In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1720, which called for all developmental education offered in the state to be accelerated, using one or more of the following instructional strategies: 1) co-requisite, 2) modularization, 3) compression, or 4) contextualization. The law also mandated changes in advising and student supports, and established meta-majors, which are a collection of academic programs that have common or related content. In addition, recent graduates of Florida public high schools (entering 9th grade in 2003-04 or later and graduating with a standard diploma) and active-duty military members are now exempt from assessment and placement into developmental education. Exempt students may still elect to be assessed, but they have the option to decline any referrals to developmental education. Students who do not meet the exemption criteria are required to be assessed, and if determined to have need must be presented with options for developmental education instruction. Colleges’ responses to the legislation have varied greatly, with many examples of innovation. The goal of this series is to document how colleges have responded to SB 1720 in order to highlight the decisions and processes colleges consider when implementing developmental education reform at scale.
Daytona State College moved forward with plans to develop a co-requisite writing studio after Senate Bill 1720 presented new opportunities for developmental education. The studio has been a great success so far, and unlike some other developmental courses at the college, it is growing rapidly. Overall, the college’s implementation experience has been marked by strong collaboration and creativity, an ongoing process for improvement, and a focus on student engagement and connection.

**BEFORE SENATE BILL 1720**

In the decade leading up to Senate Bill 1720, student success rates in developmental education courses at Daytona State College were repeatedly among the highest in the state. JFF featured the college in a 2011 study on high-performing community colleges in Florida for having developmental education success rates consistently above the state average in all subjects, particularly in math. In 2008, for example, 68 percent of Daytona’s developmental education students passed the highest-level developmental education math course and went on to college-level math, compared to the state average of 52 percent. But these success rates were not paralleled in the college-level courses. In an interview with a group of college administrators, faculty, and staff, one administrator explained that developmental education students were less successful in the gateway courses and that the college has been working hard to address this challenge—and increase student success overall—for the last several years.

One of Daytona’s approaches to increasing success for developmental education students pre-SB 1720 was to implement compressed courses in math and English that allow students to complete their developmental education requirements more quickly. In addition to offering traditional semester-long courses, the college launched a series of 7.5-week, half-semester courses in 2006. It also created summer courses that students could take to improve their skills so they would be prepared for the college-level courses once they started in the fall. These efforts came out of Daytona’s College Prep Committee, a cross-functional team charged with supporting developmental education students. Still operating today, the committee has been proactive in following the latest national research on developmental education reform and became particularly interested in the co-requisite model for English courses. In 2012, it developed plans to create a studio model that would allow developmental education students to enroll in the gateway English course (ENC 1101) concurrently with a writing studio that provides extra support—a model the college implemented after SB 1720 went into effect.

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At the time, the college offered two courses in developmental reading and two in developmental writing, with about 80 percent of developmental education students placing into the top level for each. The math department offered two developmental courses in total—pre-algebra and elementary algebra—with the majority of students placing into the lower level. All classes met in person, and were offered in full- and half-semesters. Particularly in the case of math, Daytona found that students who took the compressed, mini-semester courses had higher success rates than those who took the full-semester option. The college required all students to meet with an advisor before registering for the first time, and course placement was based primarily on students’ results on the PERT test. Students had opportunities to take the placement test more than once and to receive remediation help through the school’s Academic Support Center, summer brush-up courses, and other offerings before registering.

**RESPONSE TO SENATE BILL 1720**

After Senate Bill 1720 passed, Daytona’s president convened a college-wide team that included the chairs and assistant chairs of math and English and the director of academic advising and vice presidents of academic affairs and student development, as well as other members of the College Prep Committee. Each department looked at research, developed ideas, and worked through issues they anticipated students might face as various changes came about. Beginning in June 2013, the group met weekly to discuss and revise its plans. One English administrator described the planning process as collaborative and empowering for participants: “The people who were in charge of this process gave us the opportunity to come up with our options; they trusted us, department by department, to come up with a plan.” She also noted that bringing so many people from the college together “made visible how big this student population is, how important they are to our college, and how many different departments work with underprepared students.”

As the team developed options for new developmental education course offerings, it also created materials that would help advisors explain these options to students in clear, simple ways. The group decided to pilot some redesigned courses in the second half of the spring 2014 semester and over the summer in order to gain insights and make adjustments before full implementation in fall 2014.

**REDESIGNED COURSE OFFERINGS**

**ENGLISH**

Senate Bill 1720 allowed Daytona State to move forward with its earlier plans for developing a writing studio that students could take as a co-requisite to the English composition gateway course, ENC 1101. The college’s English faculty and Academic Support Center (ASC) worked together to create the one-credit studio (ENC 0055L), which meets weekly and is taught by learning specialists from the ASC, Writing Center staff, and faculty volunteers in a workshop format. According to its creators, the student-driven workshop provides ENC 1101 students with contextualized support to help them “navigate course requirements, develop critical thinking skills, and complete complex reading and writing assignments.” Each studio is capped at 12 students to facilitate a high level of engagement and interaction among students and their instructors. In addition, the creators of the studio intentionally designed it so that students from different sections of ENC 1101 with different instructors would be together in one class. The assistant chair of English explained that the diversity of teaching methods and assignments students bring to class can be challenging to navigate, “but that challenge in itself is really helpful to students,” because it promotes a dynamic of peer learning and “normalizes confusion” by encouraging students to ask questions. The workshop also encourages students to visit the Writing Center for additional support, which aligns with the college’s overall focus on connecting students to support services.

Piloting the studio in the spring and summer of 2014 gave the college an opportunity to address some implementation challenges before the fall. For example, since the studio is offered in 16-week and 8-week semesters, as is ENC 1101, some students initially registered for the two courses on different timeframes, pairing an 8-week studio with a 16-week composition course. As a result, the ASC started generating reports to document which students were incorrectly placed and revamped its outreach efforts and materials to explain the options to students more clearly. The summer also provided an opportunity to train facilitators in the studio model. Because facilitators were sometimes met with silence from students in early workshops, the designers created a “bag of tricks” with ideas for what to work on with students. They also conducted mock studio sessions with facilitators and began generating regular reports.
to keep instructors, in both ENC 1101 and the studio, informed about which courses their students are taking.

In addition to the writing studio, Daytona made other changes to its English course offerings after SB 1720. The English department eliminated the lower-level developmental education course in both reading and writing, and the remaining two upper-level courses—REA 0017 and ENC 0025—are both offered as modularized, compressed courses in which instructors schedule time with students in the ASC. Several college-credit courses were also developed to offer students additional support, including a one-credit college resources course co-enrolled with ENC 1101, a three-credit linguistics course focused on grammar and composition, and a three-credit critical reading strategies course.

The English department also made changes to some college-level courses around the same time SB 1720 went into effect. Previously, ENC 1101 focused on composition, and the next course in the sequence, ENC 1102, focused on literature. Beginning in fall 2014, ENC 1102 was revised to focus less on literature and more on writing, with composition content spread over both courses. The faculty noted that since this change happened at the same time as the developmental education redesign, it is difficult to know which factors contributed to student success rates in ENC 1101.

**MATHEMATICS**

Most developmental math courses at Daytona were already available as compressed, half-semester courses prior to Senate Bill 1720. These courses include pre-algebra and elementary algebra—which both have a lab component—as well as an online course that combines both of those courses into one. In response to the bill, the math department added a new two-credit modularized course that allows student to work only on the skills they need and go at their own pace. In addition, the faculty created a one-credit lab course that students can take as a co-requisite to intermediate algebra.

Around the same time, recent changes in the state’s general education requirements for AA degrees also prompted the math department to create an alternative pathway for students interested in careers (and transfer degrees) that do not require college algebra. Students now have the option of taking a new gateway math course (MGF 2106) and a math for liberal arts course (MGF 2107), which lead to statistics. As a result of this change, one administrator reported, MAT 1033 enrollments have continued to decrease while MGF 2106 and MGF 2107 enrollments increase.

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

Like all the other Florida colleges JFF interviewed, Daytona has seen a drop in overall enrollments in developmental education courses after the redesign. One administrator reported that enrollment has decreased by about one-third every semester since implementation in fall 2014, with a roughly 65 percent decrease in developmental education English enrollments in the first year. However, based on growing interest in the writing studio, the college is adding more sections of ENC 0055L every semester, with 32 sections offered in spring 2015 and more scheduled for fall 2015. Administrators attribute this growth to several factors, including the engaging peer learning dynamic of the studio and the efforts of advisors in getting students there. One college analyst noted that in fall 2014, 62 percent of students whose advisors recommended the studio took it, and that percentage is growing. Another administrator pointed out that there are also students who take the studio of their own accord, because they think they could use the help. This may be in part based on positive feedback students have shared with each other through word of mouth. Facilitators have also conducted student surveys, which indicate that many students find the studio valuable and empowering.

Although it is too early to determine the impact of the redesign plan on student success, Daytona officials anecdotally reported that the success rates in ENC 1101 have not gone down since Senate Bill 1720 went into effect. College researchers are in the process of trying to determine what has contributed to this success, which, one analyst pointed out, presents challenges based on the number of new interventions (such as the new student success course) and other variables at play.

Daytona officials reported other challenges around data as well. One administrator commented that there are more than 200 developmental education courses now offered in Florida colleges, which makes comparisons across institutions difficult: “There are a lot of great efforts going on here and throughout
Florida, and there are lots of studies [underway]. We are trying to figure out where to put limited resources and trying the best we can to do honest assessments of each [modality], but that has been tough.”

The college has also researched how to assess and place students now that many of them arrive without test scores and are not required to test. A placement strategy using high school GPAs in addition to test scores is now in place. Many at Daytona see this as a welcome change from the previous rigid system, which offered students and advisors little choice. As one administrator explained, “The bill challenged us to look at our students in ways that we weren’t forced to do prior […] and to think about what we know about a student, beyond test scores, that will help us place them in the courses they need.”

**GOING FORWARD**

Despite challenges around timing, resources, data, and other issues related to Senate Bill 1720, Daytona officials appear optimistic about the changes underway at their institution. They feel the college has expanded its ability to help students feel engaged with and connected to the institution, and their efforts have led to important cultural shifts. For example, the ASC is now perceived as a place where “successful students” go for support, rather than just those who are struggling or in trouble. The college continues to revise its offerings to help students succeed, with plans to add more “gear-up” college prep workshops for incoming students and new “on-time” plans to encourage students to graduate on time.

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