



Continuing Adaptions:
Administrators' Perceptions of the Third Year
of Developmental Education Reform in the
Florida College System

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Executive Summary

To address concerns about the cost and effectiveness of developmental education (DE), Florida lawmakers passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) in 2013. This bill required institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) to implement comprehensive DE reform by the fall semester of 2014. SB 1720 made three major changes to Florida's DE policy. First, certain students became exempt from college course placement testing and DE. Exempt students include military personnel and students who began attending a Florida public high school in 2003/04 or after and went on to earn a diploma. Second, FCS institutions became required to offer developmental courses using four modalities: compressed, contextualized, modularized, and co-requisite. Third, colleges were required to offer enhanced student advising to facilitate student enrollment in the new course offerings and to develop meta-majors that students select based on their interests, academic goals, and career aspirations.

Florida State University's Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) has been evaluating the implementation of SB 1720 since the spring of 2014. This report is the fourth in a series of annual reports devoted to analyzing results of a survey given to administrators every year at each of the FCS institutions. The fourth survey, administered in the spring of 2017, focused on how implementation of SB 1720 continued to evolve and how administrators perceived its implementation and effects after it had been in operation for three years. It also describes the types of resources that were needed by colleges to implement the changes under SB 1720.

Using descriptive statistics, we report the following key findings:

Overall implementation of SB 1720 and changes that have occurred over time

- Colleges tend to be facilitative by demonstrating high effort and high compliance in implementation even if they did not agree with the policy.
- There has been a sharp decline in the percentage of respondents that agree or strongly agree that the policy has been effective—from 74% in 2015 to 60% in 2016 to 39% in 2017.

- Colleges have made numerous changes to advising processes, such as spending more time with students during advising sessions—particularly with at-risk students identified through early alert systems. However, time constraints remain a concern, with less than a third of respondents in each of the three years reporting that advisors had ample time to meet with students.

Institutional resources required for implementation

- Institutions faced a variety of startup costs, but they faced more startup costs from training and development for the new developmental courses than for new facilities and equipment.
- Institutions required more advising staff and tried to use methods that did not incur costs, such as increasing the workload of advising staff without extra pay and increasing the use of faculty for advising and/or orientation.
- Administrators reported changes to developmental and gateway course staffing. Institutions used fewer adjunct instructors and more teaching faculty, as fewer instructors were needed for developmental courses. Almost all institutions moved DE faculty with

appropriate credentials to gateway courses; faculty without appropriate credentials were sometimes moved to student life skills courses.

- The majority of administrators reported keeping the same number of student support staff in developmental reading/writing and gateway courses while increasing it in other student support services. Again, it seems that institutions used strategies that would allow them to increase services without increasing cost.
- Facility usage varied across DE modalities, and some additional space was needed. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported needing

additional space for tutoring. A smaller proportion of administrators reported needing additional space for other activities, including advising, orientation, and workshops and summer bridge programs (25% to 29%).

Implications of the reform for student enrollment and costs

- Changes under SB1720 created new challenges with student enrollment, tuition, financial aid, and veterans' benefits. Most of the challenges related to poorer course performance, tuition and financial aid repercussions from poorer course performance, or other unintended consequences.

Introduction

To address concerns about the cost and effectiveness of developmental education (DE), Florida lawmakers passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) in 2013. This bill required institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) to implement a comprehensive DE reform system. Institutions had to create their own plan for implementation by January of 2014, and statewide implementation of the policy began during the fall semester of 2014.

SB 1720 made three major changes to Florida's DE policy. First, certain students became exempt from college course placement testing and DE. Exempt students include military personnel and students who began attending a Florida public high school in 2003/04 or after and went on to earn a diploma. Second, FCS institutions are now required to offer developmental courses using four modalities: compressed, contextualized, modularized, and co-requisite. Compressed courses are taught over fewer weeks—usually 8 or 12 weeks rather than 16 weeks—but class periods are extended to account for the shorter duration. Contextualized courses con-

nect the course curriculum to students' meta-majors (major course pathways that have common or related content) and to the real world. Modularized courses are customized to students' specific strengths and weaknesses and are completed on a computer at the students' own pace. Co-requisite instruction combines gateway (college-level) and developmental material so that the student completes the developmental and gateway courses simultaneously. The third change is that colleges are now required to offer enhanced student advising to facilitate enrollment in the new DE course offerings and had to develop meta-majors that students select based on their interests, academic goals, and career aspirations.

Florida State University's Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) has been evaluating the implementation of SB 1720 since the spring of 2014. As part of this evaluation, CPS has implemented a survey of administrators at FCS institutions every spring, starting in 2014. The first survey was designed to assess how administrators perceived the new legislation and how they planned to implement it. The second survey examined how

administrators assessed the policy's implementation and initial effects. The third survey focused on how implementation had changed after the initial year. The current survey, the fourth in the series, focused on how

implementation continued to evolve and how administrators perceived the policy's implementation and effects after it had been in operation for three years. It also describes the types of resources that were needed by colleges to implement the changes under SB 1720.

Literature Review

Each year since 2014, findings from the FCS administrator surveys have revealed varying attitudes and behaviors toward implementation among institutions. In the year before the reform, most administrators agreed that the reform was innovative and indicated that they were undertaking major changes although they had differing perspectives about how likely these changes were to increase student success (Hu et al., 2014). Once implementation began, administrators reported different patterns in DE modality, advising, and student services (Hu et al., 2015). Administrators also differed in how they ranked their institutions' priorities among the mandates resulting from the implementation of SB 1720 (Hu, Richard, Woods, Nix, Tandberg, Park, & Bertrand Jones, 2016).

CPS researchers also conducted a qualitative analysis including interviews and focus groups from site visits to

FCS institutions and, through this analysis, developed an empirically grounded typology of implementation for the DE reform (Brower, Bertrand Jones, Tandberg, Hu, & Park, 2017). Brower et al. (2017) identified four implementation patterns, which were based on the dimensions of effort level and compliance level. As shown in Figure 1, the categories consisted of oppositional (high effort, low compliance), circumventing (low effort, low compliance), satisficing (low effort, high compliance), and facilitative (high effort, high compliance). Brower et al. (2017) then classified the implementation behaviors into one of these categories based on the extent to which their behaviors contributed to achieving policy objectives. The presence of behaviors in all four categories among the participating institutions indicates that community college personnel had considerable discretion in how the reform was implemented.



Figure 1. Policy Implementation Typology for Comprehensive Developmental Education Reform in Florida

Note: Figure is based on typology presented in Brower, Bertrand Jones, Tandberg, Hu, & Park (2017).

One of the rationales behind SB 1720 was to reduce the amount of money spent on DE. However, the cost implications for each institution vary depending on pre-existing patterns of DE enrollment and the extent to which resources are reallocated to DE reform efforts. Scott-Clayton, Crosta, and Belfield (2014) estimate an annual cost of \$7 billion nationally for DE among first-time, degree-seeking fall enrollees. This estimate is based on total institutional expenditures per FTE, which includes costs incurred by students, the institution, and the state. Yet it does not take into account the cost of students' time or the impact of DE on students' outcomes. There may be additional indirect costs if students in developmental courses take more time to graduate or face a greater likelihood of dropping out. Other studies have estimated the direct cost of DE to students and their families to be from \$1.3 billion to \$1.5 billion per year (Barry & Dannenberg, 2016; Jimenez, Sargrad, Morales, & Thompson, 2016). These costs vary by state due to factors such as the extent to which DE is provided at two-year or four-year colleges, the percentage of students enrolled in DE, and the maximum number of developmental courses required in each subject area. In Florida, DE was estimated to cost \$81 million to the state and \$73 million to students for a total cost of \$154 million in 2009/10 (Underhill, 2013).

Implementation of SB 1720 may also have resource implications based on changes to students' long-term trajectories. Belfield, Crosta, and Jenkins (2014) describe how there are many calls for community colleges to improve college success through new initiatives, such as increased advising and academic support services, but little attention is given to how these initiatives may impact resource allocations as persistence rates increase. If students persist in college for longer, colleges may have to offer more upper-level courses, which has implications for expenditures

and revenues. College-level courses tend to be more expensive than DE courses because they are more likely to be taught by full-time faculty than adjunct instructors, class sizes tend to be smaller, and courses are more likely to require specialized equipment or facilities (particularly in health care or science courses). Simulations using data from one community college show that an intervention that increases the percentage of students passing college-level math in the first year by 20 percent would be expected to increase total revenues by 0.8 percent while increasing total costs by a higher rate of 0.9 percent; this means there would be an overall negative effect on net revenue (Belfield et al., 2014).

Belfield et al. (2014) also caution that initiatives that focus on college entry but do not provide additional supports later on may be inefficient if students are simply deferring the decision to drop out until later semesters. Early descriptive research on outcomes from DE reform in Florida indicate that more students are enrolling directly into gateway courses, but pass rates in these courses are declining (Hu et al., 2016). Failing a course may discourage students, and there may be unintended consequences if these students are more likely to drop out in subsequent semesters after initial poor performance in the gateway courses. Failing gateway courses multiple times also has direct financial costs to students. After students fail the same course twice, they no longer receive the in-state tuition rate. The cost of the course then increases three to four times.

The current report examines implementation typologies among Florida colleges, the use and reallocation of resources for DE reform efforts, and the consequences – both intended and unintended – for students.

Methods

This study aims to determine how administrators perceive the impact of SB 1720 on their institutions and how this impact has changed since SB 1720 was first implemented. This survey was designed as a follow-up to the previous studies of administrator perceptions that were conducted in the spring of 2015 and 2016 (Hu et al., 2015; Hu, Richard, Woods, Nix, Tandberg, Park, & Bertrand Jones, 2016). We were interested in how institutions have modified their academic advising, support services, faculty, and course offerings since implementing SB 1720 and how students have been affected by the policy. Some of the questions are repeated from the previous surveys so that we can assess how implementation has changed over time. The following research questions guided our analyses:

1. How do college administrators describe the implementation of their institutional plan under SB 1720?
2. How do administrators assess the impacts of SB 1720 at their institution?
3. What resources were needed by colleges to implement the changes under SB 1720?

ADMINISTRATION

Data for this study were collected using an online survey administered through Qualtrics software. Administrators were identified using FCS websites. CPS researchers distributed email invitations containing a link to the online survey to the highest-ranking student affairs and academic affairs administrators at each of the 28 FCS institutions. The survey included questions on:

1. **Participant position.**
2. **Startup costs.** Respondents were asked to identify the startup costs their institution incurred from planning and implementing SB 1720.
3. **Changes to implementation.** This section asked participants whether implementation has changed over time in response to students' needs or other new information and if implementation is viewed as effective.
4. **Implementation typology.** This series of questions was designed to determine institutions' effort and compliance levels under the implementation of SB 1720.
5. **Academic advising and orientation.** This section asked participants about the characteristics and/or effectiveness of academic advising for developmental and gateway courses, advising tools, advising sessions, advisor workload, and advising personnel changes.
6. **Instructional staffing.** These questions related to changes in instructional staffing for developmental and gateway courses.
7. **Student support services.** These questions related to changes in student support services staffing for developmental and gateway courses.
8. **Facilities.** These questions asked about the types of facilities used for different developmental course modalities and if any additional space had to be allocated for various activities after SB 1720.
9. **Students.** This set of questions asked about the effects of the implementation of SB 1720 on student enrollment, course success, college persistence, tuition, financial aid, and veterans' benefits.

SAMPLE

We received survey responses from 24 of the 28 FCS institutions, giving us a participation rate of 86%. Two institutions had multiple respondents fully complete the survey. For these institutions, we used the responses from the most senior administrator. Most of the surveys were completed by a vice president or provost (58%), with the remaining surveys completed by a dean (21%), the president (4%), or an unknown administrator position (17%).

DATA ANALYSIS

We downloaded the survey data and used Stata to conduct a comprehensive descriptive analysis. We broke down the results into three main categories

based on the topics covered by the survey questions: overall implementation, institutional resources, and student enrollment and costs. Most of the questions had closed-ended responses that ranged on a scale, including from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” from “not at all” to “a great extent,” and from “decreased

by more than five” to “increased by more than five.” For such questions, we tabulated responses across the scale and presented these results in figures. The implementation effectiveness and advising questions were the same as those in the previous two surveys, allowing us to track the results across time.

Results

We begin with a description of the overall implementation of SB 1720 and consider changes that have occurred over time. Next, we document the institutional resources required for implementation, including startup costs, changes in personnel, and reallocation of facilities. Finally, we present implications of the reform for student enrollment and costs.

OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION

Policy implementation typology

Administrators reported high levels of compliance and effort during the third year of implementation. There were two to five questions describing behaviors for each of the implementation types previously identified by Brower et al. (2017). Respondents rated each of these on the extent to which their institution exhibited these behaviors on a scale of 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). We created an average of the survey items within each of the four implementation types and found that all colleges scored highest on the facilitative category (high compliance and high implementation)

with an average rating of 4.0 on a 5-point scale (Figure 2). There was little variation on some typology items. For example, the average institutional values within the satisficing category (low compliance and low implementation) ranged from 1.0 to 2.0. These results should be interpreted with caution, in case administrators are hesitant to admit resistance to reform effort.

Institutions rated most highly on the facilitative items for significantly altering operating procedures and shifting financial or human resources. This corresponds with findings in the next section that demonstrate how colleges made new investments and reallocated existing resources to support reform efforts. However, institutions also tended to score highly on one of the oppositional behaviors for staff disagreement with policymakers about decisions under SB 1720. Taken together, these findings suggest that the colleges were committed to the reform efforts even if they did not fully agree with them.

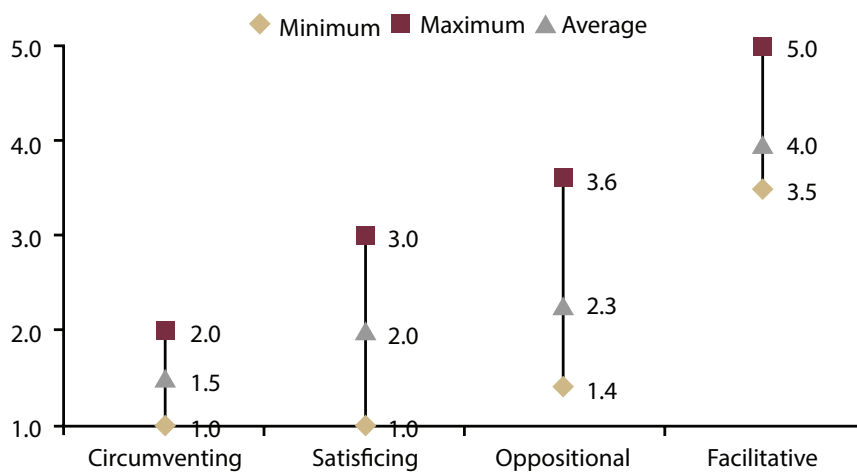


Figure 2. Institutional Average Values for Policy Implementation Typology Categories

Note: Respondents rated multiple items on the extent to which their institution exhibited implementation behaviors on a scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). An average value was calculated based on the survey items within each of the four implementation types. N=23 institutions.

Implementation effectiveness

Each year since 2015, administrators have been asked to rate the extent to which implementation of SB 1720 has effectively served their college and student population. Figure 3 depicts the responses to this question over time. There has been a sharp decline each year in administrators’ perceptions of implementation effectiveness. The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their college and student population has been effectively served fell from 74% in 2015 to 60% in 2016 to 39% in 2017. Most of the change in responses is attributed to an increase in the “neither agree nor disagree” category. Only 17%

of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that implementation had been effective in 2017.

It remains unclear why administrators report lower levels of satisfaction over time, but colleges do appear to be trying to address this issue. Only about one-third of respondents (34.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that implementation at their college has remained the same as in the initial plan. The majority of respondents reported making changes in response to students’ needs (73.9%) and making changes in response to other new information (73.9%).

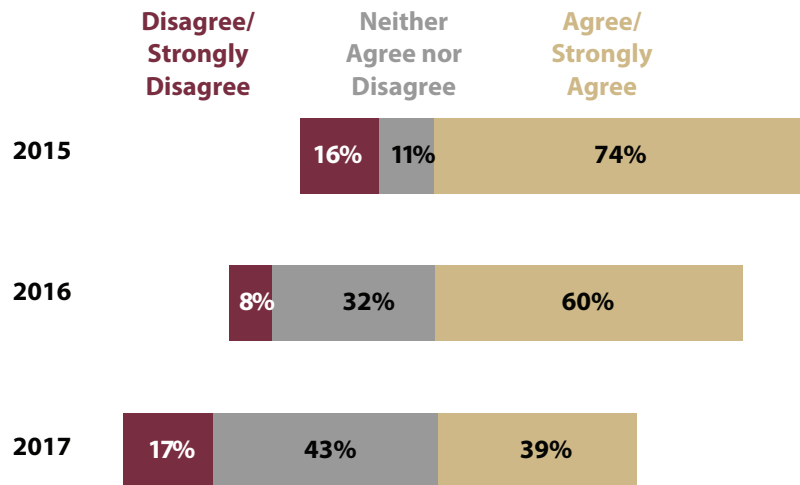


Figure 3. Percentage of Respondents at Each Level of Agreement With the Statement “Our implementation of SB 1720 has effectively served our college and student population.”

Note: Scale ranges from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). N=19 institutions in 2015, 25 institutions in 2016, and 23 institutions in 2017.

Changes to advising implementation

Many colleges appear to be making changes in advising and orientation services. The greatest change was that more than three-quarters of respondents (78%) reported adding more orientation resources online (Figure 4). In addition, the majority of respondents reported undertaking more labor-intensive changes to advising, such as spending more time with at-risk students identified through early alert systems (70%)

and increasing the duration of advising sessions (61%). Some administrators reported other changes to the orientation process, such as increasing the duration of orientation (43%), switching from in-person to online format for orientation (35%), or developing separate orientations for exempt and non-exempt students (13%). Only 9% of respondents reported adding financial aid responsibilities for advisors.

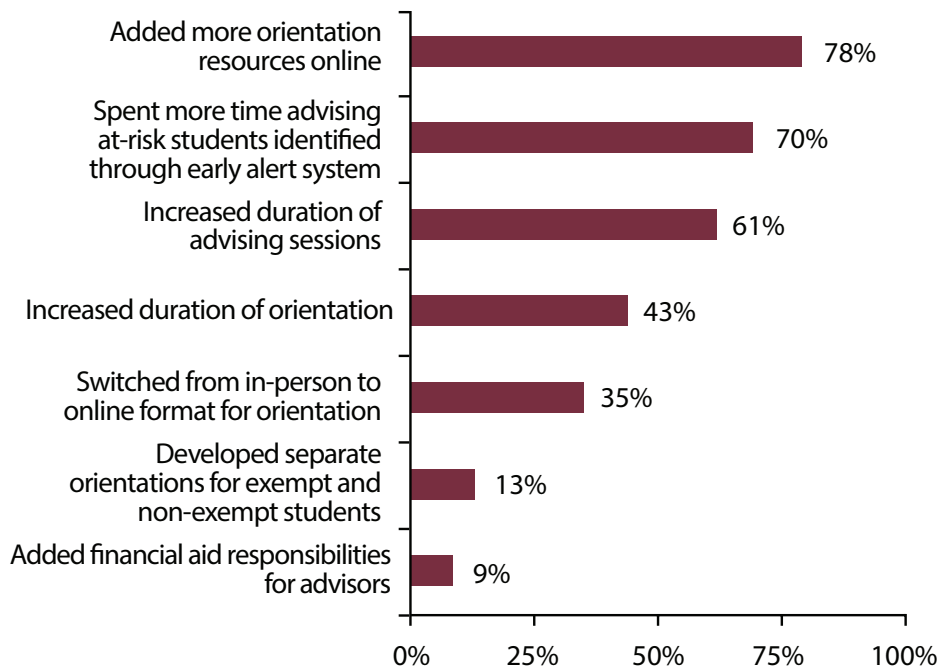


Figure 4. Percentage of Colleges That Experienced Changes to Advising or Orientation Since SB 1720

Note: Respondents were asked to check all changes that apply. N=23 institutions.

Even though the majority of administrators reported increasing the duration of advising sessions, respondents had concerns that the amount of time still may not be sufficient. Only 17% of respondents reported that their college's advising systems allow ample time for advisors to meet with students, a decline from 2015, when 30% of respondents agreed with this statement (Figure 5). There has also been a decline in the percentage of respondents who agree that their systems have effectively advised students on their exemption status, from 90% or more in 2015 and 2016 to 78% in 2017. Responses about the effectiveness of

the advising systems for advising students on their developmental course options have remained fairly consistent, between 83% and 89% in all three years.

In all years, over three-quarters of respondents reported that their advising systems rely on degree maps for students to follow over the course of several semesters and on individualized education plans for students. In addition, over 80% of respondents reported that their advising systems take into consideration non-cognitive factors, such as family obligations and learning styles, when advising students.

Our advising systems and processes...

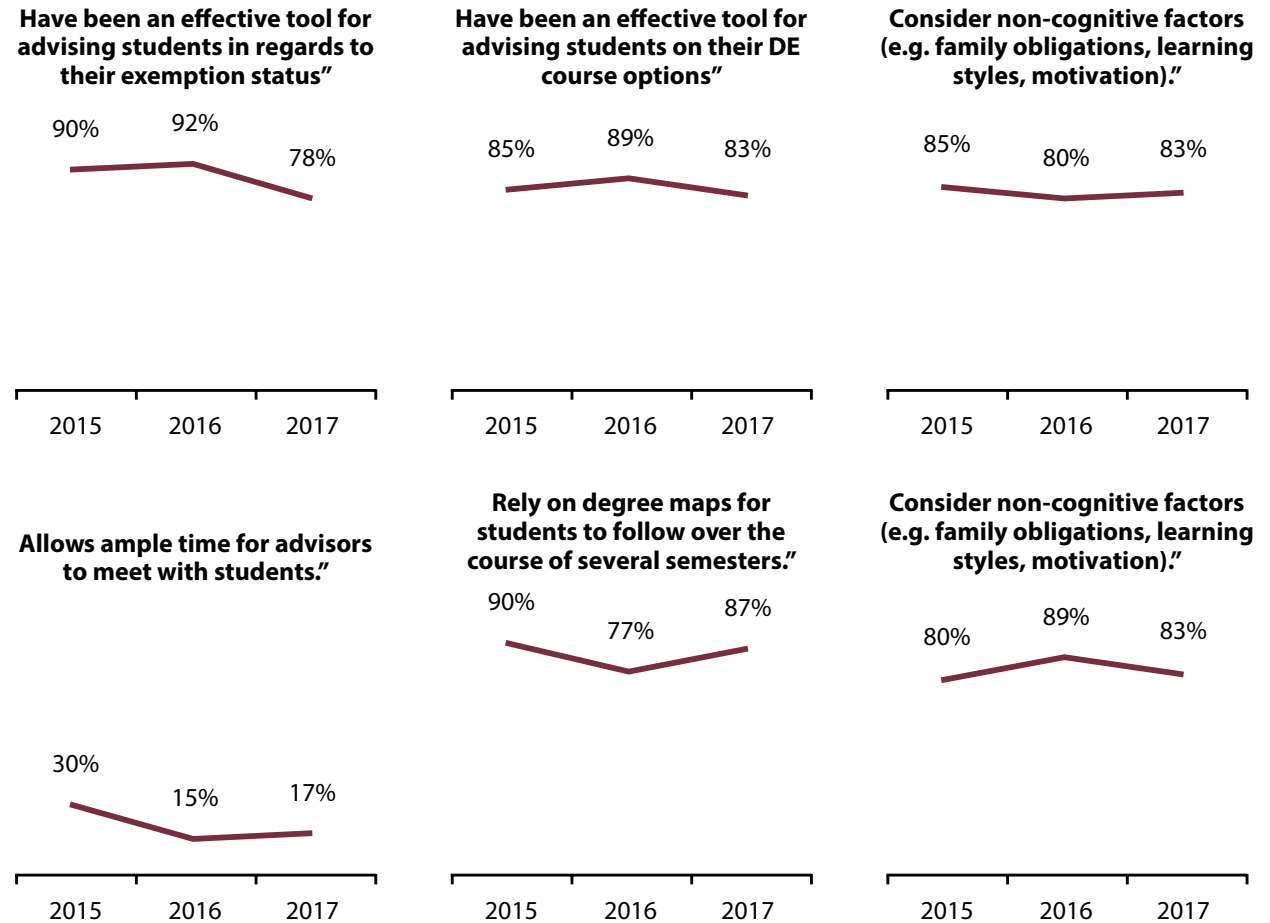


Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to the Following Statements About Advising and Orientation, By Year

Note: Scale ranges from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). N=19 institutions in 2015, 25 institutions in 2016, and 23 institutions in 2017.

INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Startup costs

Administrators were asked to identify the startup costs their institution incurred during planning and initial implementation of SB 1720. They were given a list of 10 options and were asked to check all that applied and to write any additional costs in an open-response box. On average, administrators reported five different types of startup costs. The categories selected indicate that institutions faced more costs from implementing training and development for the new developmental courses than from new facilities and equipment. Most of the respondents spent money on professional development for instructors of the new developmental courses (86%), development of materials that explain the new course options (82%), compensation

for faculty to redesign courses (64%), and resources for creating or revising their data system to meet state reporting standards under SB 1720 (55%) (Figure 6). Half of the respondents said they spent money on developing an early alert system to identify at-risk students. Fewer than half of the respondents indicated they incurred costs for purchasing various equipment and facilities, including new technology for developmental courses (36%), computers for developmental courses (36%) or for support services (23%), new facilities (18%), and new technology for student support services (14%). Other costs that were mentioned in the open-response question included those for developing new advising presentations and hiring faculty to teach the student life skills course that one institution began requiring for all students as part of its SB 1720 implementation.

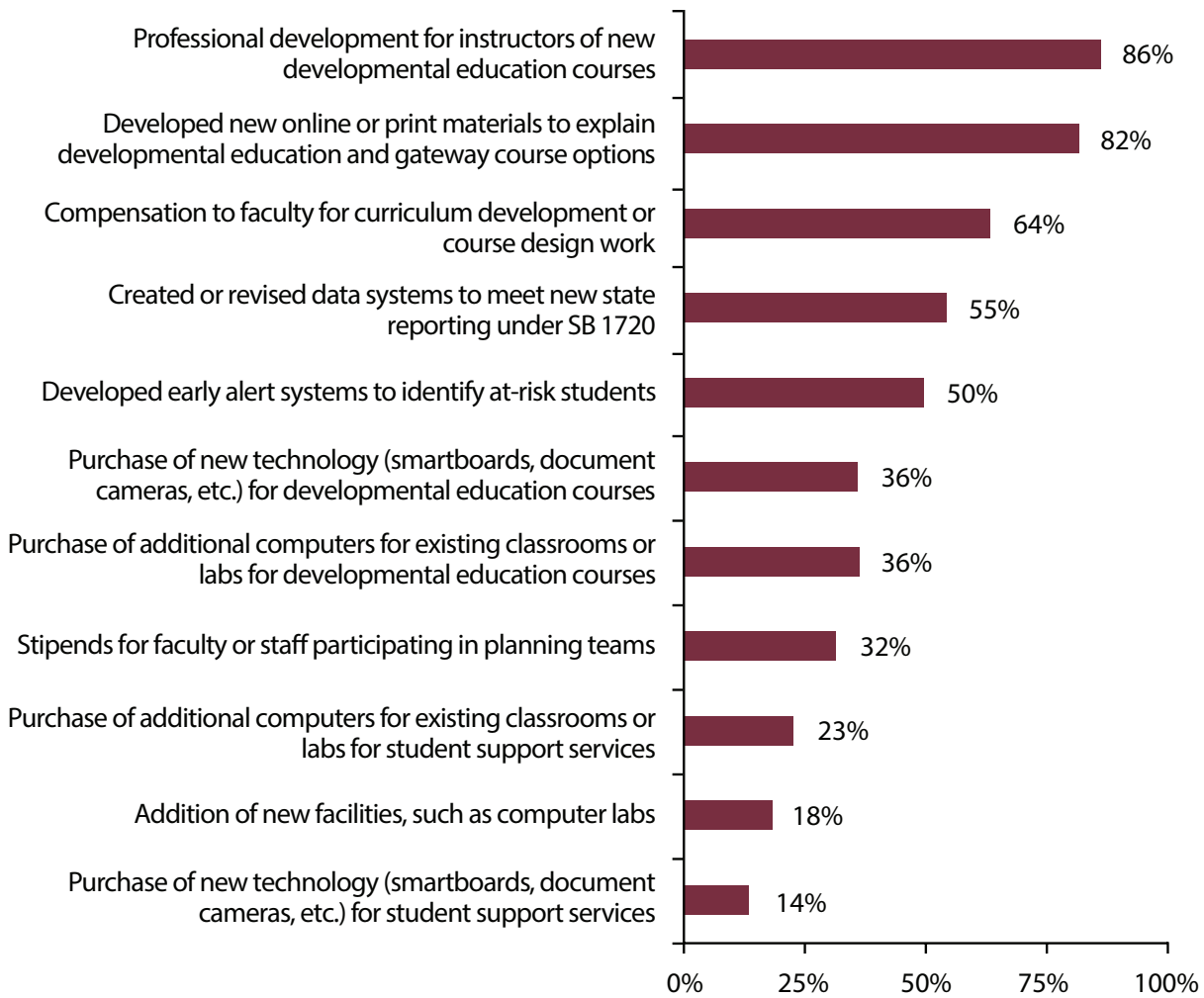


Figure 6. Percentage of Colleges That Experienced Startup Costs During the Planning and Initial Implementation of SB 1720

Note: Respondents were asked to check all that apply. N=22 institutions.

Changes in personnel

Several survey questions aimed at understanding how institutions made personnel changes in response to SB 1720. Figure 7 depicts staffing changes to advising and orientation services. The majority of administrators reported that their institutions had to increase advising

and orientation staff (64%). Forty-two percent of those reporting an increase said they made an increase of more than five. About one-third of respondents reported no change, while only one administrator (4%) reported a decrease in the number of staff.

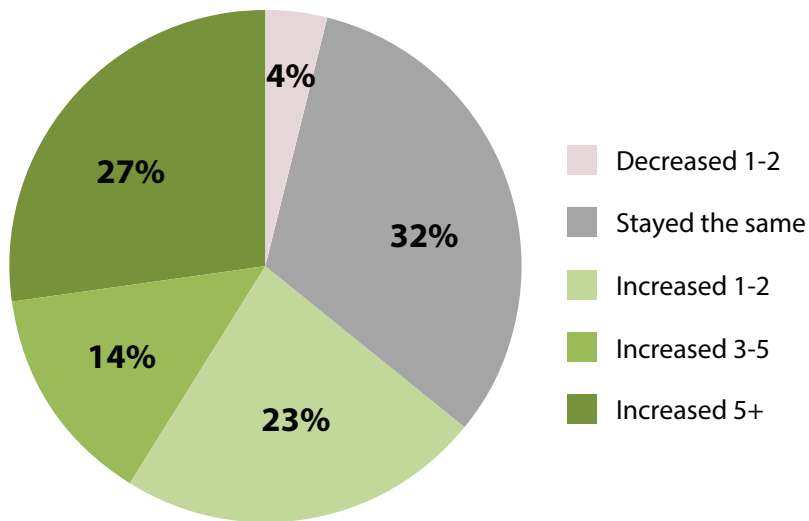


Figure 7. Percentage of Colleges With Changes in the Number of Advising and Orientation Staff

Note: Scale ranges from “decreased by 5+” to “increased by 5+.” N=22 institutions.

The survey also asked questions about other types of changes to advising and orientation staffing. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which changes were made among four categories of advising and orientation personnel (Figure 8). Most administrators reported increasing the use of IT and data entry staff (79%), increasing the workload of advising staff without extra pay (67%), and increasing the use of faculty for advising and/or orientation (63%). Changes in IT

and data entry staff and advising workload had the largest changes, as 21% of respondents reported making these changes to a great extent. Fewer than half of respondents reported giving more overtime pay to advising staff, and none felt this occurred to a great extent. Thus, it seems that institutions try to draw in extra resources for advising and orientation without incurring additional costs.

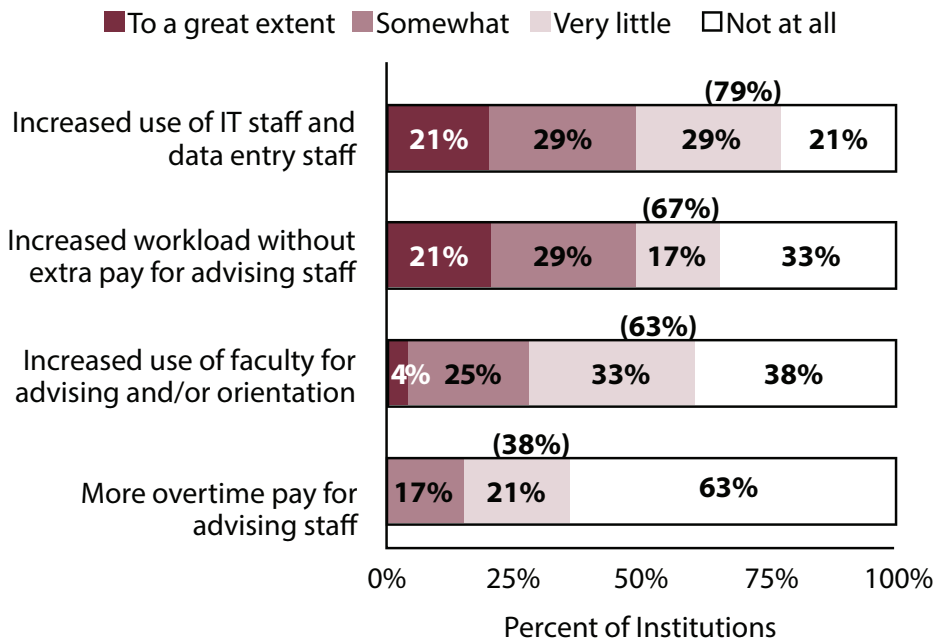


Figure 8. Extent to Which Colleges Made Advising and Orientation Personnel Changes With SB 1720 (Total Percentage of Institutions Experiencing Any Challenges in Parentheses)

Note: Scale ranges from “not at all” to “to a great extent.” N=24 institutions.

The survey also asked a few questions about how staffing for developmental and gateway courses changed with SB 1720. Figures 9 and 10 depict how the number of adjunct instructors and teaching faculty changed for these courses, respectively. These figures show that institutions shifted away from adjunct instructors toward more full-time teaching faculty. The most common response for how the usage of adjunct instructors changed in developmental courses was “decreased more than five” (33% and 42% in math and reading/writing, respectively). The decrease in adjunct instructors for developmental courses occurred at a higher rate than the increase in their usage for gateway courses, and the decrease was larger in reading/writing than in math. The reduction in teaching faculty for developmental courses was less dramatic. A very small percentage of administrators reported reducing

the number by more than five (8% in both reading/writing and math). A much larger proportion of institutions made no change to the usage of teaching faculty in both developmental and gateway courses (33% to 50%) than to adjunct instructors (8% to 33%). A small percentage of respondents noted an increase in the usage of teaching faculty for developmental courses (4% in math and 8% in reading/writing) and a small decrease in their usage for gateway courses.

A follow-up question uncovered that almost all institutions moved DE faculty who had appropriate credentials to gateway courses (96%), and faculty without appropriate credentials were sometimes moved to student life skills courses (46%). Faculty overload policies for gateway courses were revised by only one institution.

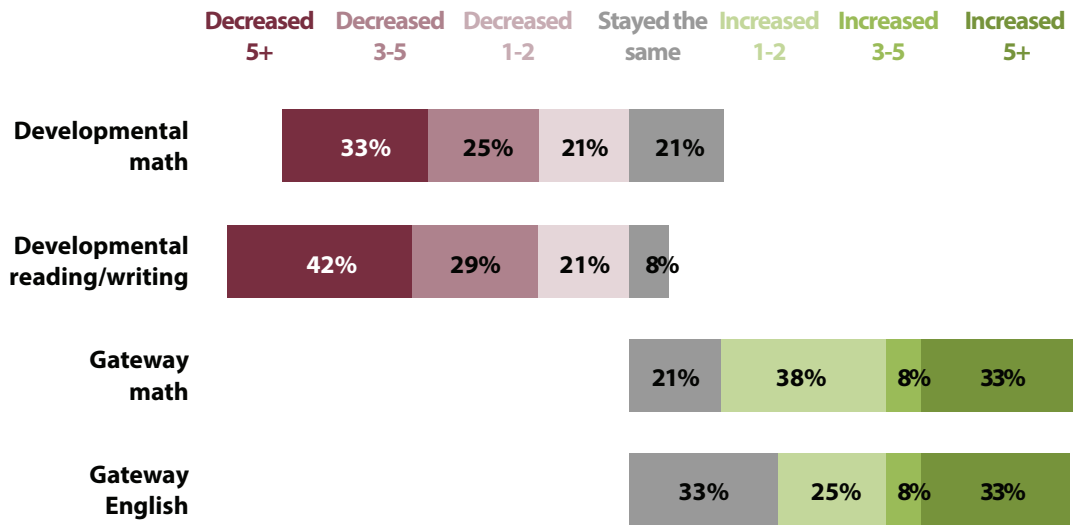


Figure 9. Percentage of Colleges That Experienced Changes in the Number of Adjunct Instructors for Developmental and Gateway Courses With SB 1720

Note: Scale ranges from “decreased by 5+” to “increased by 5+.” N=24 institutions.

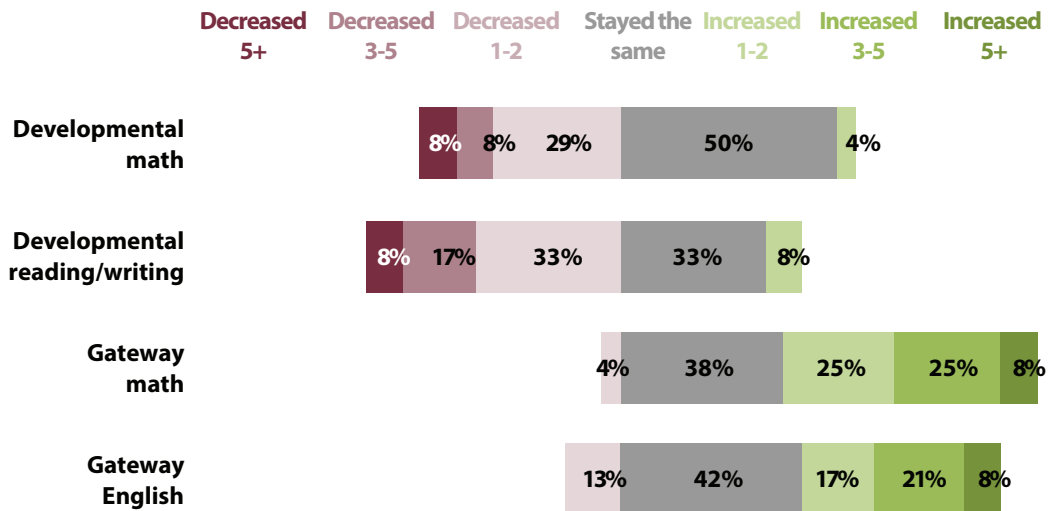


Figure 10. Percentage of Colleges That Experienced Changes in the Number of Teaching Faculty for Developmental and Gateway Courses With SB 1720

Note: Scale ranges from “decreased by 5+” to “increased by 5+.” N=24 institutions.

We also examined how student support services changed with SB 1720. Figure 11 shows how institutions changed the number of support staff for developmental and gateway courses. The majority of administrators reported keeping the number of staff the same in developmental reading/writing and gateway

courses (54% to 74%). Only one to two administrators reported decreasing support staff. For administrators reporting an increase in support services staff, most of them reported an increase of one to two except in developmental math, where there were larger increases.

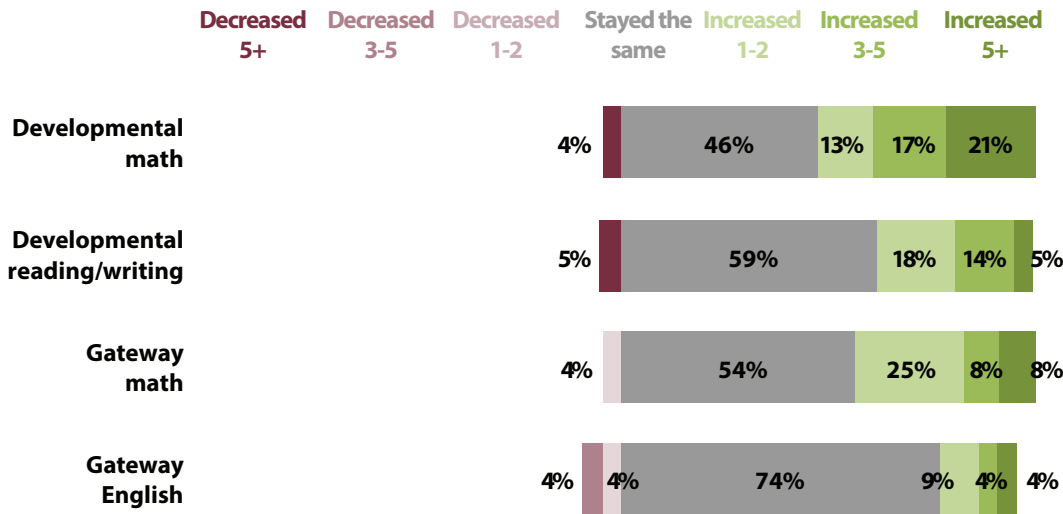


Figure 11. Percentage of Colleges That Experienced Changes in the Number of Support Services Staff for Developmental and Gateway Courses With SB 1720

Note: Scale ranges from “decreased by 5+” to “increased by 5+.” N=24 institutions for DE math and gateway math; N=23 for Gateway reading/writing; N=22 for DE reading/writing.

Figure 12 provides more details on student support services changes. Increased student support services came in a variety of forms. The majority of administrators reported increased use of external online tutoring programs and service providers (88%), increased use of faculty (71%), increased support staff workload without extra pay (67%), and increased use of IT staff (63%).

A small percentage of institutions paid more overtime to support staff (25%), and all but one of the institutions used this strategy very little. Again, it seems that institutions try to use strategies that do not involve an increase in costs, such as using faculty more or by increasing workload without extra pay.

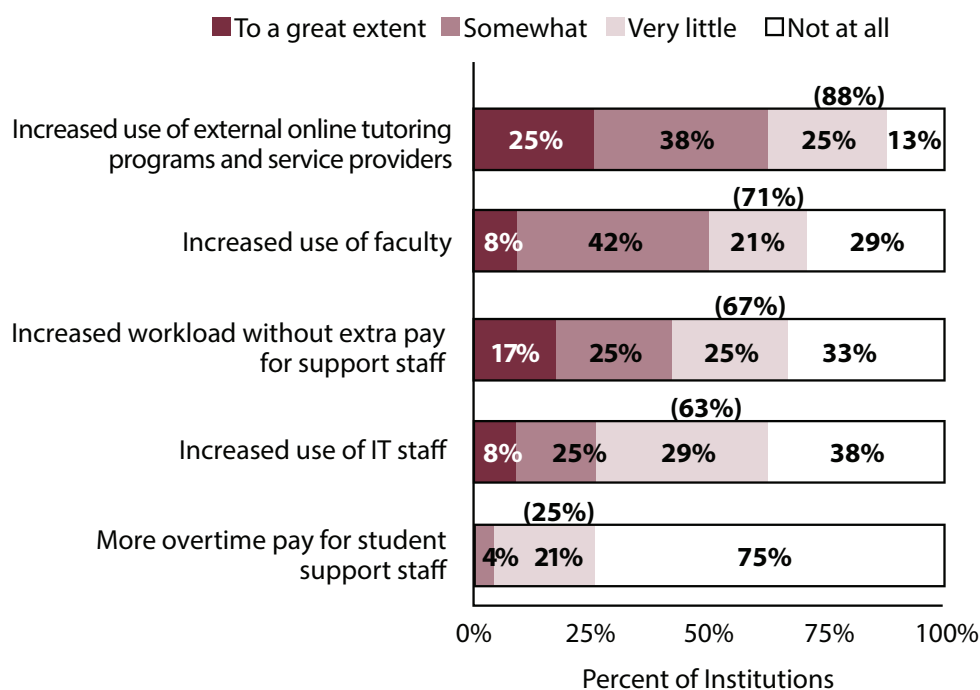


Figure 12. The Extent to Which Colleges Made Personnel Changes to Student Support Services With SB 1720 (Total Percentage of Institutions Experiencing Any Challenges in Parentheses)

Note: Scale ranges from “not at all” to “to a great extent.” N=24 institutions.

Facilities

A final set of institutional resource questions explored what types of facilities were used for the various DE modalities and how facility usage changed in response to SB 1720. Figure 13 shows that most DE courses had an assigned space. Institutions more frequently used the modularized and compressed modalities, as these modalities received the most responses for facility usage. Modularized courses were most frequently taught in classrooms that had computers or in computer labs, while compressed courses were most frequently taught in classrooms (with or without computers for each student). Co-requisite and contextualized courses seem to be offered less often. When they are offered, the courses are held in a mix of facilities that include

computer labs, classrooms with individual computers, and classrooms without individual computers.

The survey also asked respondents whether additional space or facilities had to be allocated for various activities after SB 1720. The most common increase in space/facility allocation went to tutoring; 58% of respondents reported an increase for this purpose. A smaller proportion of administrators reported an increase in space/facility allocation for other activities, including advising, orientation, and workshops and summer bridge programs (25% to 29%). Only one administrator reported an increase in space/facility allocation for learning communities.

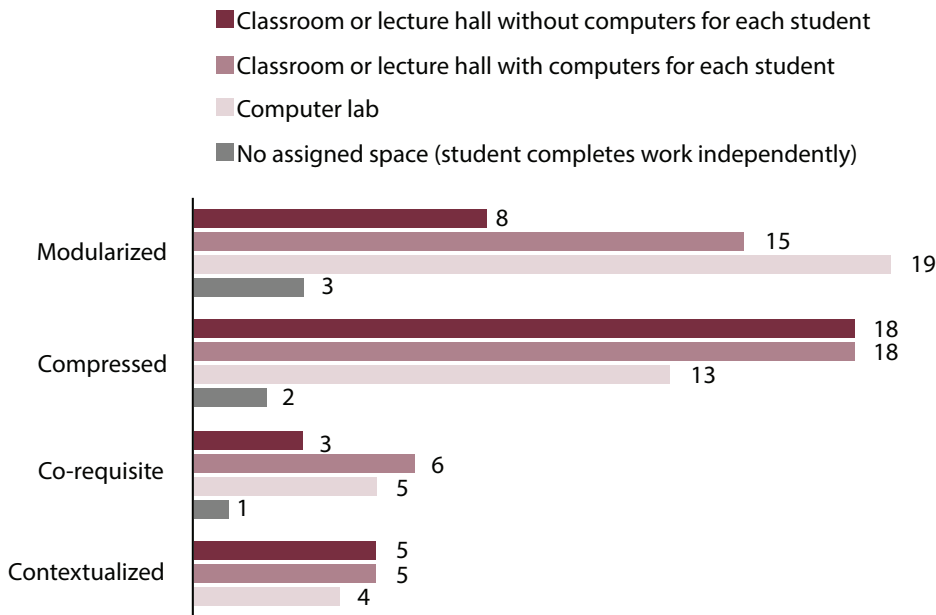


Figure 13. Facility Usage by Developmental Education Course Type

Note: Respondents were asked to check all that apply. N= 24 institutions.

Student enrollment and costs

The survey also included a set of questions on the extent to which institutions experienced challenges with student enrollment, tuition, and financial aid under SB 1720. Respondents were asked whether their institution experienced the challenge on a 4-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “to a great extent” (Figure 14).

All administrators reported facing a challenge with students not persisting in college because they lacked preparation for the courses they took. Other common challenges included more students repeating courses because they were unprepared for the courses they enrolled in, more students reluctant to drop classes they were failing because they needed a certain number of credit hours to keep financial aid, more students unable to maintain GPA requirements for financial aid, students experiencing financial aid constraints with partial semester developmental courses, and an increase in the number of unprepared students who

failed courses repeatedly and had to pay out-of-state tuition after the third attempt; 88% to 96% of administrators reported that each of these was a challenge.

The challenge most commonly reported “to a great extent” was that veterans’ benefits do not apply to DE because these courses are no longer required; 29% of institutions said they experienced this challenge “to a great extent.”

The majority of administrators also reported some level of concern with reduced performance funding from the state because of declines in retention and completion rates (70%) and a decrease in tuition revenues as fewer students from four-year universities enrolled in developmental courses (66%). The least challenging issue seems to be that developmental courses that are more than a semester long can reduce veterans’ benefits, though this may be perceived as less of a challenge because it impacts only veterans.

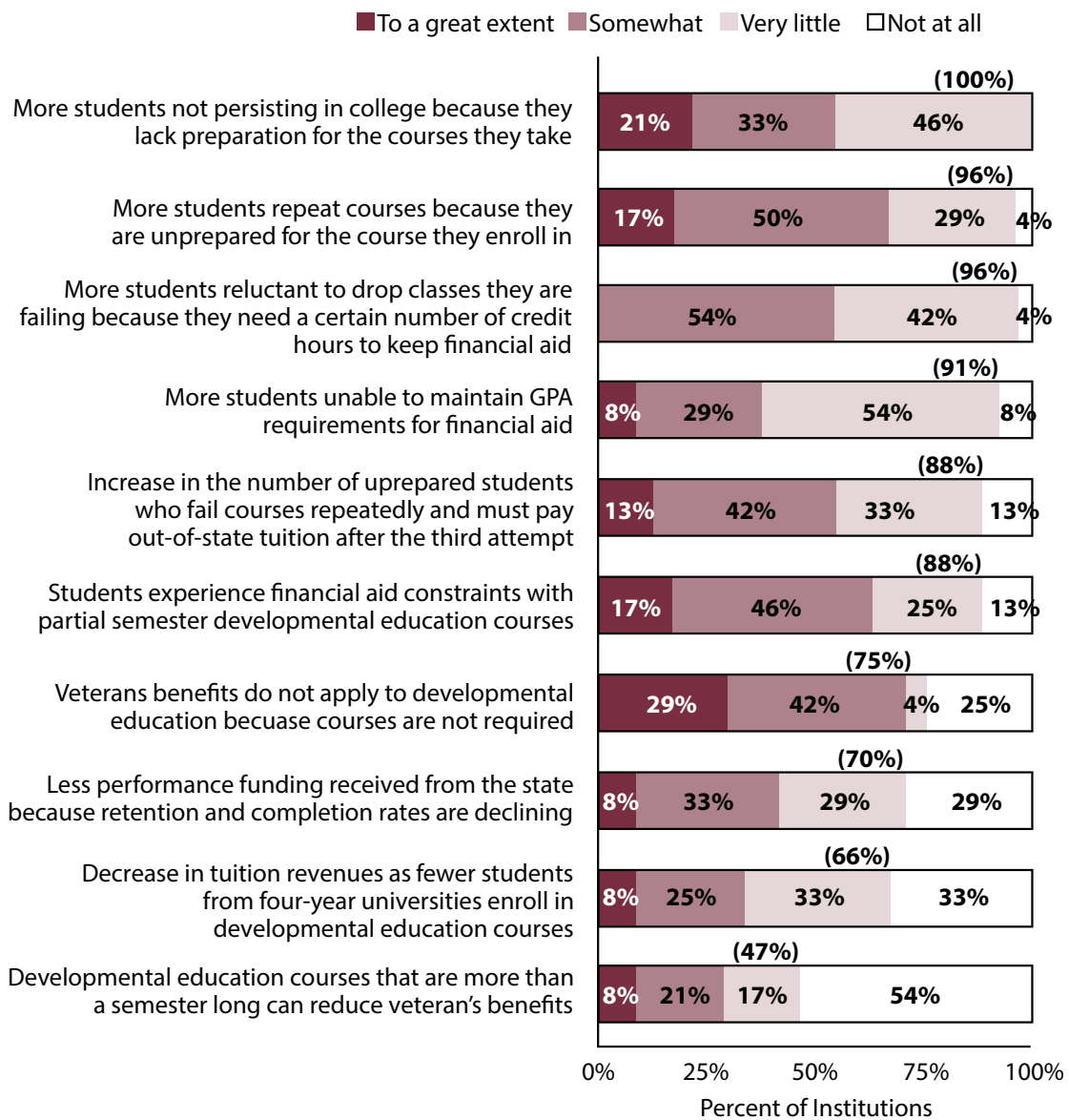


Figure 14. The Extent to Which Colleges Experienced Challenges Regarding Enrollment, Tuition, and Financial Aid With SB 1720 (Total Percentage of Institutions Experiencing Any Challenges in Parentheses)

Note: Scale ranges from “not at all” to “to a great extent.” N=24 institutions.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study assessed administrators' perceptions of the implementation of reform efforts under SB 1720 in the third year of the policy. We examined attitudes and behaviors toward implementation, changes over time in perceptions of effectiveness, institutional efforts to allocate new and existing resources to support reform initiatives, and implications for students in terms of enrollment and costs. We provide a summary of the main findings below.

- **Colleges tend to be facilitative toward implementation despite staff disagreement with policymakers.**

Colleges were asked a series of questions about attitudes and behaviors toward the implementation of SB 1720, which were grouped into four categories based on the levels of effort and compliance demonstrated by the college. All of the colleges ranked most highly on the facilitative category, which indicates both high effort and high compliance. However, administrators also reported disagreement between staff and policymakers about decisions under SB 1720. This indicates that colleges were dedicated to implementing reform efforts even if they did not necessarily agree with them.

- **Administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of the reform have declined over time.**

Over the three years of implementation, administrators have been asked how effectively their colleges' implementation of SB 1720 has served students. There has been a sharp decline in the percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that the initiative has been effective, from 74% in 2015 to 60% in 2016 to only 39% in 2017. It is possible that over time, institutions have received more feedback from students and staff and more data on student outcomes, which may have influenced their perceptions. Additional qualitative data is being collected through site visits to gain a better understanding of the factors that may have contributed to changes in perceptions of effectiveness over time.

- **Colleges have made numerous changes to advising processes, but time constraints remain a concern.**

Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported that their college has made changes to their initial plan in response to student needs and in response to other new information. Many of the administrators reported changes to advising processes, such as spending more time with students during advising sessions—particularly with at-risk students identified through early alert systems. However, the amount of time spent on advising remained a concern, with less than a third of respondents in each of the three years reporting that advisors had ample time to meet with students.

- **Institutions faced a variety of startup costs, especially for training and development for the new DE modalities.**

Administrators were more likely to report experiencing startup costs from training and development for the new developmental courses than from new facilities and equipment. Most of the respondents spent resources on professional development for instructors of the new developmental courses (86%), development of materials that explain the new course options (82%), and compensation for faculty to redesign courses (64%). Half of respondents said they spent money on developing an early alert system to identify at-risk students. Fewer than half of respondents reported incurring costs associated with purchasing various equipment and facilities.

- **Institutions required more advising staff and tried to use methods that did not incur additional costs.**

The majority of administrators (64%) reported that their institutions had to increase advising and orientation staff, and 42% of those reporting an increase said more than five staff were added. Only one administrator reported a decrease in the number of advising staff. Most administrators reported increasing the use of IT and data entry staff (79%), increasing the workload of

advising staff without extra pay (67%), and increasing the use of faculty for advising and/or orientation (63%). Thus it seems that institutions are trying to draw in extra resources for advising and orientation without incurring additional costs.

- **Administrators reported changes to developmental and gateway course staffing.**

The decrease in adjunct instructors for developmental courses occurred at a higher rate than the increase in their usage for gateway courses, and the decrease was larger in reading and writing than in math. Institutions shifted away from adjunct instructors toward more teaching faculty, as fewer instructors were needed for developmental courses. Almost all institutions moved DE faculty who had appropriate credentials to gateway courses (96%), and those without appropriate credentials were sometimes moved to student life skills courses (46%).

- **Institutions required more student support services.**

The majority of administrators reported keeping the number of student support staff the same in developmental reading/writing and gateway courses (54% to 74%). However, student support services increased in other ways. The majority of administrators reported increased use of external online tutoring programs and service providers (88%), increased use of faculty (71%), increased support staff workload without extra pay (67%), and increased use of IT staff (63%). Again, it seems as though institutions try to use strategies that do not involve an increase in costs.

- **Different DE modalities used a variety of different facility types, and certain reform**

- **activities required more space.**

Institutions more frequently used the modularized and compressed modalities. Modularized courses were most frequently taught in classrooms that had computers or in computer labs, while compressed courses were most frequently taught in classrooms (with or without computers). Co-requisite and contextualized courses seem to be offered less often. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported an increase in space for tutoring. A smaller proportion of administrators reported an increase in space for other activities, including advising, orientation, and workshops and summer bridge programs (25% to 29%).

- **Institutions faced many challenges in student enrollment, tuition, and financial aid.**

All of the administrators reported experiencing a challenge with students not persisting in college because they lacked preparation for the courses they took. Almost all of the institutions faced challenges with students repeating courses because they were unprepared for the course they enrolled in, more students reluctant to drop classes they were failing because they needed a certain number of credit hours to keep financial aid, more students unable to maintain GPA requirements for financial aid, students experiencing financial aid constraints with partial semester developmental courses, and an increase in the number of unprepared students who failed courses repeatedly and had to pay out-of-state tuition after the third attempt. The unintended consequence that was most frequently reported as a challenge “to a great extent” was that veterans’ benefits do not apply to DE because these courses are no longer required.

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