Improving College Pathways in California

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Overview of Presentation

- Background
- Data and Sample
- Results
- Policy Recommendations
Background:
The need to improve college pathways
The demand for college is very strong

- California needs more college graduates
  - A shortage of 1.1 million college graduates by 2030

- Parents and students have high expectations
  - 85% of California parents and almost all high school seniors have some postsecondary aspirations
Too few high school students complete college

- 1000 9th graders
- 823 graduates from high school
- 282 attend a four-year college as freshmen
- 362 attend a community college as freshmen
- 145 transfer to a four-year college
- 427 attend a four-year college
- 305 earn a bachelor’s degree
- 9th graders attend high school
- 823 graduates from high school
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- 145 transfer to a four-year college
- 427 attend a four-year college
- 305 earn a bachelor’s degree
Data & Sample
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• CALPASS Plus
  - High School Sample:
    • 141,307 high school graduates in 24 diverse districts from 2007 to 2014 school years
    • More low-income and low performing students
  - Community College Sample:
    • 16,792 first-time college students from 2011 to 2015, with complete high school transcripts and early college transcripts
    • Fewer students enrolled in a developmental education course

• Statewide data from IPEDS, CDE, UC and CSU
Roadblocks in high school
Where do students fall off the a-g pathway?

% high school graduates completing each subject area requirements

- Social Science (a): 57%
- English (b): 36%
- Math (c): 42%
- Science (d): 54%
- Foreign Language (e): 51%
- Art (f): 74%
- Electives (g): 82%

% completing a-g, with C or better vs % completing a-g
When do students fall off the a-g pathway?

% non a-g completers taking at least one a-g course, by subject and grade

Grade 9
- Math: 72%
- Science: 40%
- English: 70%

Grade 10
- Math: 70%
- Science: 64%
- English: 43%

Grade 11
- Math: 40%
- Science: 23%
- English: 40%

Grade 12
- Math: 23%
- Science: 20%
- English: 64%
The mismatch between student potential and course-taking patterns

Math pathway: % …completers moving on to the next level math course

- Algebra I to geometry: 66% among students passing previous math course, 69% among students passing previous math course with an A or B
- Geometry to algebra 2: 59% among students passing previous math course, 68% among students passing previous math course with an A or B
- Algebra 2 to higher math: 47% among students passing previous math course, 59% among students passing previous math course with an A or B
The mismatch left under-represented students further behind

% … completers moving onto the next level math (a-g) course

- Algebra 1 -> geometry
  - Asian American: 80%
  - African American: 66%

- Geometry -> algebra 2
  - Asian American: 74%
  - African American: 52%

- Algebra 2 -> higher math
  - Asian American: 64%
  - African American: 38%
Why do students fall off the a-g pathway?

- The role of high school graduation requirements
  - CA is one of the few (3) states that only require two years of math
- The role of high school course placement policies
  - A significant number of students repeat a math course that they already passed
- The role of course counseling and academic support
  - Under-represented students often attend schools that do not have a strong college-going expectation
Improving success in community colleges
The importance of high school preparation

- Remedial education is one of the largest roadblocks to student success at community college.
- Taking a–g courses in high school reduces students’ likelihood of taking remedial courses.
  - Grades in and number of a–g courses matter a lot.
Among prepared students, placement is a concern

% students who could pass transfer courses but enrolled in developmental courses, 2011-2015

- Female: 21%
- Male: 15%
- Asian American: 21%
- African American: 13%
- Latino: 18%
- White: 19%
- Low Income: 17%
- First Generation: 14%
Among prepared students, placement is a concern

% students eligible for transfer courses but enrolled in developmental courses, 2011-2015

- Female: 61%
- Male: 52%
- Asian American: 73%
- African American: 45%
- Latino: 56%
- White: 63%
- Low Income: 47%
- First Generation: 44%
Why?

- Validity and reliability of placement assessments
- Students poor showing in the assessment
- Grade inflation in high school
- Students do not have a clear understanding of their pathways
- Non-traditional attendance patterns
  - Delayed entry to college
  - Part-time enrollment
- Reforms to address these issues (AB 705, guided pathways)
Policy Recommendations
To improve college readiness...

- Increase the number of courses that are a-g approved
  - Key lesson from high growth districts
  - Offerings low in disadvantaged schools
- Leverage high school graduation requirements
  - Current policy lags behind other states
- Revise course enrollment policies to address the takings-gap
  - Consider nudges (e.g., opt-in) that make it easier to stay on track
  - Targeted counseling for under-represented students
To improve college success…

- Continue the current effort to develop a better placement system
  - New initiatives that use multiple measures

- Establish an effective academic counseling and support system
  - Most students enter CCCs with the goal of obtaining an associate degree and/or transferring into a four year college
  - New guided pathway initiative holds promise

- Develop a statewide longitudinal database
  - Create an early detection system
  - Evaluate what works
Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.