# Innovation and Expansion in the Breadth of Programs and Services

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Given that students will be unequally prepared for college, we can assume that there will always be a need for developmental education in some form. Even the debates about mainstreaming developmental education still recognize the need for some kind of integrated, expanded support services such as study skills courses and learning centers to support all students. Whatever the focus—integrated services or separate programs—the fact is that work needs to continue to provide innovative and expanded versions of developmental education in the future. The breadth of programs in developmental education is far ranging, from inclusive English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to federally funded academic support and bridge programs like TRIO's Upward Bound and Talent Search programs. It is important to examine the ways that these programs presently serve students, as well as continuing to identify the best locations and configurations for these programs. A deeper consideration of the relationship of these programs to each other, and how they fit under the umbrella of developmental education, is a key issue in the future.

There are presently many new innovations in developmental education that are worth examining as models for future expansion in the field. For example, distance learning and new technologies have played a larger role in delivering education to students both off-site and in the classroom. What are we finding about the outcomes of these methods? We also continue to implement summer bridge and immersion programs (summer institutes) for minority, ESL, and international students entering college to prepare them for academic work (Nuney-Wormack, Astone, & Smodlaka, 1992; Stratton, 1998). Programs that bridge students from K-12 to college, such as Upward Bound, have also been expanded and created to prepare students early on for a transition to college. Federally-funded programs like TRIO have gained recognition for their successes in supporting low-income, minority, and first-generation college students through tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and advising systems. Additionally, grants have been used to develop programs for nontraditional populations of students, such as women who are receiving welfare to attend college and learn skills to be placed into new jobs (e.g., through such avenues as the Student Parent Program in General College, University of Minnesota, which assists recipients of MFIP—Minnesota Family Investment Program). Other curricular reform concepts, such as the Curriculum Transformation and Disability (CTAD) workshop program at the University of Minnesota, also serve as models for creating professional development forums for faculty to transform their courses to create better access for all students, specifically those with disabilities.

Other program models are being developed and adopted by developmental education programs, such as the Freshman Seminar model (Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina). Learning communities, which can be created and sustained through seminars, or the offering of clustered or packaged courses (i.e., courses in which students take the same set of classes together), are other newer models of education that have been successfully applied in developmental programs. Additionally, new partnerships have been formed between community and technical colleges to offer a wider range of courses designed to meet the needs of industries and businesses requiring specialized training. The results of these expanded programs need to be researched and analyzed carefully to determine the impact and outcomes for students. The merging of programs such as the community and technical college, and the presence of bridge programs between high schools and higher education, are examples of transformations in definitions of developmental education.

Another emerging question related to these changes is: What is "college level" work when placed within the broader context of education? What is "developmental" within this range of definitions, and who are the students served by developmental programs (Higbee, in press)? This discussion is very much at the heart of future innovations and changes in the field at the present time. We continue to face external challenges to our work, and new approaches include discussions about mainstreaming developmental education students into a more integrated curriculum serving all students. If we are doing our jobs correctly and successfully, true innovations in the field might lead us in this direction. Yet at the present time, the reality is that there are and will always be a wide range of students entering higher education whose needs change and cannot be addressed by mainstream programs. High school education is uneven in terms of college preparation. Even with the advent of new standards and testing measures for high school students, which theoretically exist to even out their levels of preparation (or screen them out and hold them back), the problems facing educators are many in terms of continuing to meet the needs of changing demographics and nontraditional student populations. Even a small percentage of students in private, elite colleges like Harvard require the presence of a developmental English course and tutorial services. There will always be a need for some form of developmental education, and the innovations need to be initiated and developed by experts who work within the field, not shaped by those from the outside.

Additionally, there are often discrepancies in our definitions of who the “developmental” populations really are (Higbee, in press). This leads back to present work on continuing to expand and define developmental education. For example, many educational systems have experienced a shift in demographics related to immigrants and refugee students participating in higher education. English as a Second Language programs have been established to respond to the needs of these students in terms of language acquisition and acculturation at the college level. However, some of these students are “developmental” and some are not, but the distinctions have not always been clarified. What are the unique borders and barriers these students face, and how does developmental education respond—or not—to these needs? Is our current definition of developmental education too narrow in these areas, or does it need to be expanded? Which programs can serve as positive models for this consideration? As with more traditional developmental programs, the needs vary widely at the local level. A continued exploration of the range of services, integrated or separate, is needed to provide more accurate information as we assess these issues.

## Standards and Certification

Another area in the discussion around program and service innovations is the implementation of standards and certification for individuals and programs of developmental education. Does this contribute to innovative and expanded programs and services in the field? What standards will be most useful in terms of sustaining these progressive initiatives, and how can we assess this? Organizations like the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) and the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) can serve as focal points for evaluation, development, and implementation of standards. In this case, these organizations need to work toward demonstrating a positive relationship between standards such as certification and outcomes for students in developmental programs. What is the impact in terms of retention and graduation rates? Which services and programs contribute to these positive outcomes, and how can we draw upon these models to inform standards for programs and professionals?

## Professional Development

In terms of long-term professional development, it is important to continue expanding graduate-level programs that can certify future faculty and staff with teaching and research expertise in developmental education. We can look toward existing programs for future innovations in this area, such as Appalachian State University, Grambling State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Southwest Texas State University, and National-Louis University. It is recommended that more places should invest their resources in creating more options for sites to attain a doctorate in developmental education. Presently, there is only one place, Grambling State University, which offers such a program at the doctoral level. If we really want to expand and sustain research in the field, we need to train doctoral students directly into the profession. Typically, most people enter developmental education through a content area or through work in support services. This certainly provides necessary training and background for programs and services, but the existence of graduate students with these formal credentials further legitimizes the work of developmental education as a field. This creates an important history as well when we can offer sites for this sustained focus on developmental education. This, in conjunction with the ongoing innovations in opportunities for professional development, will provide an important legacy for establishing long-term professionals invested in the goals and outcomes of developmental education.

## Recommendations

Ultimately, the work to expand programs and provide innovative services in the future should result from a strong focus on the needs and expectations of students and their multiple educational contexts. Future changes need to come as a result of their needs and not from an external push related to false public perceptions of how these programs should function. We need to inform our work with theory and research relevant to our models for success, as well as learn to be flexible and attentive to current politics and trends affecting developmental education. The best practices and models in the field need to be documented and disseminated widely through national organizations and locally by administrators.

To continue innovations and expansions in developmental education that most positively benefit all students, the following recommendations must be considered:

1. Place an awareness of changing student demographics and needs at the forefront of innovations in programs and services.

2. Promote certification as a means of professionalizing the field of developmental education.

3. Identify, validate, and disseminate best practices and program models, which should be research-based and reflective of collaborations between two- and four-year institutions.

4. Address the professional development needs of many part-time and adjunct staff, many of whom may not have the opportunity to attend professional conferences, yet they teach a large majority of classes and provide services.

5. Train and mentor teachers to implement research, and reward them accordingly for these activities.

6. Since a large percentage of students continue to enter the work force directly through technical training programs, it is important to work with industry to provide this training and merge this with developmental education programs.

7. Promote a focus on technology and access, with an emphasis on what is working. We need to continue it because it is good, not just because it is there.

8. Continue to develop graduate-level programs and professional development for future staff and faculty in developmental education.

## References

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