



E. Glenn Ward Family Foundation, Inc.
6818 South Chappel Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60649

Addressing the Issue of College Readiness through Ward College

The Problem – College Readiness

Many institutions of higher education routinely make decisions based upon the mistaken assumption that their typical student is a *traditional* student (that is, straight out of high school) and that this traditional student who enrolls at their institution is college-ready. Nevertheless, the majority of American college students are not traditional students¹, and in addition, the overwhelming majority of admitted students are not college-ready². Furthermore, clear demographic trends in the population of American college students, especially in its steadily increasing ethnic/racial minority composition, will only exacerbate the issue of college-readiness in the years to come.

Current data indicate that seventy-five percent of all college students are required to enroll in at least one college-readiness (that is, remedial, or developmental) reading course and that only twenty-seven percent of those who require a college-readiness course ever go on to earn a bachelor's degree^{3 4 5}. The rate of admitted students who require remedial coursework is likely near eighty-five percent for African American students and near ninety percent for those who have been, or are currently, incarcerated⁶.

Students required to take college-readiness courses are far less likely to persist or to complete a degree or certificate program than are those students who are not mandated into such courses^{7 8 9}. Being required by an institution of higher education to take a college-readiness course entails the following burdens for a student: (1) increased costs for course work, (2) failure to receive college credit for such remedial coursework, and (3) the wasting of valuable time toward completion of a certificate or degree.

An opportunity now emerges with e-learning as a delivery method in college-readiness, simultaneously creating the possibility of a reduction in cost as well as matching more appropriately the complex schedules of many non-traditional students, who often have jobs and families and who are likely to enroll in college-readiness courses.

Our Hypothesis – Ward College

Ward College was developed to directly test the hypothesis that an integrated and innovative, evidence-based-practices design in developmental education should increase educational attainment rates among working adult students and incarcerated students from low-income and minority communities. Between 40 percent and 60 percent of our students will be from currently or formerly incarcerated populations. Our key goal for all of our students is a deepened and more effective integration into family, community and society through the optimal development of personal, academic and professional potential by using culturally-relevant approaches that ultimately stabilize individuals and neighborhoods. Developmental education and degree programs at Ward College are structured in blended/hybrid as well as in exclusively online formats, making learning more accessible to the working adult or incarcerated student. Certificate programs in a variety of occupations will also be available.

The Learning Objective

Developmental education (or college-readiness) courses are generally mandated by institutions of higher education for students' entry into college-level course work. Data show that student performance in such courses is customarily considered an indicator of a student's likelihood of persistence or success in college^{10 11}. Increasing retention rates save money to both students and institutions of higher education, while also supporting low-income and minority students' specific academic and career goals and needs.

The learning objective for the Ward College student is college-readiness. Once a student has attained readiness, the learning objective becomes success in the student's educational program of choice, whether the associate in liberal arts program or one of our certificate programs. Finally, the objective then becomes either placement in gainful employment or transfer to a four-year institution of higher education.

¹ Oblinger, Diana, G. (Ed.) (2012). *Game changers: eEducation and information technologies*. Educause. 978-1-933046-00-6. Retrieved from: <http://www.educause.edu/research-publications/books/game-changers-education-and-information-technologies>

² American College Testing (ACT). (2014) *The condition of college & career readiness*. Retrieved from: <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr14/pdf/CCCR14-NationalReadinessRpt.pdf>

³ ACT, "The condition of college," 16.

⁴ Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) (2013). *The condition of college & career readiness: First-generation students*. Retrieved from <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/states/pdf/FirstGeneration.pdf>

⁵ Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (2012). *Distance education: A systems view of online learning*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

⁶ Geiter, D. W. (2015). *Identifying factors contributing to student retention and persistence in online deved@ (developmental education) courses*. (Doctoral dissertation).

⁷ Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2014). *Grade change: Tracking online education in the United States, 2013*. Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/gradechange.pdf>

⁸ Harris, T. (2010). *Enrollment management professionals in community colleges: An exploratory study of their influence on student recruitment and retention* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED514388>

⁹ National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *Digest of educational statistics*. Washington, DC: Department of Education). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_192.asp?referrer=list

¹⁰ Epper, R. M., & Baker, E. D. (2009). Technology solutions for developmental math: An overview of current and emerging practices. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 26(2), 4-23.

¹¹ National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *Digest of educational statistics*. Washington, DC: Department of Education). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_192.asp?referrer=list