

January 30, 2012

House Higher Education Committee

* Rep. Larry Seaquist, Chair
* Rep. Reuven Carlyle, Vice Chair
* Rep. Larry Haler
* Rep. Kevin Parker
* Rep. Katrina Asay
* Rep. Vincent Buys
* Rep. Larry Crouse
* Rep. Susan Fagan
* Rep. Bob Hasegawa
* Rep. Gerry Pollet
* Rep. Tim Probst
* Rep. Chris Reykdal
* Rep. Mike Sells
* Rep. Larry Springer
* Rep. Judy Warnick
* Rep. Sharon Wylie
* Rep. Hans Zeiger

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

Shoreline Community College supports the goals of House Bill 2717. At Shoreline, we have four words representing core values that guide all of our decisions. They are:

* Accessibility
* Affordability
* Accountability
* Outcomes

House Bill 2717 is intended to find and support “innovative approaches to increase the cost-effective delivery of developmental and remedial education. Those goals are in line with our core values. We know those goals can be met because Shoreline Community College is already doing it. Let me explain.

There is no doubt about the significant need and burden represented by remedial education. Chairman Seaquist has pointed out that 23 percent of community and technical college budgets go toward remedial education, our pre-college classes. And, 85 percent of all of our students require at least one remedial math course.

We know that math is the number one gatekeeper subject to college success for students needing remedial help. At Shoreline, our highest enrolled remedial math course has a pass rate of just over half - 54 percent. However, many of those students have taken and paid for the class more than one time.

According to The Chronicle of Higher Education, 60-70 percent of students in remedial math either do not successfully complete the sequence of courses or avoid taking math altogether and therefore never graduate. Our state’s numbers are little different.

Shoreline and the rest of our wonderful community and technical colleges work hard to meet the needs of our students. Our colleges were founded on the idea that they would respond to the needs of the community and for decades, we have done that. Now, we need do to more, and we can.

Here are three examples:

1. At Shoreline, we are piloting a modularized version of our beginning algebra class, Math 80. The concept is not new, coming to us from an award-winning program in Kentucky. Our Dean of Science, Susan Hoyne, brought the program to Shoreline with the help of dedicated faculty. The normal five-credit class is broken up into five, one-credit modules. The students move at their own pace, learning and earning one credit at a time. The approach means a student never risks losing an entire quarter and being told they must start over. Our early data shows the success rate for those students is going up. At the same time, costs appear to be going down for the students and the college.
2. Shoreline is home to the largest high school re-engagement effort in the state. Through the paired programs of Learning Center North/Career Education Options, we serve about 600 students under age 21 for whom the state still owes an education. With our partners, King County and the Monroe School District, some of the most challenging students are finding success.

Learning Center North (LCN) recently began a pilot project called “Fearless Math.” Through the leadership of program director Guru Dorje, students get a combination of personal, face-to-face support and online academic experience using the nationally acclaimed, and free, Khan Academy. According to Dorje, one LCN student in Fearless Math who had already failed Math 80 twice was told by her Shoreline math instructor, “I don’t know what you’re doing this quarter, but keep doing it.”

1. There are other options. Shoreline partners with Blackboard, Inc. to provide our learning management system and other services. In several other states, Blackboard is currently piloting a remedial math program that combines online curriculum, instruction and significant student support with face-to-face support at the pilot colleges. Early indications are that students in the pilot programs are experiencing more success than those in pilot schools’ traditional remedial classes. And again, it appears that costs are going down for students and the institutions.

It is clear that education and training are key factors in economic recovery. If we are to give more students the support they need to get the education and training necessary to become employed contributors to that recovery, colleges need to look for innovative and efficient methods.

House Bill 2717 can provide the legislative framework to support these efforts. Shoreline looks forward to involving all our constituencies - students, faculty, staff and community – in piloting effective and efficient ways to improve the lives of our students.

Sincerely,

  
Lee Lambert, President, Shoreline Community College