



**How Students Make Course
Enrollment Decisions in an
Era of Increased Choice:
Results From a Survey of
Enrollment Patterns and
Choice Factors**

Shouping Hu, Toby Park, Chenoa S. Woods,
David Tandberg, Tamara Bertrand Jones,
Dava Hankerson, Keith Richard

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Background	2
Student Choice Literature	3
Methods	4
Results	6
References	19
Author Biographies	20

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Executive Summary

In 2013, the state of Florida passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720), which dramatically restructured developmental education (DE) placement and instruction. Whereas DE was previously required for students testing below established levels on standardized tests, certain students (graduates from Florida public high schools in the year 2007 or later and active duty members of the military—labeled exempt students) now have the opportunity to opt out of these courses and enroll directly into college-level work. In addition, colleges must now provide all students with a wider array of delivery methods for DE courses.

In light of this environment of increased student choice, we sought to investigate how students are making their enrollment decisions. We distributed the Student Response Survey in the Fall 2014 semester to all first-time-in-college students at two Florida College System (FCS) institutions. Of particular interest to this study were the exempt students, or those with wider course enrollment options, and the importance students placed on 14 factors that possibly influenced their DE course enrollment decisions (i.e. their decision factors). Our results show:

1. Of all students in the sample, roughly 21% were recommended for DE reading, 24% for writing, and 42% for math.
2. In math, 58% of students recommended for DE ignored this advice and took either college-level math (23%) or no math course at all (35%).
3. In writing, 69% of students recommended for DE ignored this advice and took either college-level composition (27%) or no composition class at all (42%).
4. In reading, 92% of students recommended for DE ignored this advice and took either college-level composition (36%) or no composition class at all (56%).
5. Low-income students have the highest rates of opting to not enroll in any reading, writing, or math courses when advised to enter a DE course in that subject.
6. The most widely regarded important factor for course enrollment decisions was future career goals. This finding is consistent for nearly every student subgroup.

7. In addition to career goals, time to degree, high school grades, and high school GPA were also important decision factors for many students.
8. Military history was largely unimportant to many students, which may be a function of the small percentage of military students in the sample.
9. Women tend to place a greater emphasis on the various decision factors included in the survey overall, with the greatest differences between men and women occurring for cost of DE and work history.
10. Students in the lowest income category place the most importance on factors related to time, work, and cost, compared to students in higher income categories.
11. Asian students tend to place higher importance on career goals and academic ability compared to other decision factors.
12. Students opting to bypass DE altogether or not enroll in any academic courses tend to show lower rates of consideration across all of the decision factors.

Although we recognize limitations in the current data, we present some key recommendations for institutional leaders and academic advisors as well as a cautionary note and a need for additional investigation. Advising sessions need to include the connections between careers and courses linked to specific course-major pathways (meta-majors), and should encourage students to enroll in courses directly related to their ultimate goals.

Advisors should also warn students of the possible negative consequences (e.g. low grades, possible failure) of enrolling in courses above their academic ability, while ensuring that students do enroll in one form of reading, writing, and/or math course. We note, however, that a sizeable percentage of students are explicitly defying their advisor recommendation and either directly enrolling in college-level coursework or not enrolling in a reading/writing/math course of any kind. This is particularly true of low-income students. Thus, even with enhanced advising systems, the choice to bypass DE altogether, and its relationship to student outcomes, warrants further investigation.

Background

In 2013, the state of Florida passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720), which dramatically altered its legislation to restructure developmental education (DE) placement and delivery methods. Whereas DE was previously required for students testing below established levels on the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), the policy shift offers many students the opportunity to opt out of these courses and enroll directly into college-level work. The policy took full effect in the Fall 2014 semester and is novel in that

it provides many students the opportunity to make important choices regarding DE enrollment that guide their educational pathways. The purpose of this study is to understand how students decide to enroll in DE courses in reading, writing, and math during the initial implementation period of the new legislation. We also examine how these decisions vary by important student characteristics such as gender, household income, and race/ethnicity.

Student Choice Literature

Decision-making is an important component of the college experience and can have explicit implications for a student's future educational attainment and occupational opportunities. Prior to each semester, college students must consider a great deal of information in order to determine which courses to take and when. As a result, colleges spend significant time and resources guiding students through the course selection (CS) process by utilizing academic advising, new student orientation, and course bulletins, among other methods.

Previous research claims that most students in degree programs have too much freedom, often ignoring advisors' recommendations or enrolling in courses that do not lead towards graduation, even if enrolled in a structured program (Complete College America, 2012). As of Fall 2014, students identified as "exempt" under SB 1720 have even greater freedom in their enrollment choices and course selection options through the optional, modified forms of developmental education offered by Florida College System (FCS) institutions. DE courses are offered in a variety of new formats in an attempt to suit a diverse student population's various needs, and now exempt students may choose from DE and college-level courses alike.

In the related literature, factors affecting course selection can be divided into two broad categories: academic characteristics related to the course or instructor; or personal characteristics related to the individual student. The first criterion refers to academic information regarding the course such as course content and/or description, difficulty, exams, or instructor style. In Babad's (2001) study of students'

considerations in selecting first and last courses, she found that first courses were selected based on intellectual level and expected quality of teaching of the course, and last courses were selected based on low level of difficulty. In a later study, Babad and Tayeb (2003) identified learning value, instructor's style, and course difficulty as highly important during the CS decision-making process.

The second criterion is related to the individual student's personal context and may include accommodating busy schedules, particularly for the working student; requirements for a future program of study; and considering career goals, social needs, or addressing an academic weakness. Feather (1988) found that selection into specific math and English courses were related to student self-concept of ability in the subject area. Moogan and Baron (2003) identified problem recognition, the degree to which a choice fulfills a certain gap for the student, as an additional factor behind student CS. Furthermore, students tend to use friends, family, peers, advisors, and faculty as sources of information when making CS decisions (Kerin, Harvey, & Crandall, 1975). Peers and friends are often ranked highest in consideration during the CS process, although they are somewhat unreliable sources of information (Brooks, 2002, 2003; Roberts & Allen, 1997). These influences on students' choices may be particularly important for students who have the option of enrolling in DE or bypassing the previously required courses and enrolling directly in college-level courses.

Methods

The current study is part of a larger examination and policy analysis of SB 1720. This study focused on the Student Response Survey administered at two campuses in the FCS. However, initial findings from focus group interviews with campus stakeholders inform the presentation of our results. We center our analysis on the student group of interest: exempt students who are now given choice in their DE course enrollment.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of this student survey was to understand how students made their decisions to enroll in or forgo DE courses as first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. The survey gathered information about the following topics:

- Student exempt status (via questions regarding high school graduation and active-duty military status)
- Developmental and college-level course recommendations and selections
- Factors contributing to student enrollment decisions
- Knowledge of SB 1720 and course offerings
- Communication with college academic advisors
- Use and quality of student support services
- Participant demographics

Of particular interest for this study are the DE enrollment decision factors, or influences that students found important in deciding whether to enroll in a DE course. Our list of 14 factors is derived from the list of factors presented to the FCS institutions by the administrative team at the

Division of Florida Colleges when the institutions were developing implementation plans for integrated advising of exempt students. The survey was designed to allow students to respond whether they found the following factors very important, important, moderately important, somewhat important, not important, or that they did not know how to include this information in their decision-making process:

- High school grades in specific courses
- High school grade point average (GPA)
- PERT scores
- SAT scores (or other standardized test scores)
- Work history
- Military history
- Meta-major/program of study
- High school extracurricular activities
- Parent/guardian recommendation
- High school teacher recommendation
- High school counselor recommendation
- Cost of developmental education
- Time to complete intended degree
- Personal career goals

We asked students to rate the emphasis placed on each of these factors when making their enrollment decisions via a Likert scale. For reporting purposes, we present the percentage of students who respond as “important” or “very important.”

DATA AND SAMPLE

The sample for this study comes from two institutions in the FCS. All FTIC students attending these institutions were given an online survey to complete during their first semester of college for a total sample of 963 students. Our analytic sample includes students who have data on all three of the course enrollment variables, yielding an analytic sample of 668.

The overall sample represents a diverse group of students. The majority of participants identify as Latino (32%), White (31%), or Black (25%); Asian students compose 6% of the sample, and students of Native American, Native Hawaiian, or another race/ethnicity compose 6% of the sample. More females (64%) participated in the survey and the modal (33%) household income for students living at home or for financially independent students was between \$21,000 and \$50,999. Eighteen percent of the sample lives in households making less than \$11,000 annually, 27% live in households making \$11,000-\$20,999, and 22% live in households making \$51,000 or more. Students in this sample are aged 16 to 53 years of age, with 92% of the sample age 25 years or younger; most students are of traditional FTIC age, with 71% of students 18 or 19 years old.

Of particular interest in this study are students who are exempt (those who are given the option to enroll in developmental courses, or to bypass their advisor's recommendation and enroll directly into college-level courses). Based on SB 1720, two questions in the Student Response Survey indicate students' exempt status: (1) "Are you an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces?" and (2) "Did you enter 9th grade in a Florida public high school in 2003-2004 or after and earn a standard Florida high school diploma?" If students answered yes to either of these variables, they were designated as exempt. Just 1% of the sample is active duty military personnel and 61% of the remaining students are exempt based on their high school graduation. Thus, 62% of the sample is considered exempt.

Results

The results are organized into three main sections. First, we present enrollment patterns for exempt students, with a particular focus on those students who were recommended to take DE. We also disaggregate these patterns by gender, income, and race. The above enrollment patterns are presented for all exempt students in the sample. Next, we provide an overall portrait of the factors associated with making enrollment decisions, for both exempt and nonexempt students, asserting that while the legislation directly impacted exempt students, advising likely changed for all students. Finally, we return to our focus on exempt students and examine the relationship between course enrollment patterns and the factors cited as important in making these decisions, again disaggregating our results by subject, gender, income, and race. The students who responded to the questions regarding their enrollment decisions represent a subgroup of students; students who enrolled in all college-level courses in reading, writing, and math and were not advised to take any DE courses did not respond to these survey questions and therefore are eliminated from these analyses.

COURSE ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

In the survey, students were asked questions regarding their enrollment decisions in reading, writing, and math, separately. For each subject, they could indicate one of the following possible enrollment choices:

- *I registered for a COLLEGE level [subject] course and was not advised to register for a developmental reading/writing/math course.* In this case, students were “college-ready” and were not advised to enroll in a DE course. It is likely that these students would enroll in college-level courses despite any changes in the legislation.
- *I was advised to register for developmental [subject] but I chose to register for a COLLEGE level reading/writing/math course instead.* These students were advised to take a DE course in the subject, yet chose to enroll into a college-level course instead of a DE course. This is one of the most critical changes from SB 1720.
- *I was advised to register for developmental [subject] but I chose NOT to register for any reading/writing/math courses this semester.* These students were advised to take a DE course in the subject, yet did not enroll in any course, college-level nor DE, in the subject.
- *Actual DE course selection.* For this option, students selected the specific DE course number and title in which they enrolled (e.g. REA 0056; ENC 0051; MAT 0022) for the subject. In this case, students were advised into a DE course and indeed enrolled in a DE course in the subject.

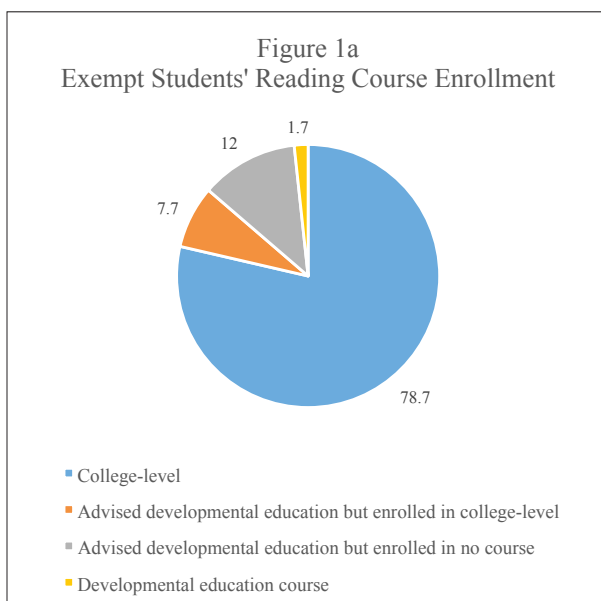
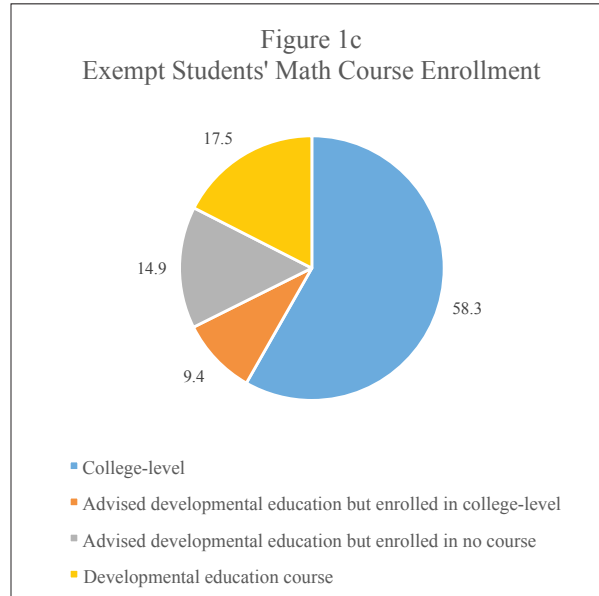
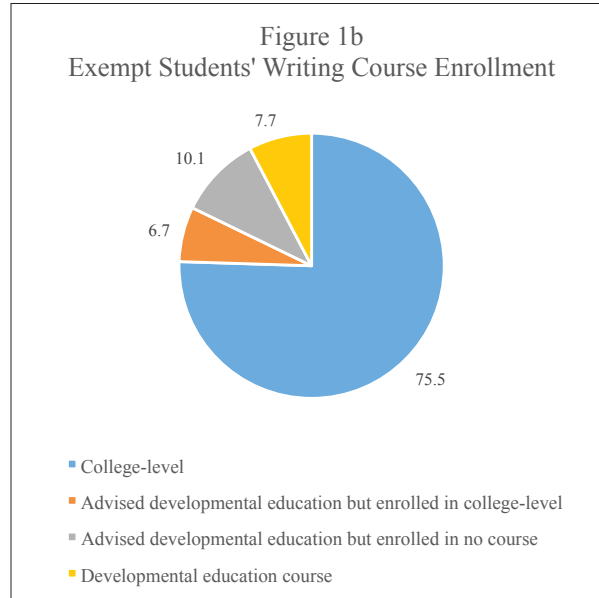
Among exempt students, those considered college-ready, 79% enrolled in college-level reading, 76% enrolled in college-level writing, and 58% enrolled in college-level math (Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c). Thus, roughly 22% were recommended for DE reading, 25% for writing, and 42% for math. Further, 8% of the sample were advised to enroll in DE reading, but instead took college-level coursework with 7% and 9% doing the same for writing and math, respectively.

In essence, of those students recommended to DE, 36% of students ignored their DE course recommendation for reading and enrolled directly in college-level coursework. Similarly, of those students recommended to DE writing, 27% enrolled

in college-level writing, and of those students recommended to take DE math, 23% enrolled in a college-level math course.

Some students advised to take DE courses chose not to enroll in the recommended DE, or the corresponding college-level course. Of those students recommended to DE, 56% of students ignored their DE course recommendation and took no core reading course, 41% took no writing course, and 36% decided not to enroll in a math course.

Remaining in the sample are those students who were advised DE and enrolled in a DE course: 2% reading, 8% writing, and 18% math in the overall sample. Amongst those students recommended for DE, these figures show that 8% heeded the advice of their college advisor and enrolled in DE reading, 31% enrolled in DE writing, and 42% enrolled in DE math when advised to do so.



Enrollment patterns are similar between men and women. For example, of those students without a recommendation to enroll in a DE reading course, 78% of women and 79% of men enrolled directly into college-level courses (see Figure 2). Similarly, 76% of women and 77% of men enrolled directly into a college-level writing course without having been advised to enter a DE writing course. However, there is some disparity between men and women and math enrollment patterns. Fifty-six percent of women compared to 68% of men enrolled directly into college-level math course or are opting to not take any math course, despite being advised to enroll in a DE math course.

Course enrollment patterns vary more dramatically by income. Those who are in the lowest-income category enroll directly into a college-level math course at the lowest rates (64%), but have the highest rates of opting to not enroll in any reading course when advised to enter a DE reading course (21%; Figure 3). Similar patterns hold for writing and math enrollment. For all income levels, DE enrollment was highest for the subject of math, where one-quarter of the lowest-income students enroll in a DE math course or do not enroll in any math course compared to 12% and 7%, respectively, of the highest income students.

There are also large enrollment differences when disaggregating the sample by race/ethnicity. Notably, no student who identified as Native American, Native Hawaiian, or another race enrolled in a DE reading

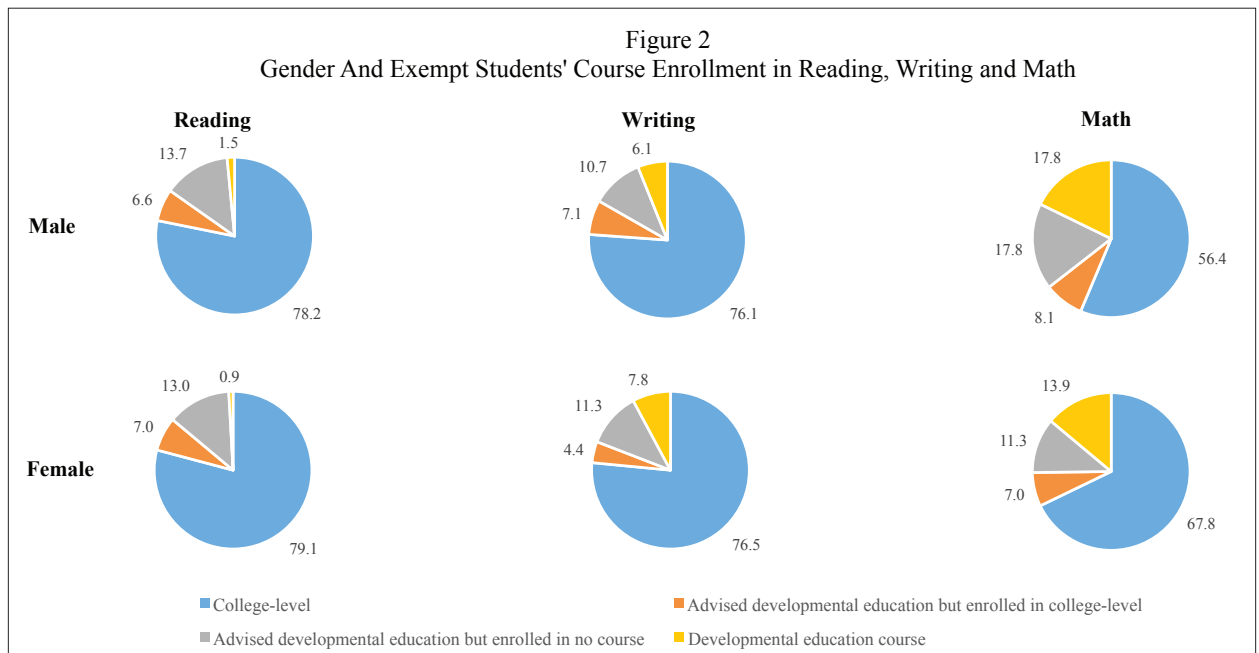
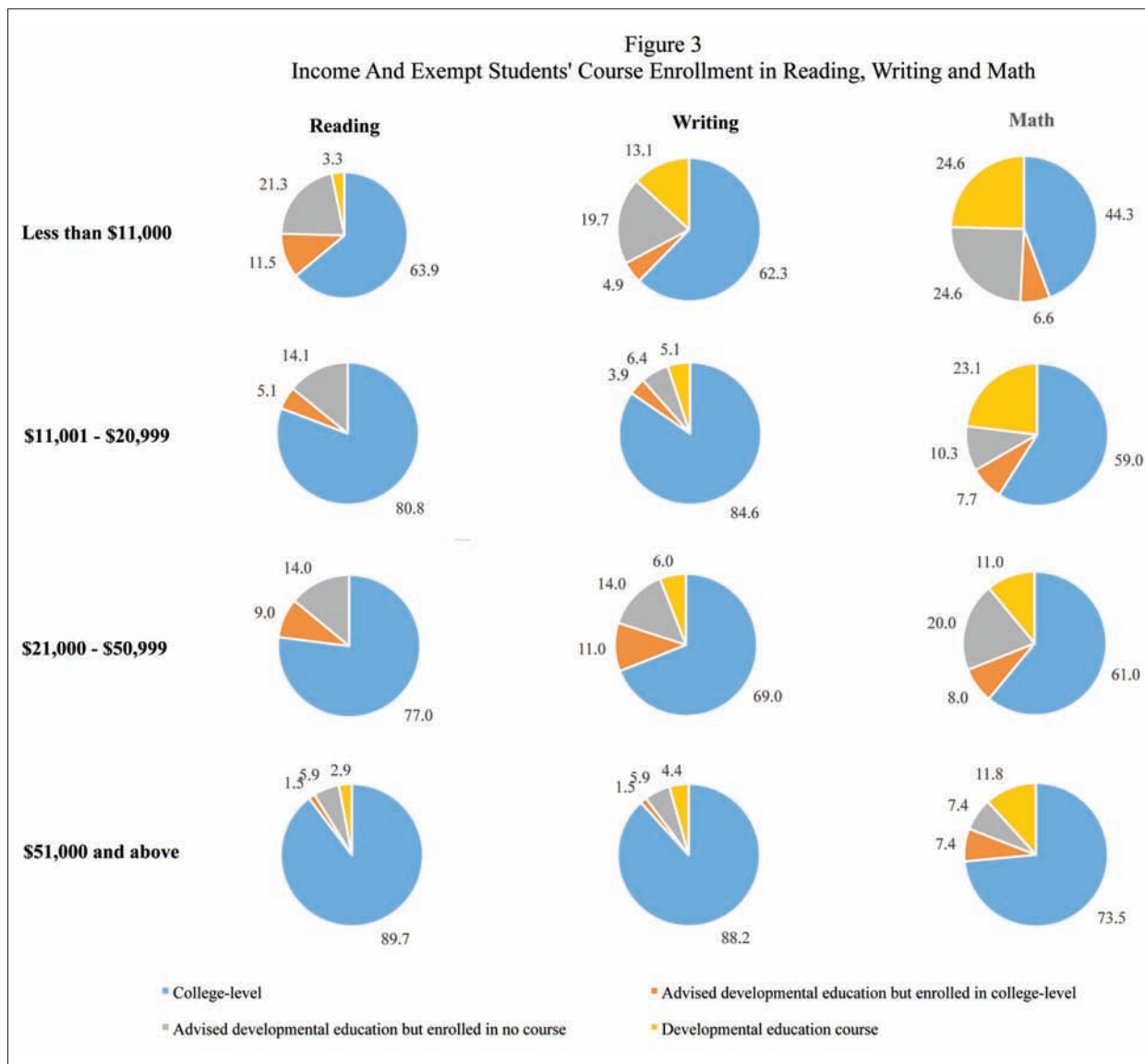


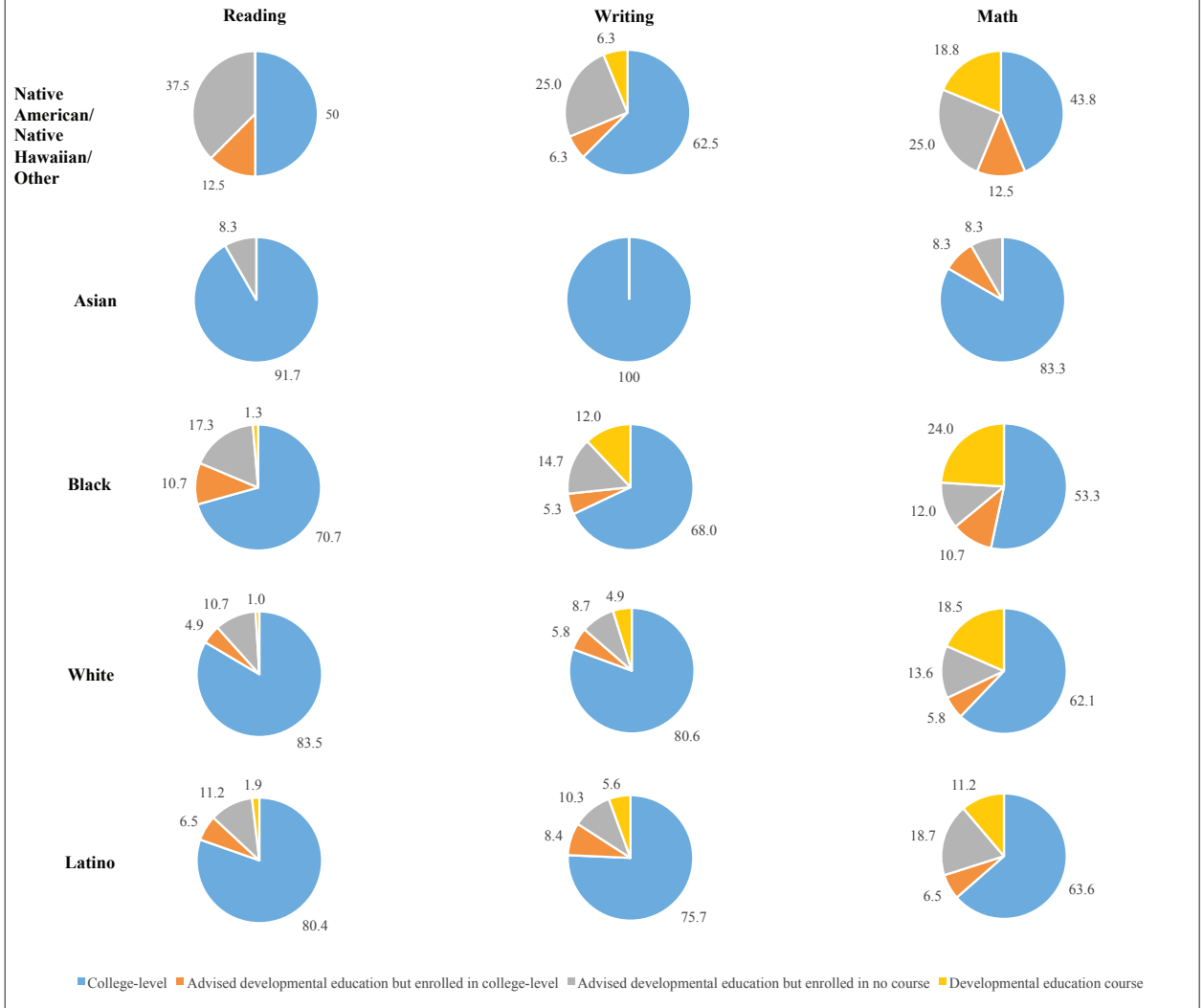
Figure 3
Income And Exempt Students' Course Enrollment in Reading, Writing and Math



course (Figure 4) and Asian students did not enroll in any DE courses in any subject. Native American, Native Hawaiian, and students of another race/ethnicity enroll in a college-level reading course despite being advised into a DE reading course (13%) or do not enroll in a reading course (37%) at the highest rates. These patterns remain for enrollment

in writing and math as well. More Latino students enroll in DE reading (2%) but more Black students enroll in DE writing (12%) or math (24%), compared to students in other racial/ethnic groups.

Figure 4
Race/Ethnicity and Exempt Students' Course Enrollment in Reading, Writing and Math



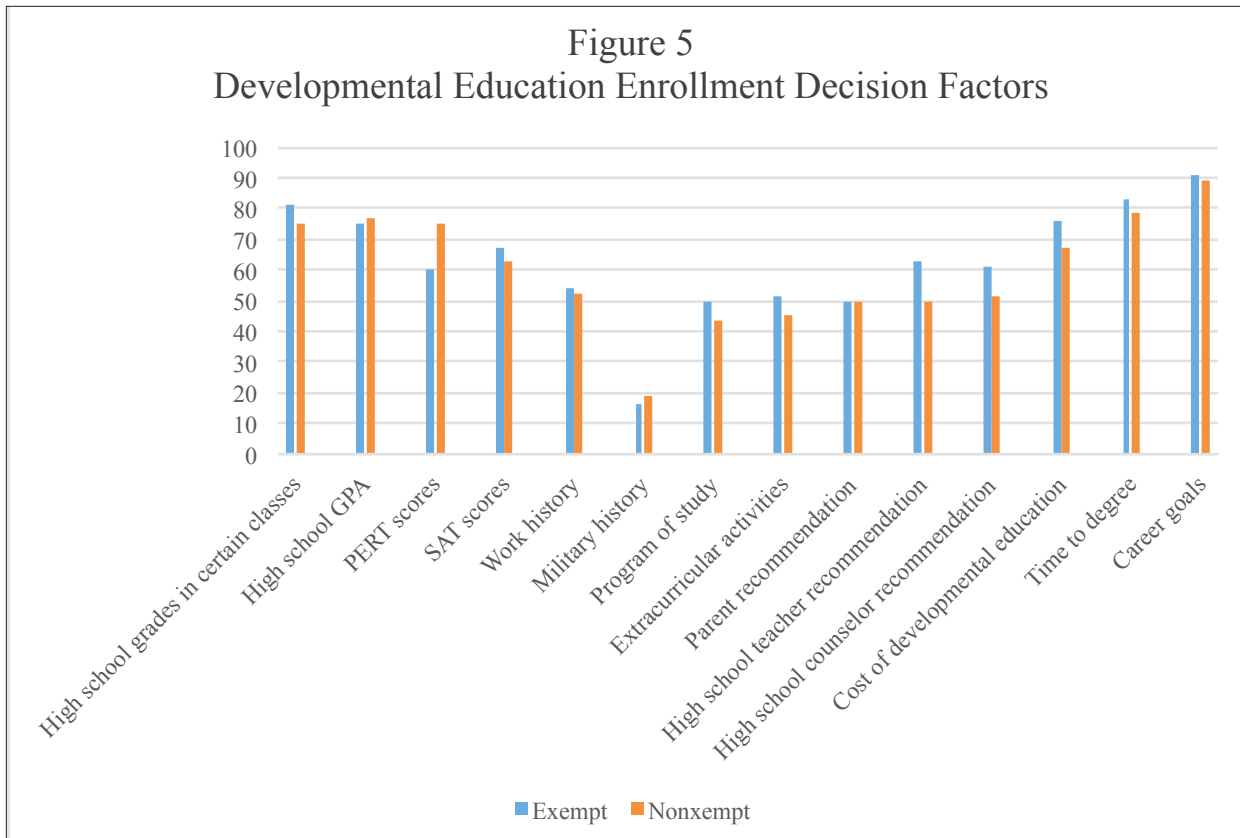
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION DECISION FACTORS

In the survey, students were asked to rate the importance of 14 factors that influenced their enrollment in a DE course. Figure 5 presents these findings comparing exempt and non-exempt students. For both groups of students, the most important factors influencing students' decisions to enroll in developmental courses were career goals and time to degree. Indeed, 91% of exempt students

and 89% of non-exempt students responded that their career goals were important or very important. Eighty-three percent of exempt students indicated that time to degree played a role in their decision-making process, as did 80% of non-exempt students.

Non-exempt students (74%) placed more emphasis on PERT scores than did exempt students (60%). This could be because colleges may require non-exempt students to take the PERT and use cut

Figure 5
Developmental Education Enrollment Decision Factors



scores to determine students’ DE course enrollment. Conversely, colleges can no longer require exempt students to take the PERT and these scores alone may not be used to place exempt students into DE courses. More exempt students consider their high school teachers’ recommendations (63%) and high school counselors’ recommendations (61%) than do non-exempt students (51% and 53%, respectively). This may be because more exempt students are younger, and thus may be more closely connected with their high school experiences, compared to older students.

COURSE ENROLLMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT DECISION FACTORS

Next, we examined how the factors involved in making enrollment decisions varied by decision

the students made. Figure 6a displays factors important to exempt students’ enrollment decisions disaggregated by their reading course enrollment. For most students, career goals were influential in their enrollment decisions. That is, 90% of students who were not advised into a DE reading course, 96% of students who had disregarded advising to enter a DE reading course, 90% of students who enrolled in no reading course, and 100% of students in a DE reading course indicated that career goals were important or very important.

For 84% of college-level students, time to degree was also an important factor in their decision-making process. For 89% of college-level students who were advised to enter a DE reading course, and for 79% of those taking no reading course, grades in

specific high school courses were also important or very important. All students in DE reading courses indicated that grades in high school courses, high school GPA, their PERT scores, and time to degree impacted their decision to enroll in a DE reading course. Across the board, however, those students enrolled in DE tended to express greater importance of all 14 of the consideration factors, followed by those enrolled in college-level, and then those who either were recommended for DE and took college-level and those who took no reading courses. This may suggest that students bypassing DE or those not taking any reading course may not be fully considering all of the information available to them when making enrollment decisions.

Career goals were also highly influential for writing students. Ninety percent of college-level writing students, 96% of college-level writing students who bypassed DE courses, 92% of students enrolled in no writing course, and 89% of students in DE writing courses indicated that career goals were important or very important when making their enrollment decisions (Figure 6b). Eighty-four percent of college-level writing students indicated that time to degree was important or very important, and 83% of college-level writing students who opted out of DE writing courses responded that time to degree, cost of developmental education, and high school course grades were important or very important. For students who opted to not enroll in any writing

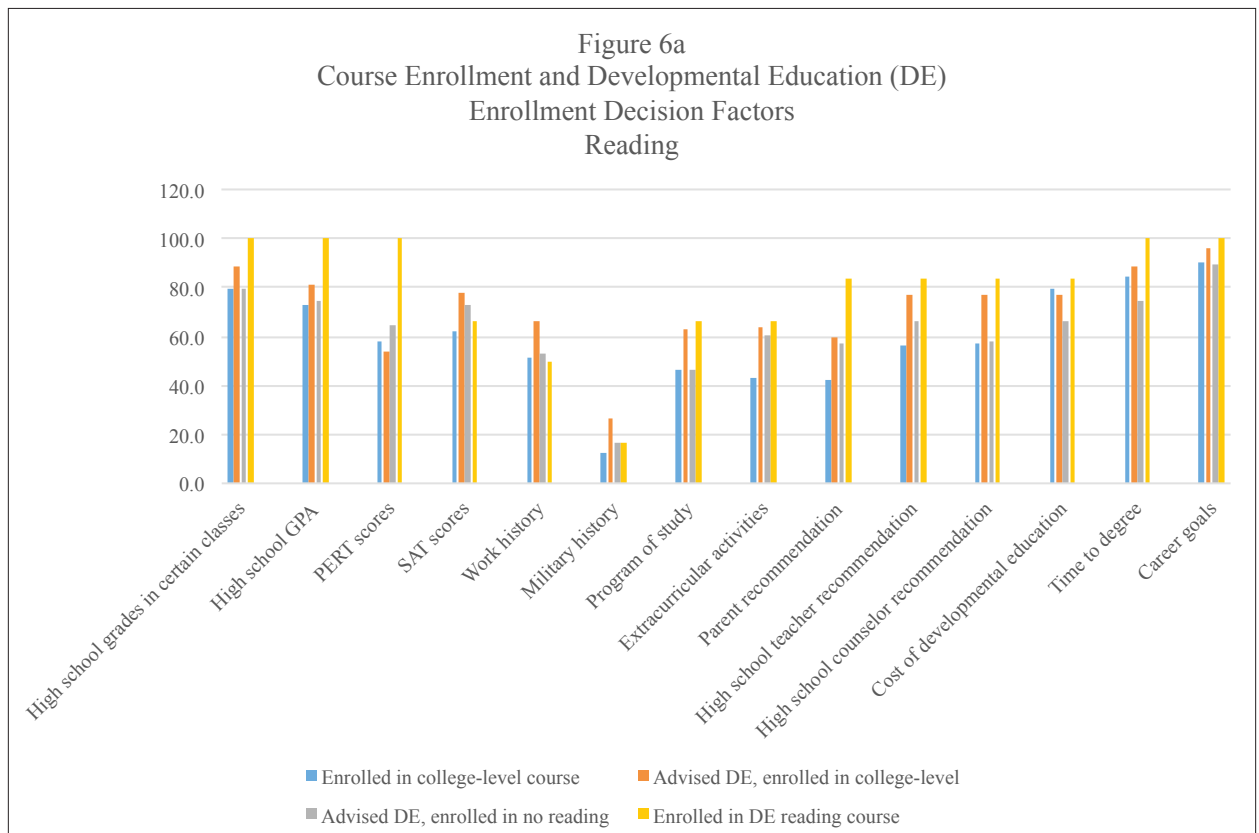
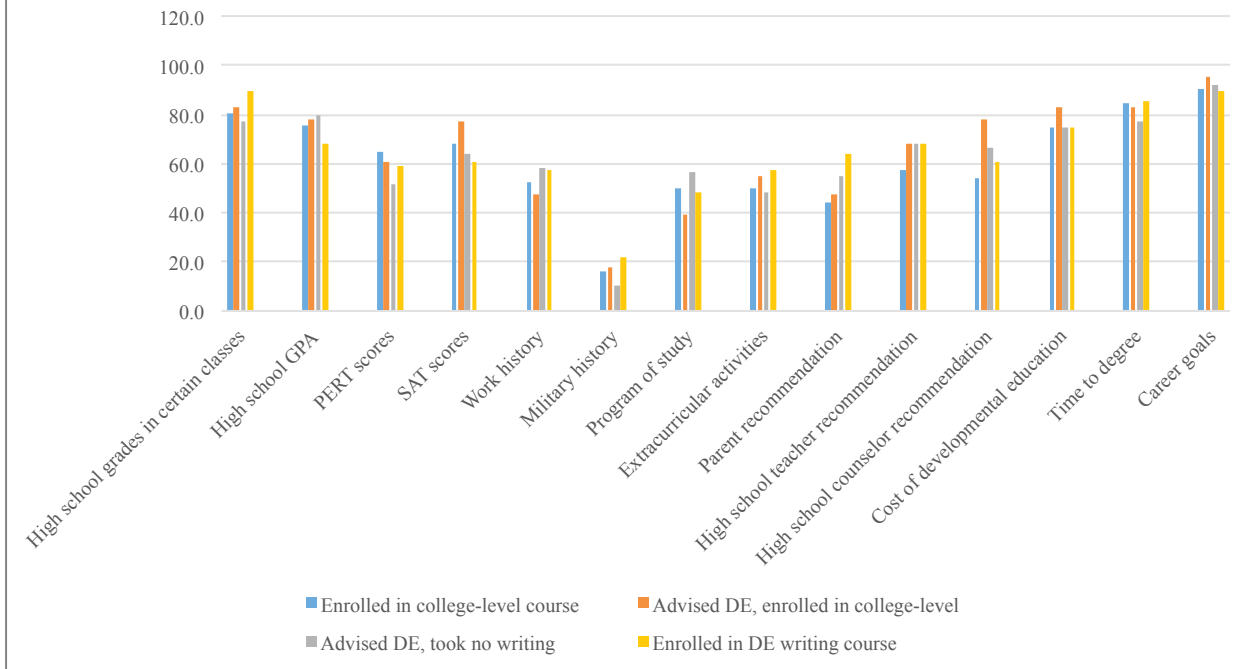


Figure 6b
 Course Enrollment and Developmental Education (DE)
 Enrollment Decision Factors
 Writing



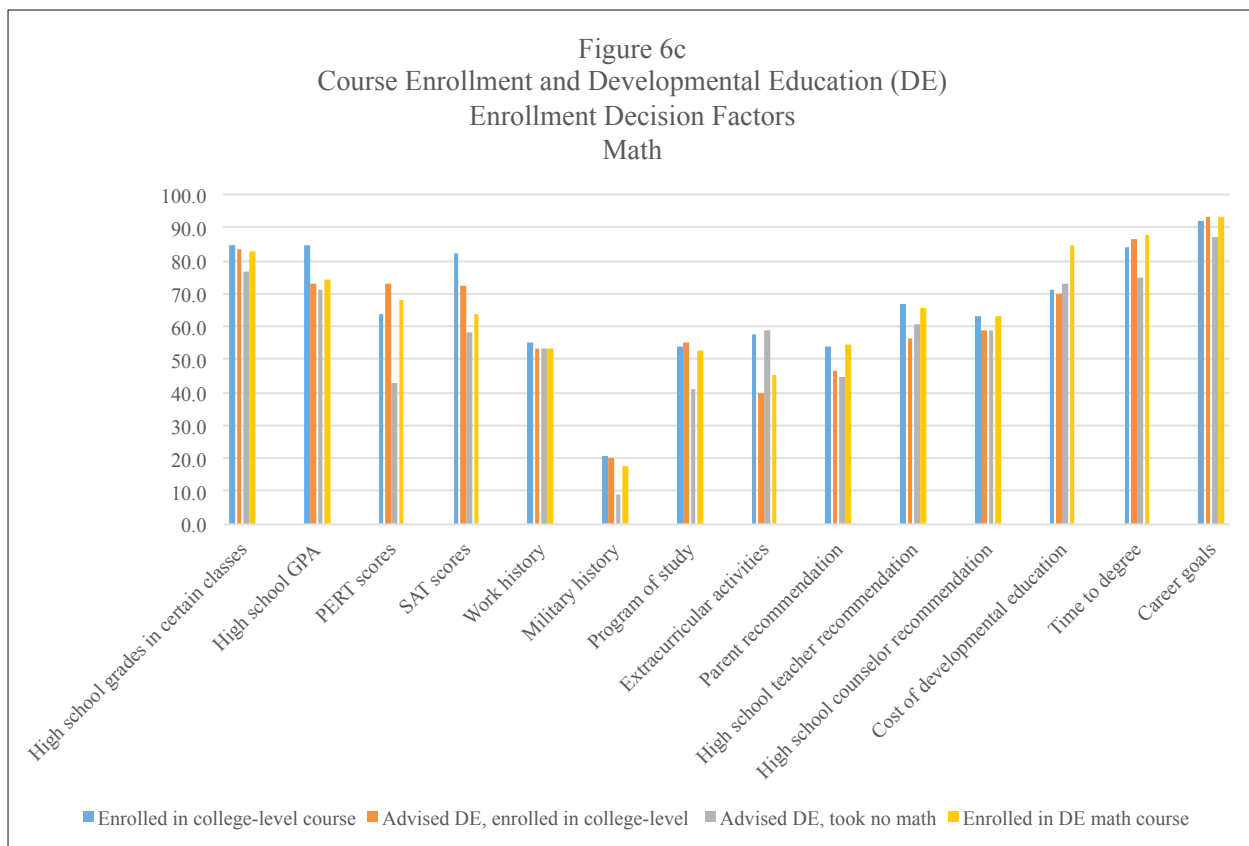
course, high school GPA was the second most popular decision factor (80%) and for those in a DE writing course, high school course grades was tied for the most popular factor.

Again, most math students emphasized career goals as important or very important in their enrollment decisions. Ninety-two percent of college-level math students, 93% of college-level math students who were advised to take a DE course, 88% of students who enrolled in no math course, and 93% of students in a DE math course indicated the primary role of career goals in their decisions (Figure 6c). Eighty-four percent of college-level math students also placed high importance on time to degree, high school course grades, and high school GPA. Eighty-seven percent of students who bypassed recommendations

to enroll in a DE course and enrolled directly in college-level math, and 88% of DE math course students indicated that time to degree was important or very important. Seventy-seven percent of students who enrolled in no math course reported high school course grades to be important or very important in their enrollment decisions.

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT DECISION FACTORS

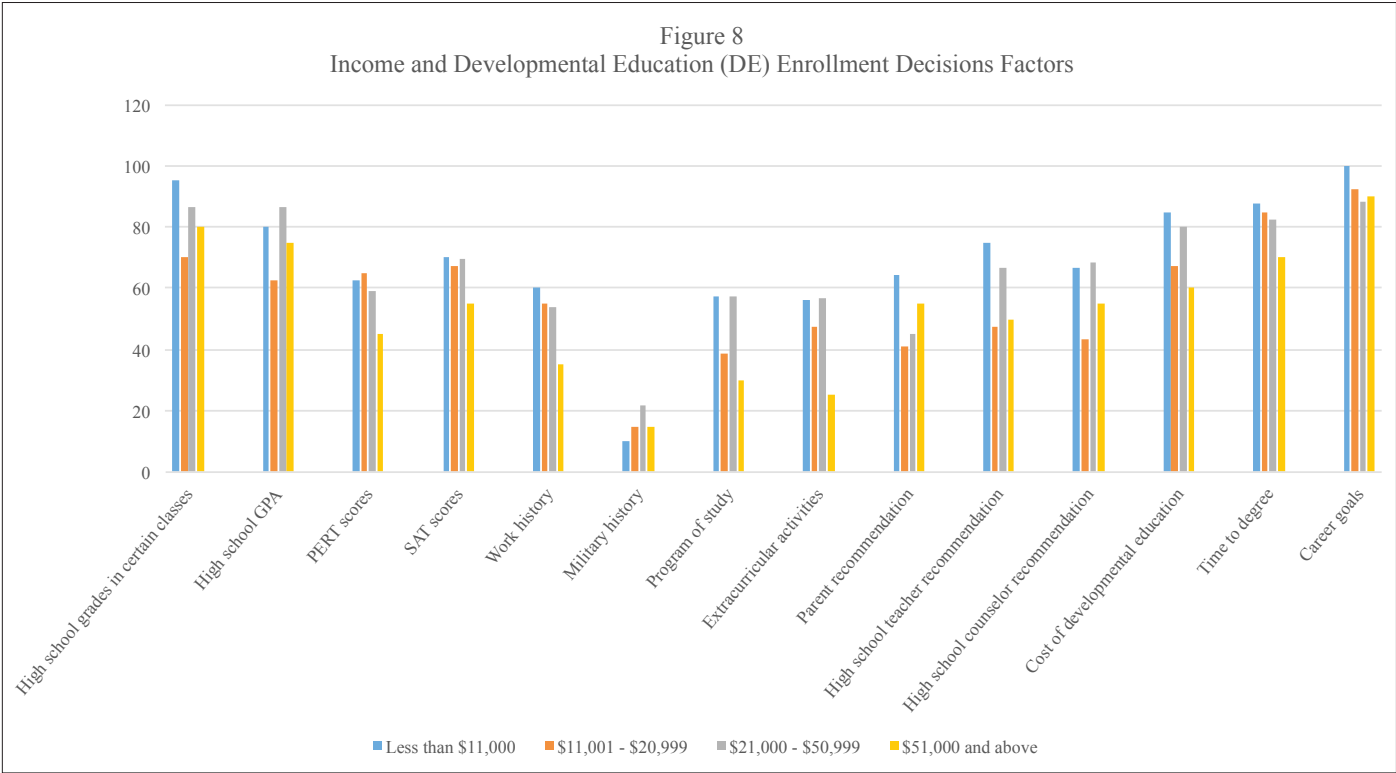
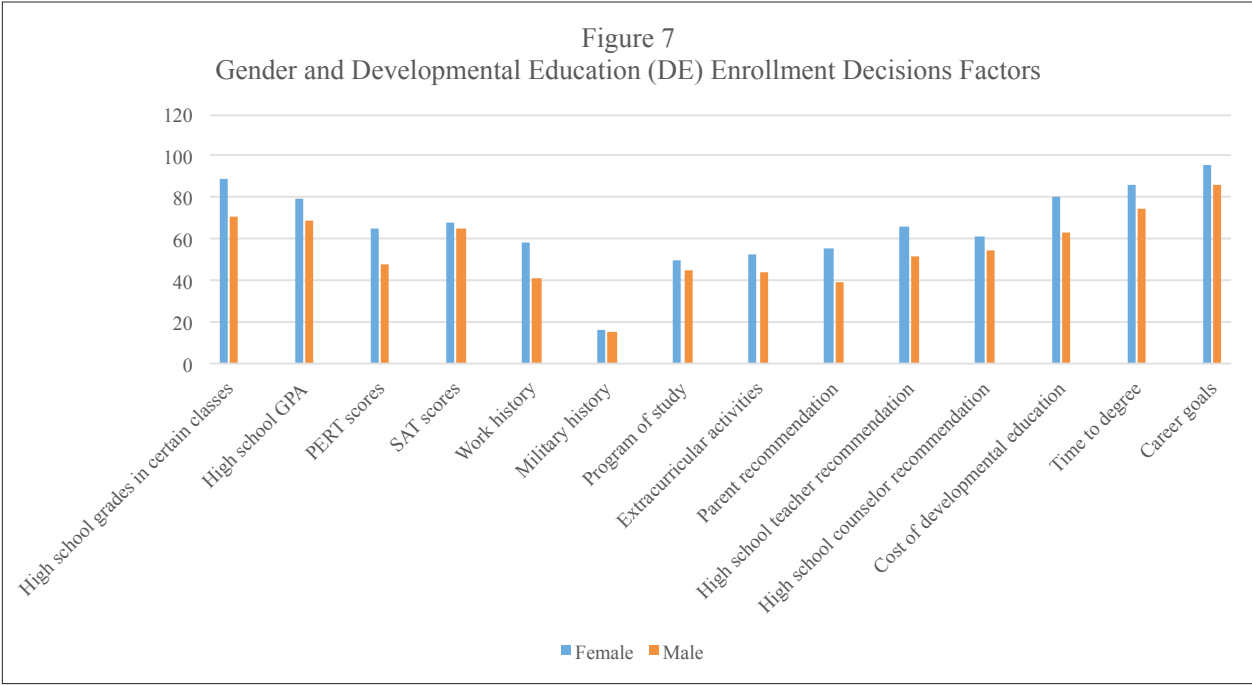
Men and women tended to place relatively different levels of importance on many of the factors influencing students' DE enrollment decisions. Generally, more women found many of the decision factors to be important or very important and tended to place higher emphasis on cost, work history,



others’ recommendations, and academic ability when compared to men. Eighty-one percent of women indicated that cost of DE was important, whereas only 63% of men thought so (see Figure 7). Although work history was not among the most important factors for men or women, there is a large gender difference. Fifty-nine percent of females, compared to just 41% of males, indicated work history was important or very important. More females place a higher emphasis on parents’ (55%) and teachers’ (66%) recommendations compared to men (55% and 52%, respectively). Eighty-nine percent of females, compared to just 71% of males indicated that high school grades were important or very important. Sixty-five percent of women, compared to only 48% of men, noted the PERT as important or very important.

INCOME AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT DECISION FACTORS

The data reveal that income may be related to exempt students’ DE enrollment decisions. Some of the starkest contrasts occur between students in the highest income and lowest income categories. Noticeably fewer students in the highest income category (60%) designated the cost of DE as important or very important as compared to students in the lowest income category (85%; Figure 8). Not unsurprisingly, fewer students in the highest income category (35%) indicated that work history was highly important when compared to students in the lowest income category (60%). These findings may be because students in the highest income category



have more limited paid work experience than students in the lower income groups. In addition, more students in the lowest income group (58%) emphasized program of study as important or very important, compared to students in the highest income group (35%).

However, noticeable differences between students in other income categories occur as well, particularly for variables relating to students' high school experiences. For example, only 25% of students in the highest income category indicated that high school extracurricular activities are important or very important, compared to 57% of students in households making \$21,000-\$50,999 annually, and 56% of students in households making less than \$11,000 annually. Also, 75% of students in households making less than \$11,000 annually emphasize the importance of high school teachers' recommendations, compared to 48% of students in households making \$11,001-\$20,999 annually.

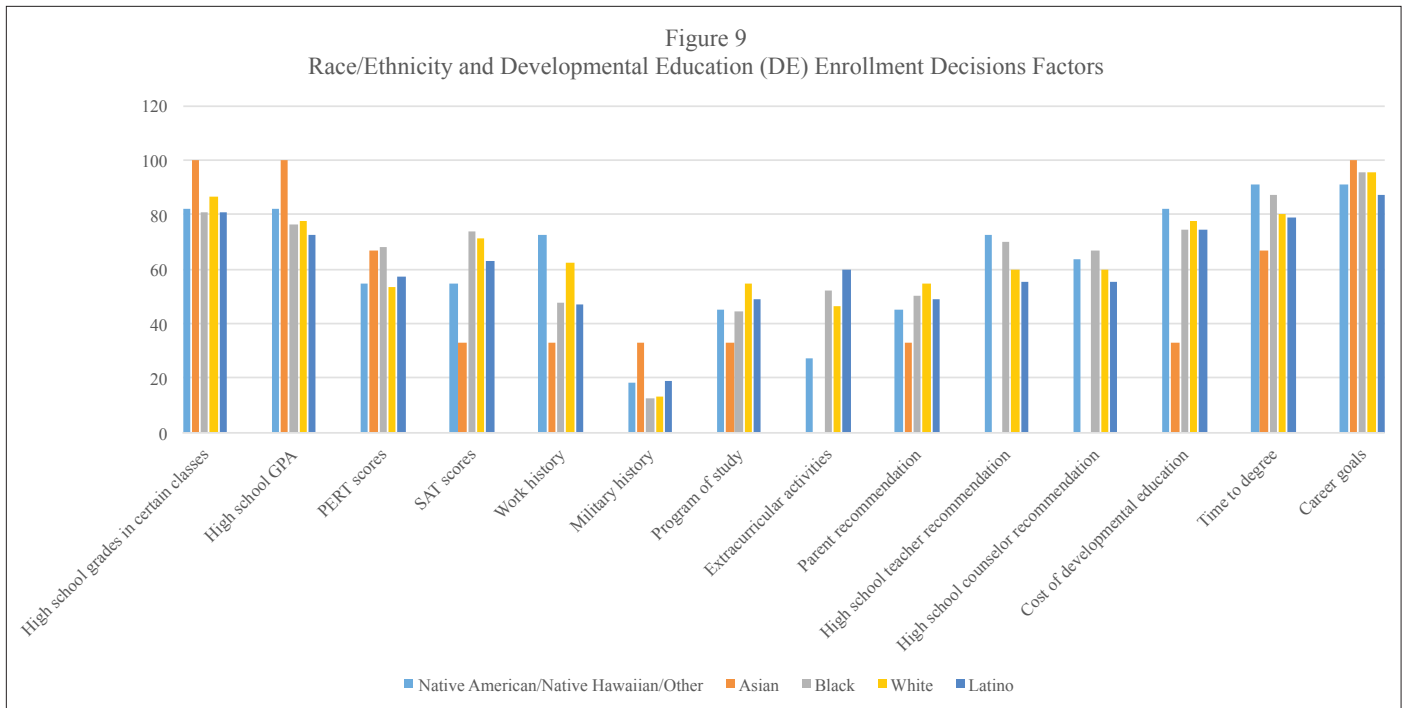
The extent to which students considered their academic ability when making enrollment decisions also varies by income. Whereas 95% of students in the lowest income category indicated high school grades in specific courses were important or very important, only 70% of students in households making \$11,000-\$20,999 per year answered similarly. The largest difference for the importance of high school GPA was between students in the low-middle income category (63%) and students in the high-middle income category (86%). Sixty-five percent of students in families who make \$11,000-\$20,999 per year indicated that PERT scores were very influential in their decision-making process, compared to 45% of students in the highest income category.

RACE/ETHNICITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT DECISION FACTORS

Race/ethnicity appears to play a role in students' course enrollment decisions. The following results need to be considered with caution, however, because of the small percentages of exempt students who identify as Native American, Native Hawaiian, or another race/ethnicity (5%) or Asian (4%). Notably, Asian students appear to be reluctant to place too much emphasis on any of the factors (Figure 9). All Asian students indicate that high school course grades, high school GPA, and career goals are important or very important, and 67% indicate that PERT scores and time to degree are equally as important. However, most Asian students do not place high levels of importance on the remaining categories.

Across all racial/ethnic groups, career goals (87-100%) and high school course grades (81-100%) are viewed as highly influential in the DE course enrollment process. There are large differences, however, in how students place emphasis on the importance of SAT or other standardized test scores. Only 33% of Asian students, compared with 63% of Latino students, 71% of White students, 74% of Black students, and 55% of other students, highlight the importance of SAT or other test scores in their decision-making. The range is even broader for students' emphasis on the role of extracurricular activities. Whereas no Asian student indicated high school extracurricular activities were of high importance, 27-60% of other students did so.

Also notable was the difference across race/ethnicity for students' emphasis on the role of parents', teachers', and counselors' recommendations. No Asian student placed importance on the role of teachers' or counselors' recommendations, and only 33% of Asian



students placed importance on the role of parents. Conversely, 55% of White students relied heavily on their parents' recommendation, 73% of students who identify in another racial category relied on their high school teachers' recommendation, and 67% of Black students relied heavily on their high school counselors' recommendation. Additionally, few Asian students (33%) highlight the role of cost compared to others; 75-82% of the other student groups note cost as important or very important in their DE enrollment choices.

LIMITATIONS

Our study sheds important light on how students are making enrollment decisions and how these decisions as well as the factors that contribute to them vary by gender, income, and race. These results, however, should be interpreted with caution, given some of the limitations the data present. First, as is often the case with surveys, our sample represents a specific group

of students. As is evident in our age distribution, we are drawing from more traditional, recent high school graduates. Similarly, the course enrollment data define the majority of our sample as college-ready in at least one subject area, and are thus not necessarily representative of DE students. Additionally, the data come from only two FCS institutions, and cannot illustrate the state of DE across the FCS. The survey was not required for students to complete and thus the data are self-report data and represent a group of students who opted to complete the survey, and not a random sample of students across the institutions.

Another limitation of the study is that it was administered late in the Fall semester. It is likely, therefore, that the students in the sample represent a group of more privileged, higher ability, students who may have fewer outside demands on their time, effort, and money. We do not present immediate outcome data (e.g. course withdrawal and persistence)

because it is likely that those who were planning to drop out of a course may have already done so, or may have dropped out of their college entirely. Thus, the students in our sample may represent a more academically capable group of students. Future analyses are certainly warranted to study the relationship between course delivery methods and student persistence and success—a study planned already for the coming months. Despite these limitations, our study sheds important light on how students are making enrollment decisions now that developmental education is optional for many students.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study captures enrollment patterns and how different factors influence students' enrollment decisions. Overall, students are resistant to enroll in DE courses, particularly in the subjects of reading and writing. In addition, low-income students have the highest rates of opting not to enroll in any reading, writing, or math courses when advised to enter a DE course. The most widely regarded important factor for course enrollment decisions was future career goals. This finding is consistent for nearly every student subgroup. In addition to career goals, time to degree, high school grades, and high school GPA were also important decision factors for many students. Military history was largely unimportant to many students, which may be a function of the small percentage of military students in the sample. Women tend to place a greater emphasis on decision factors overall, with the largest gender differences occurring for cost of DE and work history. Students in the lowest income category place the most importance on factors related to time, work, and cost, compared to students in higher income categories. Asian students tend to place higher importance on career goals and

academic ability compared to other decision factors. Students opting to bypass DE altogether or not enroll in any core academic (reading, writing, math) courses tend to show lower rates of consideration across all of the decision factors.

Our recommendation to practitioners, particularly academic advisors, is to make a discussion about occupational options a key point in the advising experience. Since most students designate their career goals as important or very important, academic advisors should be knowledgeable about their students' future plans, as well as the possible occupations themselves. Likewise, meta-majors, majors, and programs of study should take a more central role in the advising process. Although the current data do not reveal that program of study is important for a majority of students, linking program options and majors to students' career goals should be a natural connection during the advising process. Given the current data, it appears as though fewer than half of the students do not place a high importance on their program of study, but choosing a major and a career are closely linked, so it is concerning that students do not place a higher emphasis on their program of study when enrolling in DE courses.

We also find that students bypassing DE or not taking any subject-matter courses identify fewer factors they rate as important or very important in making their enrollment decisions. This may be a concern if these students are not aware of or do not take into consideration all of the information available to them when selecting their courses. We understand, however, that even with enhanced advising systems, students are granted choice under the legislation and ultimately design their own educational path. Thus,

students' enrollment options, and their relationships to student outcomes, warrants further investigation.

Through the passage of SB 1720, the institutions of the Florida College System are now providing greater choices to their students when it comes to developmental education and course selection. It is encouraging that the students who responded to the survey are placing importance on a number of factors when making decisions—a reflection that, in conjunction with advisors, students are seriously

considering the options available to them. What is somewhat concerning and remains a topic for continued observation is whether students are able to make decisions that will set them up for success, particularly in the instance when a student enrolls in gateway courses directly, or fails to take core academic courses in writing or math when advised to take DE. The next phase of our analysis will address this very topic: How do the decisions made by exempt students impact their academic success?

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Author Biographies

Dr. Shouping Hu is the Louis W. and Elizabeth N. Bender Endowed Professor in Education and the founding director of the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University. His research interests examine issues related to college access and success, student engagement and learning, and higher education policy. Dr. Hu is the Principal Investigator of the project on developmental education reform in the State of Florida, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Dr. Toby Park is an Assistant Professor of Economics of Education and Education Policy, and an Associate Director of the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University. His primary research investigates student outcomes in postsecondary education, with a particular focus on traditionally underrepresented, economically disadvantaged, and academically underprepared student populations as well as students attending community colleges and minority serving institutions. Dr. Park is a Co-Principal Investigator of the project on developmental education in the State of Florida.

Dr. Chenoa Woods recently graduated from the University of California, Irvine's School of Education. Chenoa earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, and a master's degree in school counseling, both from California State University, Long Beach before earning her doctorate in educational policy and social context. She was awarded the 2013-2014 University of California All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (UC/ACCORD) dissertation scholarship and the University of California, Irvine Public Impact Fellowship to support her work on exploring underrepresented students' college choice processes.

Dr. David Tandberg is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education and an Associate Director of the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University. His research focuses on state higher education policy and politics. Dr. Tandberg is a Co-Principal Investigator of the project on developmental education reform in the State of Florida.

Dr. Tamara Bertrand Jones currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and a Senior Research Associate of the Center for Postsecondary Success at The Florida State University. Her research examines the sociocultural influences on socialization during graduate education and the professional experiences of underrepresented populations, particularly Black women, in academia. Her previous work as an administrator and program evaluator also influence other research interests in culturally responsive assessment and evaluation. Dr. Bertrand Jones is a Co-Principal Investigator of the project on developmental education reform in the State of Florida.

Dava Hankerson is a Ph.D. student in Education Policy and Evaluation at Florida State University. Her research interests include K-12 school accountability, racial politics of public education, and educational equity and access to higher education. Dava is a research assistant on the developmental education reform project.

Keith Richard is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology department at Florida State University and a research assistant in the CPS. His research interests include developmental education reform, social psychology of education, and social stratification of race, class, and gender.

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Center for
Postsecondary
Success

Florida State University
Center for Postsecondary Success
PO Box 3064451
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4451