

STATE POLICY

AS A TOOL FOR POSTSECONDARY DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM

A Case Study of Connecticut





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State Policy as a Tool for Postsecondary Developmental Education Reform: A Case Study of Connecticut

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent national figures estimate that close to 2 million entering college students enroll in developmental education each year with the hope of acquiring the skills needed to complete college-level coursework. However, only a fraction of these students at both community colleges and four-year institutions go on to graduate. Confronted by poor student outcomes and a desire to increase educational attainment, state governments are increasingly using legislation as a tool to reform developmental education. Such reforms have varied by state, but have increasingly involved mandating changes to course content, structure, and pedagogy—areas traditionally under the purview of institutions’ faculty and administrators.

This report presents a brief case study of a legislatively led effort to improve developmental education in Connecticut, which culminated in 2012 with the passage of Public Act 12-40, “An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion.” Public Act 12-40 required institutions to change how students are assessed and placed into developmental education, limited the time students may spend enrolled in developmental courses to one semester, and implemented a new three-level model consisting of (a) college-level courses with embedded support, (b) one-semester intensive developmental courses, and (c) non-credit tuition-free transitional programs. Connecticut’s experience passing and implementing Public Act 12-40 illuminates the disconnect often present between legislatures and the higher education community, as well as the complexities inherent in large-scale education reform.

Our data comes from interviews conducted with state legislators, higher education system leaders, presidents of institutions, faculty, academic administrators, and staff members of intermediary organizations. The results of our study clearly indicate the need for improved communication and collaboration between state policymakers and the higher education community in order to identify challenges, consider alternatives, implement changes, and monitor progress. To help ensure collaborative and cooperative partnerships between these two groups—namely, state legislatures and higher education faculty and administrators—we offer recommendations to members of both parties for ways to improve communication and foster strong interorganizational relationships.

For legislative bodies and the higher education community:

- Ensure communication between staffs in addition to communication between top officials

For legislative bodies:

- Invest more resources in the legislative research function
- Empower the higher education governing and/or coordinating boards
- Engage institutional leaders, administrators, and faculty members
- Consider involvement of intermediary organizations

For the higher education community:

- Develop a professional governmental relations staff
- Proactively offer solutions
- Respect the role of the legislature and state government
- Create a periodic “state of higher education” conference

INTRODUCTION

Many state governments are utilizing legislation as a tool to fundamentally reshape developmental education in an effort to improve student outcomes and reduce costs (Gewertz 2015; Jacobs 2012; Ross 2014; Smith 2015a; Smith 2015b). With a growing intensity, these legislative interventions are requiring institutions to significantly alter their academic and financial models. While states remain the primary overseers of public higher education, legislation mandating changes in course content, structure, and pedagogy—areas of responsibility largely viewed as in the purview of institutions—represents a new and important level of involvement in higher education governance.

Since 1995, over half the states have passed legislation directly impacting developmental education. A review of two state-level legislative databases (Education Commission of the States 2015, Getting Past GO 2010) revealed three main themes across developmental education legislation. The most common action taken by state legislatures has been to pass study bills. These actions require state systems and institutions to review existing developmental education practices and consider evidence-based alternatives. State legislation has also been used to demand that more information be reported about enrollment and student outcomes in developmental education. In many cases, state legislatures have sought to identify high schools with high proportions of graduates enrolling in developmental education. Finally, legislation has been used to eliminate developmental course offerings at public four-year institutions and has established community colleges as the sole state-supported provider. The map below (see Figure 1) delineates the states that have enacted developmental education legislation between 1995 and 2015 in at least one of the three main themes: 1) study bills, 2) additional reporting requirements, and 3) limit state funding.

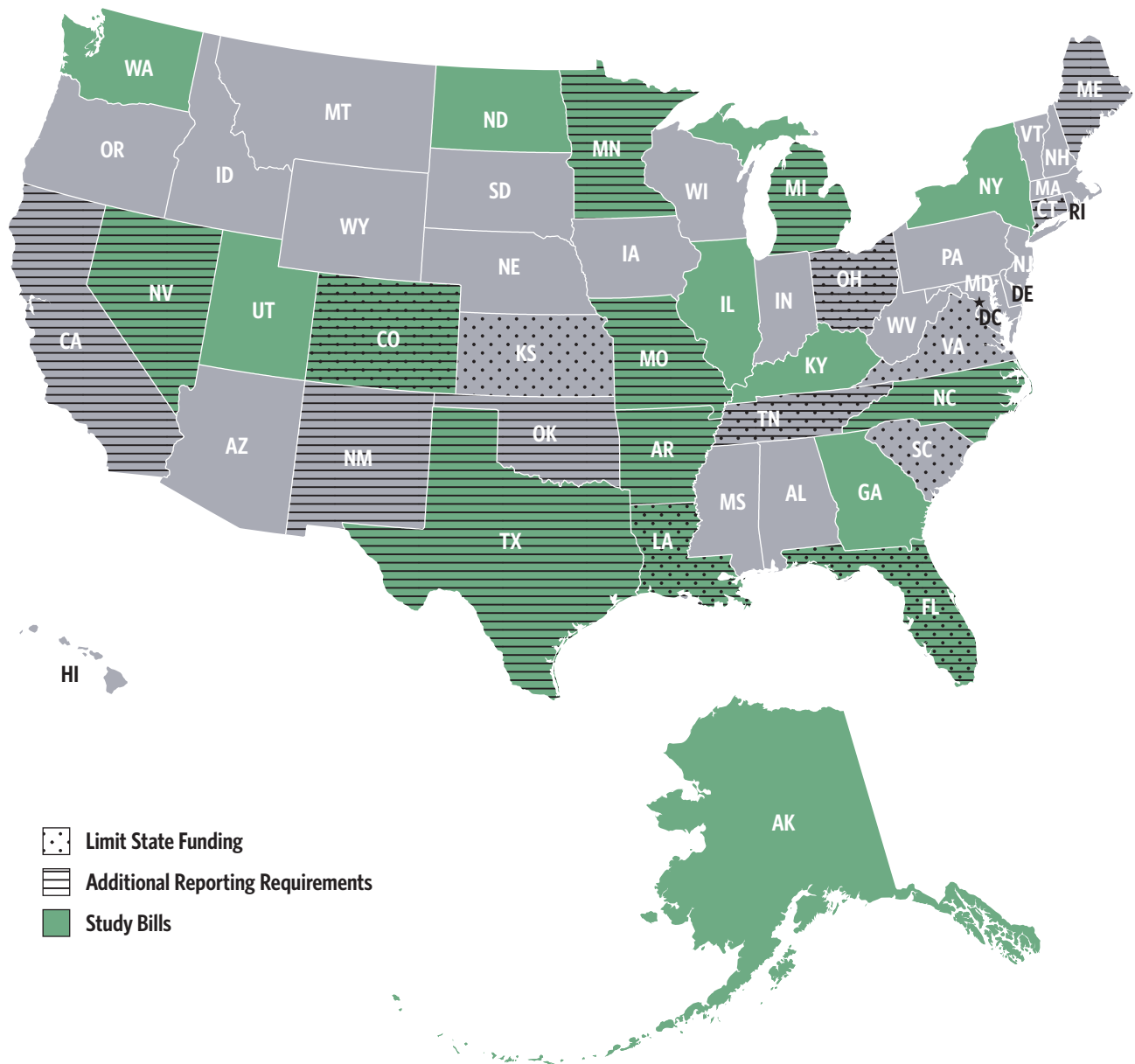
As the demographics of the United States continue to shift and access to higher education reaches new levels, cooperation and collaboration between state legislatures and public higher education institutions must play a vital role in ensuring student success. Both state legislatures and colleges and universities are largely responsible—through thoughtfully developed policies and programs—for bringing new knowledge and discoveries into the realm of everyday life. Make no mistake—legislative bodies and institutions of higher education are very different American entities. The associated individuals play different roles and have different backgrounds, including their levels of education and academic experiences. They often have different methods and strategies for achieving goals. But they share the same ultimate goal: to make life better for the people they serve. That common goal offers great potential for legislatures and higher education leaders to work collaboratively and cooperatively, applying the knowledge and resources known and available to each, to develop the most effective and efficient responses to the higher education challenges facing our states and nation.

Unfortunately, the workday lives and experiences of legislators and higher education officials do not often overlap. They work in different worlds. The legislator's world is represented by an allegiance to the general population of voters who control his or her future. Legislators must work within the realities of an always-limited government budget on which societal demands are varied and great. They often face a systemic inability to devote as much time as might be needed to each of those demands as well as other similar and related conditions. In contrast, the higher education world is represented by an allegiance to academic endeavors, chiefly teaching, research, and community service. These activities are also both time- and

resource-intensive. Institutions must recruit high-quality faculty in needed disciplines to ensure students are appropriately educated and credentialed. Colleges and universities are also confronted by the realities of budgets supported by a wide range of resources that are often unpredictable, all while competing in the national market for faculty, staff, students, and financial support.

The disconnect between the world of the legislature and the world of the higher education community is fraught with possibilities for misunderstandings as both worlds attempt to improve the quality of life for the people they serve. A brief case study, involving efforts to improve developmental education in Connecticut, is offered here to illustrate the trials faced by both state legislators and higher education officials as they strived for that common goal. Also offered are detailed recommendations for helping ensure a collaborative and cooperative effort in response to major higher education challenges facing states.

Figure 1. States That Have Enacted Developmental Education Legislation



Data compiled from: Education Commission of the States 2015, Getting Past GO 2010

OVERVIEW

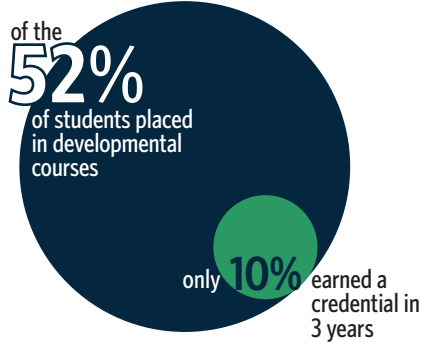
Nationwide, nearly 2 million students entering higher education are enrolled in developmental education annually (Snyder and Dillow 2013). A principal goal of developmental coursework is to help students develop the skills and attitudes needed to attain academic, career, and life goals (NADE 2015). Often, these courses—offered most commonly in English and math—aim to help students prepare for college-level courses. A closer examination (see Figure 2) indicates that more than 50 percent of students entering community colleges and close to 20 percent of those entering four-year institutions enroll in developmental courses. But only 10 percent of those developmental education students earn degrees from two-year colleges within three years and only 35 percent earn degrees from four-year institutions within six years (Complete College America 2012).

In Connecticut, those disheartening statistics were even worse. Approximately 60 percent of students enrolled in the state’s community colleges and close to 33 percent of students enrolled in the state’s four-year institutions were placed into developmental courses (Complete College America 2012). Concerning student outcomes, 8 percent of community college students and 42 percent of four-year college students went on to earn certificates and degrees (Complete College America 2012).

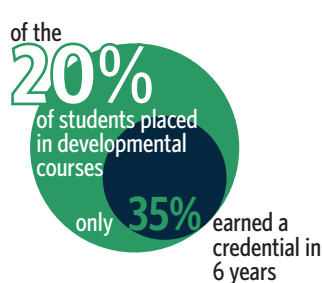
Figure 2. Percentage of Students Enrolled in Developmental Courses and Earning a Credential, by Institution Type

National

Community Colleges

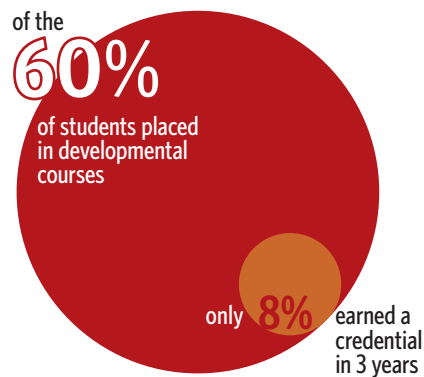


Four-Year Colleges



Connecticut

Community Colleges



Four-Year Colleges

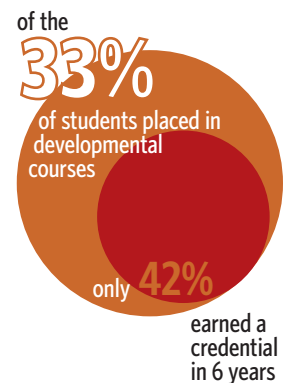
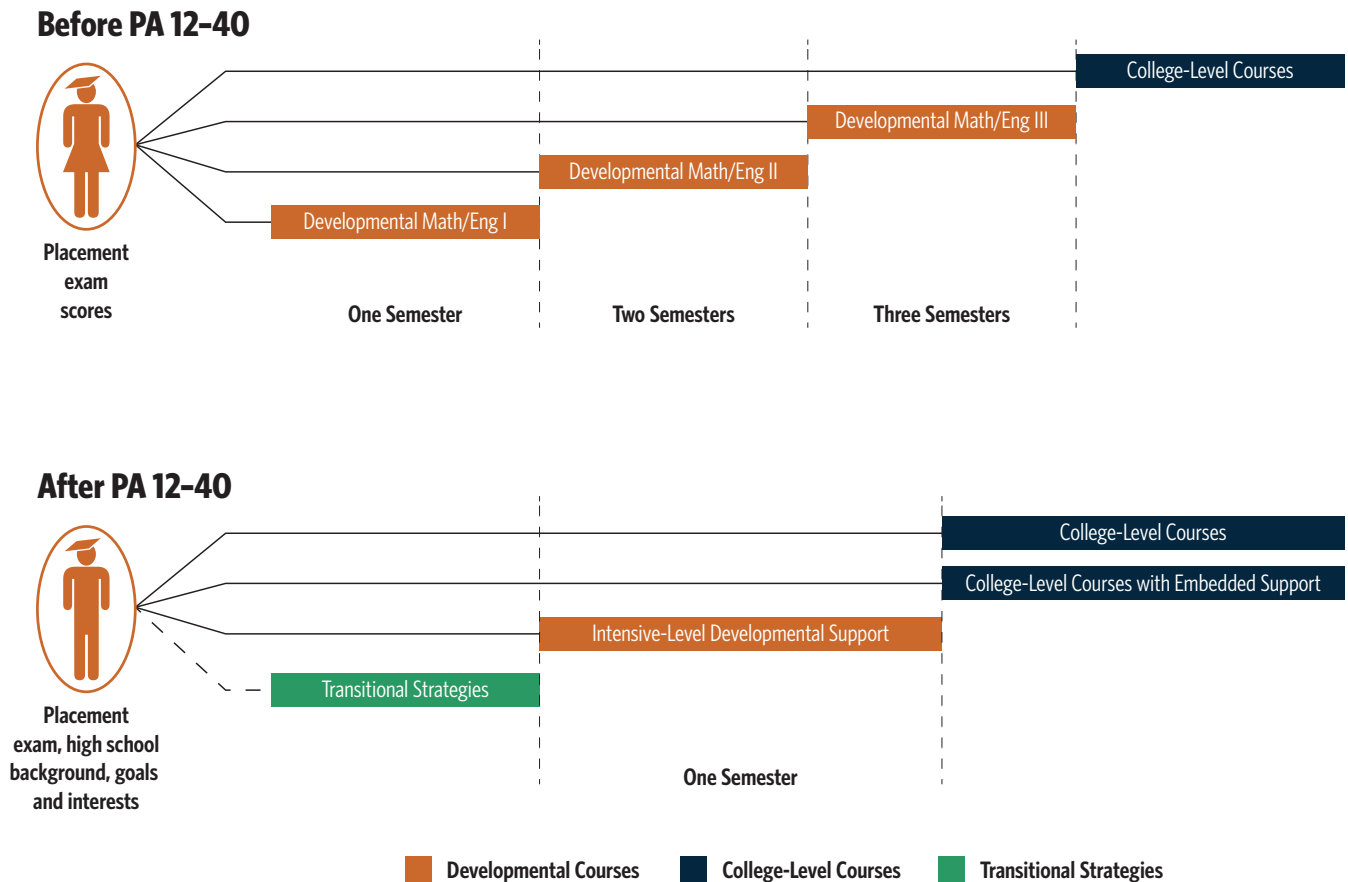


Figure 3. Developmental Education Sequence Before and After PA 12-40



“We have all these kids enrolled in community college who are using Pell [Grants] and student loans, and the vast majority in Connecticut never even pass a single credit-bearing class after the remediation, so it was really a barrier,” noted state Senator Beth Bye (D), who led the Connecticut General Assembly’s effort to reform the state’s developmental education system in 2012, taking it in a new direction. She added that “the [developmental education] system you have is taking kids’ Pell semesters, taking their student loans, leaving them poorer and with less hope than when they started.”

As a result, legislation mandating institutions to implement innovative developmental education practices was enacted in 2012. Public Act 12-40, “An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion,” prescribed three sweeping changes (see Figure 3 for illustration): (1) public institutions must now use multiple methods of assessment to place students into developmental education, (2) students are not permitted to enroll in more than one semester of developmental courses, and (3) institutions must replace traditional developmental course sequences with a new three-level model consisting of (a) college-level courses with embedded support, (b) one-semester intensive developmental courses, and (c) non-credit transitional programs.

Connecticut’s Public Act 12-40 represented a new and important type of mandate from a state legislature. In particular, the legislation is more prescriptive in nature than previous state developmental education policies, and required significant changes in academic and financial operations of the state’s community colleges and regional universities. In general, the state’s higher education community found implementation of

the new requirements troublesome for three major reasons: (1) the prescriptive nature of the change limited the ability of individual institutions to explore innovative practices that could be more effective and efficient, (2) the prescriptive nature of the change made faculty and staff buy-in more difficult to achieve, and (3) the changes themselves had deep implications for the way academic programs are financed within institutions. A more collaborative and cooperative relationship between members of the Connecticut General Assembly and higher education leaders could have reduced the impact of these changes, or possibly replaced them with other changes with fewer unintended consequences.

LEGISLATING CHANGE TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

State Senator Bye’s interest in improving developmental education was supported by two intermediary organizations, the Connecticut Association of Human Services and Complete College America, which had issued reports highlighting the poor outcomes for students enrolled in developmental education. In addition to these data, many state legislators believed that institutions had largely ignored or not sufficiently responded to concerns about developmental education outcomes. A former Connecticut state legislator remarked:

Simmering beneath the surface was this sense of the small number of people who had been active in higher education policy issues in those legislatures, that this was a repeatedly ignored issue despite legislature interest for some time. So I had staff go back and look at the legislative history and we discovered that over 20 years, back into like 1992, there had been a bill introduced almost every session having something to do with remedial education that could be considered an indication of a legislative desire to address the challenge. The bills either didn’t go anywhere or evolved into what we call study bills. . . . So you had this 20-year issue of symptoms/signs of legislative interest and concern constantly being sent off with the usual response that the specific bill’s provisions were setting academic policy inappropriately or whatever else.

Notably, Senator Bye has an extensive background in education and government. An early-childhood educator and former local school board member, she was first elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives in 2007. After serving two terms in the House, she was elected to the Connecticut Senate in 2011, where she became Senate chairperson of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

Early in the 2012 session, Senator Bye introduced Senate Bill 40, “An Act Concerning Open Access to College-Level Courses”—the precursor to Public Act 12-40. Drawing on her experience as a school board member, the bill was modeled off a district policy which allowed open access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. She noted, that after the change in policy, student performance increased remarkably, so much that “our district moved up to the top 10 percent of the schools in the state.”

The concept’s application to higher education was simple under this early version of Senate Bill 40. Any student enrolled at a public institution of higher education in Connecticut would not be required to enroll in developmental courses prior to enrolling in college-level courses. The bill in fact prohibited mandatory placement in developmental education and required that institutions offer co-requisite developmental support to students in any entry-level course in a college-level program. Senate Bill 40 was introduced only months following a significant reorganization of Connecticut’s public higher education governance system.

“There had been a bill introduced almost every session having something to do with remedial education that could be considered an indication of a legislative desire to address the challenge.”

-Former Connecticut State Legislator

“My original intention was to not block kids from credit-bearing classes. That was when my understanding was simpler. I got a more complex understanding over time.”
-Connecticut State Senator Beth Bye

Governor Dannel Malloy’s plan to overhaul the state’s higher education governance system in an effort to reduce bureaucracy, increase efficiency, and save costs was supported by the General Assembly and went into effect on July 1, 2011. Prior to this restructuring, the state’s community colleges, regional universities, and the University of Connecticut institutions were each governed by a separate board, supported by separate professional staffs. The reorganization established the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education and charged it with governing the state’s four regional universities, 12 community colleges, and one online institution. (Box 1 provides a more detailed look at the change in the higher education governance structure in Connecticut leading up to the introduction and ultimate passage of Public Act 12-40.) The consolidation of the two adminis-

trative systems was resisted in particular by community college faculty and administrators concerned that their unique mission would be overlooked in a new consolidated system.

The introduction of Senate Bill 40 meant there was limited time for the Board of Regents to clarify its new roles and responsibilities and to fill vacant positions. The bill was soon met with significant opposition, largely from faculty concerned that they, presumably with the most knowledge of developmental education practices, were excluded from the conversation. One faculty member said:

Sometimes it feels like we are being led around by the nose by people who haven’t been down in the trenches doing what we are doing in developmental education math and English.

Others, including college presidents, Board of Regents staff, and some legislators, were concerned that the legislation would reduce student access to higher education. One college president noted:

You had a lot of concern by college presidents, including me: Are we going to be limiting our population? Are we going to be closing the door to access for students?

Much of the opposition from the higher education community was fueled by a sense that the process was less than transparent and that the bill in its initial form was seriously flawed. One faculty member said:

It was not thought through appropriately and it was not communicated to people. It wasn’t transparent and they didn’t ask for feedback from the colleges and the faculty who were the ones who were going to have to develop the new curriculum.

Ultimately, Senator Bye developed a better understanding of developmental education and the impact of the bill. She proposed changes by working closely with the Board of Regents’ vice president for community colleges and vice president for state universities. The two vice presidents, who simultaneously serve as college presidents, helped Bye to consider the implications of her bill for college access and the academic model of the institutions. According to Senator Bye, the vice presidents were largely responsible for helping reshape Senate Bill 40 into the version that became Public Act 12-40, “An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion.” Senator Bye explained:

My original intention was to not block kids from credit-bearing classes. That was when my understanding was simpler. I got a more complex understanding over time.

Public Act 12-40—still controversial in the Connecticut higher education community—now requires institutions to use multiple commonly accepted measures to assess students’ readiness for college-level courses. If a student is determined to be below the skill level required for success in college-level work, students are placed into one of three levels of developmental support: embedded support, intensive support, or transitional strategies (see Box 2 for more information). The law effectively prohibits institutions from basing student placement solely on standardized assessment scores, ends multi-course sequences in developmental education, and limits the amount of time a student can be required to enroll in and pay for pre-college-level courses.

Box 1. Timeline of Changes to Connecticut’s Higher Education Governance, 2011–12

2011

January

- > Newly elected Governor Dannel Malloy introduces the idea to consolidate the community college and state university systems for an estimated savings of \$4.3 million a year.

April

- > National Center for Higher Education Management Systems publishes a critical analysis of the proposed merger, suggesting that cost savings are overestimated and the merger may overlook the heterogeneity in institutions’ missions.

July

- > Connecticut’s 12 community colleges, four regional universities, and online institution are now governed by a single Board of Regents for Higher Education per the passage of Public Acts 11-48 and 11-61.
- > Governor Malloy appoints Michael Meotti to serve as interim president of the Board of Regents.
- > Governor Malloy appoints Lewis Robinson Jr. to serve as chair of the Board of Regents.

August

- > Robert Kennedy, former president of University of Maine, is appointed by Malloy to replace Meotti as interim president of the Board of Regents. Kennedy was appointed with eight of the 15 board seats still vacant.
- > Board President Robert Kennedy appoints Meotti to executive vice president of the Board of Regents.

October

- > The Board of Regents holds its first meeting with six members present and authorizes Robinson to sign a contract to make Kennedy the permanent president.

2012

January

- > Board of Regents eliminates 24 senior-level administrative jobs.
- > A major proposal to overhaul the state’s transfer and articulation policies is considered by the board.

February

- > Senate Bill 40 is introduced by Senator Beth Bye.
- > Senate Bill 40 is referred to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee for public hearings.

March

- > Senate Bill 40 is replaced by a joint favorable substitution, significantly changing the bill.
- > The new Senate Bill 40 is analyzed by the Offices of Legislative Research and Fiscal Analysis.
- > After months of work, the Board of Regents approved the Transfer and Articulation Policy to establish a common general education core and ease transfer.

April

- > Amendments A and B are proposed, analyzed, and approved.
- > Senate passes the final amended SB 40 and refers bill to House for consideration.

May

- > House passes Senate Bill 40 becoming Public Act 12-40.
- > Governor Malloy signs Public Act 12-40.

October

- > Kennedy resigns in light of growing pressure from the state legislature to explain board staff salary increases.
- > Former University of Connecticut President Philip Austin is appointed interim board president.
- > Meotti resigns.

While Public Act 12-40 prescribed fundamental changes to the academic models of institutions, the bill allows room for institutions to pilot specific course changes if they meet the requirements of the law.

Embedded support, which consists of college-level courses that incorporate developmental support, is reserved for students who are approaching college readiness but need additional learning support. The embedded support-level courses apply a co-requisite model, replacing the prerequisite model of developmental education previously in place throughout much of Connecticut.

If students are not deemed ready for embedded-level support, the next level of support is a one-semester **intensive** developmental math and/or English class. These one-semester intensive developmental courses have replaced the preexisting developmental course

sequences found throughout Connecticut. If students fail to pass the intensive course, they are permitted to repeat the course as allowed by their institution's policy. Successfully completing the intensive support courses allows students to enter into college-level courses with embedded support within one semester.

Finally, the **transitional strategies** level consists of non-credit multi-week pre-enrollment programs aimed at assisting students who are not yet college-ready and who need more than one semester of developmental education to prepare for the intensive-level developmental courses. These transitional programs are offered at no cost to the student. The legislation also allows transitional programs to be offered in conjunction with community-based adult education partners.

While Public Act 12-40 prescribed fundamental changes to the academic models of institutions, the bill allows room for institutions to pilot specific course changes if they meet the requirements of the law. Undoubtedly, the tremendous pressure from higher education faculty, system leaders, community organizations, and others concerned with preserving access helped to shape the final version of Public Act 12-40. But even after amendments, the legislation remains controversial.

With so much opposition remaining even today, how did the bill survive to enactment and implementation? Beyond her own interests, Senator Bye said she recognized the “chaos” caused by the consolidation of the two higher education governing boards and saw it as an opportunity to accelerate the change process:

[Reorganization] is probably why the legislation got through, because there were so many things going on in the community colleges and state university systems. We waited for reorganization so that they were occupied and not as organized. . . . They didn't have their best game on for killing something if that makes sense.

Since Public Act 12-40's passage, the Board of Regents has formed system-wide committees, consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators, to guide its implementation. The vice presidents who helped Senator

Box 2. A New Model for Developmental Education

Embedded Support: Embedded support consists of college-level courses that incorporate developmental support. These courses are reserved for students who are approaching college readiness, but need additional learning support.

Intensive Support: Intensive support, which consists of a one-semester developmental math and/or English course, is available to students that are not yet ready for the embedded-level support. These intensive developmental courses are not college-level and do not count toward graduation in any degree or certificate program. Students may only be required to take one semester of developmental math and/or English. If students fail to pass the intensive course, they are permitted to repeat the course as allowed by their institution's policy. Successfully completing the intensive support courses allows students to enter into college-level courses with embedded support within one semester.

Transitional Strategies: Transitional strategies consists of non-credit multi-week pre-enrollment programs aimed at assisting students who are not yet college-ready and who need more than one semester of developmental education to prepare for intensive-level support. These programs must be offered at no cost to the student. The law allows transitional programs to be offered in conjunction with community-based adult education partners.

Bye better understand the complexities of her initial proposal continue to play important roles in leading system-wide implementation. The Board of Regents' leadership described Public Act 12-40 as an overall positive that forced their institutions to rethink developmental education. Under the board's leadership, initial funds have been secured to assist with the initial implementation and to secure additional time to institute the entire act's prescribed changes as the state nears the end of the first academic year under the new law. All stakeholders, system leaders, campus administrators and faculty, and state policymakers are eagerly awaiting preliminary data on the effectiveness of the new model.

Notably, efforts to undo the law are under way. Improvements, or lack of improvement, in student performance outcomes will determine the ultimate sustainability of Public Act 12-40.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES

The Connecticut experience highlights the disconnect that can occur between new state policies that seek to promote innovation and the complexities of institutional management in responding and adapting to those policies. In an effort to develop a meaningful and passible bill that would supersede her initial legislative proposal, Senator Bye worked with higher education system leaders to understand the academic and financial operations at play in her state's two- and four-year institutions. And yet, academic administrators and faculty today highlight a number of academic and financial model implications of Public Act 12-40 that were not considered when it was introduced and ultimately passed (see Box 3 for a list of important academic and financial model components).

For example, by limiting the time a student may enroll in the intensive level of developmental education, institutions must consolidate multiple sequences into single courses, often increasing the credit hours from three to six per intensive course. This change affects student scheduling, course offerings, and faculty work load. Faculty who taught three courses prior to the legislation now only have time to teach two. This requires the institution to hire more staff and/or limit other course offerings in order to fulfill developmental education obligations. One faculty member said:

I think one of the problems is that the intensive courses combine the lowest-level English, for example, with the higher-level, still developmental, English [courses]. . . . The full-time instructor can only teach two of those classes to make load, versus three or even four classes that he or she would have normally taught before. We then have to hire adjuncts to cover the classes that that full-time instructor would have taught before we implemented the legislation. It's costing the colleges a lot of money.

Student class scheduling is also more challenging, with fewer sections available and larger blocks of time required per course. Remarkd another faculty member:

Student scheduling had been [an] unintended consequence, and by that I mean there are students who need both six-hour developmental English and six-hour developmental math. For students, that's a full-time load. There are some students who object to that. Even if that's what they need. It's also created a challenge when we schedule these courses to make sure that it is actually possible for a student to register for both. . . . That sounds simple but if you don't think about it, it can be overlooked.

While the embedded level simply includes additional academic support for students enrolled concurrently in college-level courses, institutions have had to hire additional faculty and/or support staff to provide the supplemental instruction. One faculty member said:

If we didn't have the one-time infusion it would be difficult to provide as many sections of these [embedded] courses as we can. And it would be very difficult to have some of the supplemental instructors and other, you know, tutoring support that we've been able to provide. The bad news is that if [state funding] doesn't continue, we may have to withdraw some of that support. Which

Box 3. Academic and Finance Model Components

In order to minimize the potential for significant complications that can arise from policy change, state policymakers need some level of awareness of how changes might impact the day-to-day academic and financial operations of college and universities. Below are some aspects of the academic and finance models that should be considered when developing policies that impact higher education.

Academic restructuring: The process by which institutions reconsider their structural and resource commitments to various knowledge areas (Gumport 2000).

Analytics in higher education: The use of data, statistical analysis, and explanatory and predictive models to gain insights and act on complex issues (Bichsel 2012).

Course offerings and sequencing: A learning sequence which has been formally approved by an institution and is designated by a series of courses with specific subject names, numbers, credit hour designations, and course descriptions.

Credit hour: A unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction per week over the entire term. It is applied toward the total number of credit hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

Cross-subsidization: A process through which an institution carries out a set of profitable activities that do not yield utility per se to derive revenues it can then spend on utility-maximizing activities that do not cover their own costs (James 1990).

Faculty workload: All faculty activities that contribute to the accomplishment of unit-related activities and responsibilities (e.g., teaching, research, and service).

Financial aid eligibility and availability: A program of organized instruction or study of a certain length that leads to an academic, professional, or vocational degree or certificate, or other recognized education credential.

Funding formula for public colleges and universities: The mathematical basis for allocating dollars to institutions of higher education using a set of rates, ratios, and/or percentages derived from cost studies and peer analyses (McKeown and Layzell 1994).

Outsourcing of services: Using vendors outside of the college or university to provide specific services or serve certain functions.

Pell lifetime eligibility limit: A student's eligibility to receive a federal Pell Grant is capped at 12 semesters (or its equivalent).

Start-up and sustaining appropriations: Start-up appropriations are funds allocated to institutions to initiate and implement new programs. Sustaining appropriations are funds allocated to institutions to ensure continued operations of new programs.

Student assessment and placement: Often by using subject-based placement exams and high school transcripts, colleges and universities evaluate students' academic skill levels in order to place them into the correct course levels.

means kind of rethinking how you teach the class if you don't have that second pair of eyes, second pair of hands in the classroom—how are we going to manage that?

Though the transitional level serves the smallest group of students in developmental education, its impact on the financial model is significant. First, by law, colleges and universities cannot charge tuition and fees to students to enroll in the transitional level. This requires institutions to cover the full cost of these programs through a combination of state funds and other revenue sources. Equally important, students participating in the transitional-level programs are not counted in the institutions' enrollment totals. As a result, the enrollment figures, which are reported to the state and often used to allocate funds, are not capturing total enrollment. As one faculty member pointed out:

[Community colleges] brought up the very real fact that the more we refer students to those non-credit free workshops, those are students who under the old system would have registered for courses that would have counted toward our FTE enrollment. So even though we're still serving those same students, they're not counted in our enrollment and we're expected to provide the workshops for free, so it's sort of like this hidden thing there that we're not sure what to deal with.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As an analysis of the Connecticut story reveals, state policymakers are often pressed for time and lack the necessary policy support to understand the nuances of higher education systems and their operations. These realities make collaboration and cooperation with campus administrators, faculty, system staff, intermediaries, legislative researchers, and others of paramount importance during the policy-formation process. More effective collaboration, taking advantage of legislators' political knowledge and skills and the higher education community's knowledge of education principles and operations, will help ensure the development of effective and efficient state policies. Policymakers and members of the higher education community share responsibility for seeking and developing avenues for increased communication and resulting collaboration and cooperation.

For the best results, state policymakers and the higher education community, as well as intermediary agencies, must exchange thoughts, ideas, and concerns about educational challenges confronting their states. Several recommendations, if implemented, can help develop effective communication between state officials and institutional leaders grappling with challenges or other mutual, pressing issues of concern.

For legislative bodies and the higher education community

Ensure communication between staffs in addition to communication between top officials. While meetings between elected officials and top-level college and university administrators have a role, they are often not the key role. The key role is played by those who aid legislators and support higher education leadership. These individuals can and should communicate often and regularly with much more freedom and frank exchange of thoughts and ideas without the presence of their superiors. This type of ongoing communication at lower levels, even without the pressure of a crisis, leads to both parties becoming more knowledgeable and accepting of the realities faced by the other, and over time can heavily influence future legislative proposals, thus allowing improved opportunity for long-term success.

For legislative bodies

Invest more resources in the legislative research function. The capacity of legislators and the legislative institution as a whole to analyze information and address issues through policymaking is often limited by the wide range of demands put upon this system. To meet this challenge, legislators would benefit from a broader and stronger legislative research and support function. While multiple measures for this type of legislative professionalism exist (see Grumm 1971; Citizens Conference on State Legislatures 1971; Bowman and Kearney 1988; Squire 1992; Squire 2007), lawmakers no doubt benefit from large and well-funded professional staffs. Research staff in particular can help legislators frame potential policy problems, contextualize proposed solutions within a historical policy context, consider how proposed legislation would interact within the existing body of law and policy, and/or contribute to draft legislation.

Empower the higher education governing and/or coordinating boards. Governing and/or coordinating boards are an important element of higher education governance (Association of Governing Boards

of Universities and Colleges 2010). An effective governing or coordinating board connects the higher education community to the legislature, framing a broad policy agenda across all sectors of higher education. When state legislators and other elected officials work in collaboration with governing and coordinating boards, new higher education legislation is more likely to have engagement across various levels of leadership (e.g., presidents, senior leaders, and faculty members) and be viewed as legitimate and necessary to serve the public interest.

Legislatures should consider directing a coordinating body to convene a statewide advisory panel consisting of administrators and faculty members to identify and articulate broad-based issues and challenges to improving educational attainment in the state. The governing entity should be responsible for coordinating information-gathering and the analysis of key data. With challenges identified and data studied, the governing and/or coordinating board will be best informed and able to aid state policymakers in drafting and considering legislation. This process will help legislators recognize the realities institutions face, while creating a space for institution-level innovation and adequate financial support.

Engage institutional leaders, administrators, and faculty members. Given the great effort and attention it takes to educate students, those faculty and administrators doing some of the best work are often unable to push the boundaries of the policy-practice continuum in ways that might improve reform efforts. As a result, colleges and universities are often untapped incubators for innovation.

State officials must assess higher education performance in the name of the people they represent, but they must also strive to understand higher education contexts, tap innovators on campuses, and provide public policy leadership while exercising restraint when tempted to direct or manage the day-to-day details of institutional management (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2005).

Legislators and/or their staffs should visit campuses to hear from faculty members and administrators responsible for educating students. Open-forum meetings with legislative leaders that include campus leaders, administrators, and faculty members would provide opportunities to describe and demonstrate solutions to educational challenges.

Consider involvement of intermediary organizations. Independent, nonprofit intermediary organizations can operate between and among postsecondary institutions and various levels of government (e.g., state officials) to guide and support changes in practice and policy for various reform projects (Rothman 2003). Such organizations can provide resources—knowledge and data insight, political/social ties, administrative infrastructure and technical support—not readily available to institutional leaders or

state policymakers interested in sustained change in response to an issue (Honig 2004). Change is often difficult and slow, as organizations must carefully consider a multitude of interventions, each with their own costs and odds of success. Yet, when appropriately involved, intermediaries can help state policymakers and higher education institutions more easily identify evidence-based interventions and manage targeted reform efforts.

Intermediary organizations have different missions that must be considered when determining which organization is best able to help with meeting the goals of the state. The anticipated benefits of engaging an intermediary organization must be identified. Policymakers will need to determine if specific outcomes offered by such organizations are evidence-based and replicable, and attempt to determine the scalability of the organization-proposed solutions to the higher education challenge(s) facing the state.

The best form of involvement (e.g., professional development,

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technical assistance, and knowledge sharing) that an intermediary can play is to help meet clearly articulated and expressed objectives. To be sure, legislatures should understand the intermediaries' orientation (e.g., state policy or institutional focus) to change processes to establish whether the model is appropriate for the state and higher education institutions, given the unique social and political contexts.

Higher education institutions
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For the higher education community

Develop a professional governmental relations staff. Just as legislators and other state policymakers benefit from higher education-focused professional support staff, colleges and universities benefit from having a professional government relations staff. These staff members can focus on meeting the information needs of state policymakers and offering thoughts on the best ways to respond to challenges. The governmental relations staff could be part of the governing or coordinating board staff, or part of an individual college or university's staff as appropriate, considering the needs and organization of higher education institutions in different states. Maintaining an ongoing, trusting relationship with legislative staff members should be a key focus.

Proactively offer solutions. As the higher education community becomes aware of new challenges, it should develop methods for responding to them. If those methods need legislative support, this should then be communicated to lawmakers. Methods that don't require or need legislative support should also be communicated to lawmakers to ensure that they are aware of efforts underway to respond to challenges. Such an effort requires an ongoing exchange of information, whether legislatures are in session or not, to promote a collaborative and cooperative relationship.

Respect the role of the legislature and state government. Higher education institutions operate in a world vastly different from the world in which legislatures operate. Each world, and each of its players, has its own set of knowledge and systems, developed over time to meet its needs and purposes, all of which are valuable to the state and its people. Yet too often, the players in each world fail to recognize the role and value of the other. This disconnect leads to confusion, mistrust, and a failure to effectively communicate and collaborate, even on common goals.

By the nature of American government, public institutions such as colleges and universities are subject to laws enacted by legislatures, leaving little choice but to comply. Clearly, under these circumstances, the higher education community must work effectively and efficiently to inform proposed legislation as it is discussed and considered, and then work diligently to ensure the legislation's effectiveness after it is enacted. When clearly identified and communicated to the legislature, implementation challenges have a better chance of being addressed appropriately.

Create a periodic "state of higher education" conference. A regular conference, perhaps held annually, to allow higher education officials to offer insights into the state of higher education for legislators, as well as other interested parties, such as the news media, would help set the agenda for legislative actions related to higher education. Higher education officials could provide information directly about their successes, their concerns, and where they see the state must go to ensure that higher education goals are met. Lawmakers could also provide information about legislative priorities, concerns, and challenges as they relate to higher education.

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