# Written Testimony - Little Hoover Commission Public Hearing 10/23/12

**Eloy Ortiz Oakley**
**Superintendent-President Long Beach Community College District**

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***The Creation of Long Beach College Promise***

The Long Beach College Promise **(LBCP)** was established in March 2008 as an endorsed commitment between Long Beach City College, Long Beach Unified and Cal State University Long Beach. The LBCP is an extension of the seamless education initiative in Long Beach which grew out of the severe economic downturn in the 1990s that the city experienced after the loss of the Long Beach naval shipyard and the contraction and sale of McDonald Douglas to the Boeing Company. The LBCP took the partnerships that were formed out of the seamless education initiative and formalized them through a written agreement and "promise" to the community *(Attachment A)*.

***Your efforts to convince your faculty and staff to embrace and implement the program***

The key to an effective education initiative requires strong support and engagement on the part of the faculty, staff and community interests. All three institutions continually work to involve faculty and staff in planning and implementing interventions. The LBCP has developed an organizing and implementation structure *(Attachment B)* that brings together key leaders and content experts from the three institutions and business community. The LBCP partners support and fund one organizing employee, Judy Seal, whose charge is to facilitate committees and LBCP events. In the last year, the LBCP sponsored two faculty symposiums focused on aligning curriculum. The symposiums brought together English, math and reading faculty of the three institutions.

***Your efforts to raise money to enable Long Beach City College to grant free tuition for the semester to students from Long Beach Unified***

A cornerstone of the LBCP is incentivizing students to attend college directly after high school graduation. To accomplish this, the Long Beach City College Foundation created the LBCP Scholarship and to date has raised over $6M. The scholarship funds the first semester enrollment fees of all incoming Long Beach area high school graduates who attend LBCC immediately after graduating high school. The scholarship requires that any state aid that is applicable be utilized first and the LBCP Scholarship pays for any portion that state aid does not cover. In fall 2012, over 1600 students received the scholarship.

***Whether your partnership has led to a reduction in the number of students needing remediation in math and English***

The LBCP has resulted in several key improvements and led to important innovations that will further improve student success. Each March, the LBCP sponsors an event to issue a report card that highlights key milestones, opportunities and challenges *(Attachment C).* Improvements such as the increases in LBUSD students attending a college or university, the increased persistence and success of LBUSD students who attend LBCC and CSULB and the number of LBCC students who receive the LBCP scholarship which pays the enrollment fee of every Long Beach area high school graduate who attends LBCC are evidenced. The LBCP has also led to key innovations such as the LBCC Promise Pathways alternative placement method *(Attachment D, E & F)* which has become a national model.

***Whether you believe the Long Beach College Promise can be replicated throughout California***

At the core of the LBCP is a deliberate and sustained commitment to analyze and discuss the students' experience from K through university. From this dialogue, the education partners commit to working on solutions that benefit the student. Thus, the LBCP is replicable in virtually any community that has K-12 and higher education institutions. Many communities have launched similar initiatives such as Sonoma County, the Pasadena area, San Francisco and many other communities throughout the country. Having a deliberate working relationship across publically funded educational institutions should not be exceptional, but instead an expectation.

***What policymakers can do to encourage the creation of similar efforts around the state***

Policymakers should consider empowering communities and regions to solve challenges to preparing a well-educated and competitive workforce. In 2010, LBCC and LBUSD partnered with Senator Alan Lowenthal to sponsor SB 650, the College Promise Partnership Act *(Attachment G)* which was signed into law by Governor Brown. SB 650 eliminated several statutory barriers that prevent K-12 and community colleges from working closer. Unfortunately, the legislation was narrowed to only Long Beach. Policymakers should create incentives that encourage K-12 and higher education partnerships by eliminating statutory and regulatory barriers for institutions willing to engage in partnerships such as the LBCP. Furthermore, state funding incentives should be considered to reward communities and regions that formalize commitments to improve student outcomes.

***Other Solutions for addressing immediate and long-term issues concerning higher education, including funding***

Public education partnerships such as the LBCP rely on the leadership, commitment and support of members, boards, faculty and businesses of the communities they serve. However, state funding cuts and crippling regulations undermine such efforts. State leaders and policymakers must act to

support such partnerships. Organizations such as California Competes, the Campaign for College Opportunity and the CSUS Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy have advocated several policy and funding changes that would support improving student success. Finally, all Californians must commit to placing the appropriate priority on funding public education and hold the leaders of these institutions accountable for preparing the best workforce in the nation.

*Attachments*
*A - Long Beach College Promise MOU*
*B - LBCP Organization Structure Chart*
*C - LBCP Report Card 2012*
*D – LBCC Promise Pathways Brochure*
*E - June 25, 2012 - LA Times Article, Gauging Students' Skills*
*F - September 3, 2012 - Community College Week Article, Making the Cut*
*G - SB 650, College Promise Partnership Act*

# The Long Beach College Promise

March 20, 2008

## THE PROMISE:

We promise the opportunity of a college education to every student in the Long Beach Unified School District.

## BACKGROUND:

The Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC), and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) have created a partnership to make higher education an attainable goal for every student.

The Long Beach education community has a responsibility to prepare its young people for successful careers and productive lives. In the world of today, our regional economy is tied to the global economy. To prepare our young people for success, we must offer nothing less than a world-class education. Each student needs and deserves an opportunity for at least some higher education – and often a college degree. The future of Long Beach depends upon our effectiveness in developing a well-educated workforce to sustain and advance the economy of the city and surrounding region.

## OUR GOALS:

To meet this challenge, The Long Beach Education Partnership commits to these goals over the next ten years:

- Provide world-class education from preschool to graduate school that prepares Long Beach students for successful engagement in the global knowledge economy;
- Increase the percentage of LBUSD students who are prepared for and attend college directly from high school;
- Increase the percentage of LBCC students who earn degrees and/or career and technical certificates;
- Increase the percentage of LBCC students who successfully transfer to CSULB or another four-year college or university; and
- Increase the percentage of CSULB students who graduate with a bachelor's degree and/or advanced degrees.

## OUR COMMITMENTS:

1. *We promise to provide information, services and resources to help Long Beach students and their families prepare for college.*

   LBUSD promises that, starting in 6th grade and continuing through the senior year of high school, students and families will be offered active assistance in:
   - Learning about college opportunities and the value of a college education
   - Visiting college campuses
   - Learning about, taking and completing college preparatory courses
   - Preparing for college
   - Applying for college admission
   - Learning about and applying for college financial aid opportunities
   - Applying for college financial aid

# The Long Beach College Promise

March 20, 2008

2. *We promise to help students successfully transition to and succeed in college and to provide opportunities in career and technical education.*

   LBCC promises that all students from LBUSD will be offered active assistance in:
   - A tuition-free first semester of higher education at LBCC (by 2011)
   - Learning about and applying for college financial aid
   - Transitioning from high school and succeeding in college or career
   - Vocational training, technical education, and certification in numerous fields
   - Learning about opportunities for transfer to CSULB or another four-year university
   - Completing requirements and applying for transfer to a four-year university

   CSULB promises that all students from LBUSD or LBCC will be offered active assistance in:
   - Applying for admission to CSULB
   - Transitioning from high school or community college and succeeding at CSULB
   - Meeting requirements for a bachelor's degree
   - Learning about and applying for college financial aid
   - Preparing for careers and graduate school

3. *We promise to provide the opportunity to earn a high-quality bachelor's or advanced degree to all LBUSD and LBCC students who successfully prepare for college.*

   CSULB promises that
   - All LBUSD students who successfully complete CSU minimum college preparatory requirements will be offered admission to CSULB and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree
   - All LBCC students who successfully complete CSU minimum community college transfer requirements will be offered admission to CSULB and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree

4. *We promise to work together to deliver these promises for the young people and families of the Long Beach area.*

   LBUSD, LBCC, and CSULB will work together on all of the activities that comprise the *Long Beach College Promise.* We will work together to support and encourage success for all students from preschool to graduate school. We will work together to provide, assess, improve and expand high quality, world-class educational opportunities in the Long Beach community.

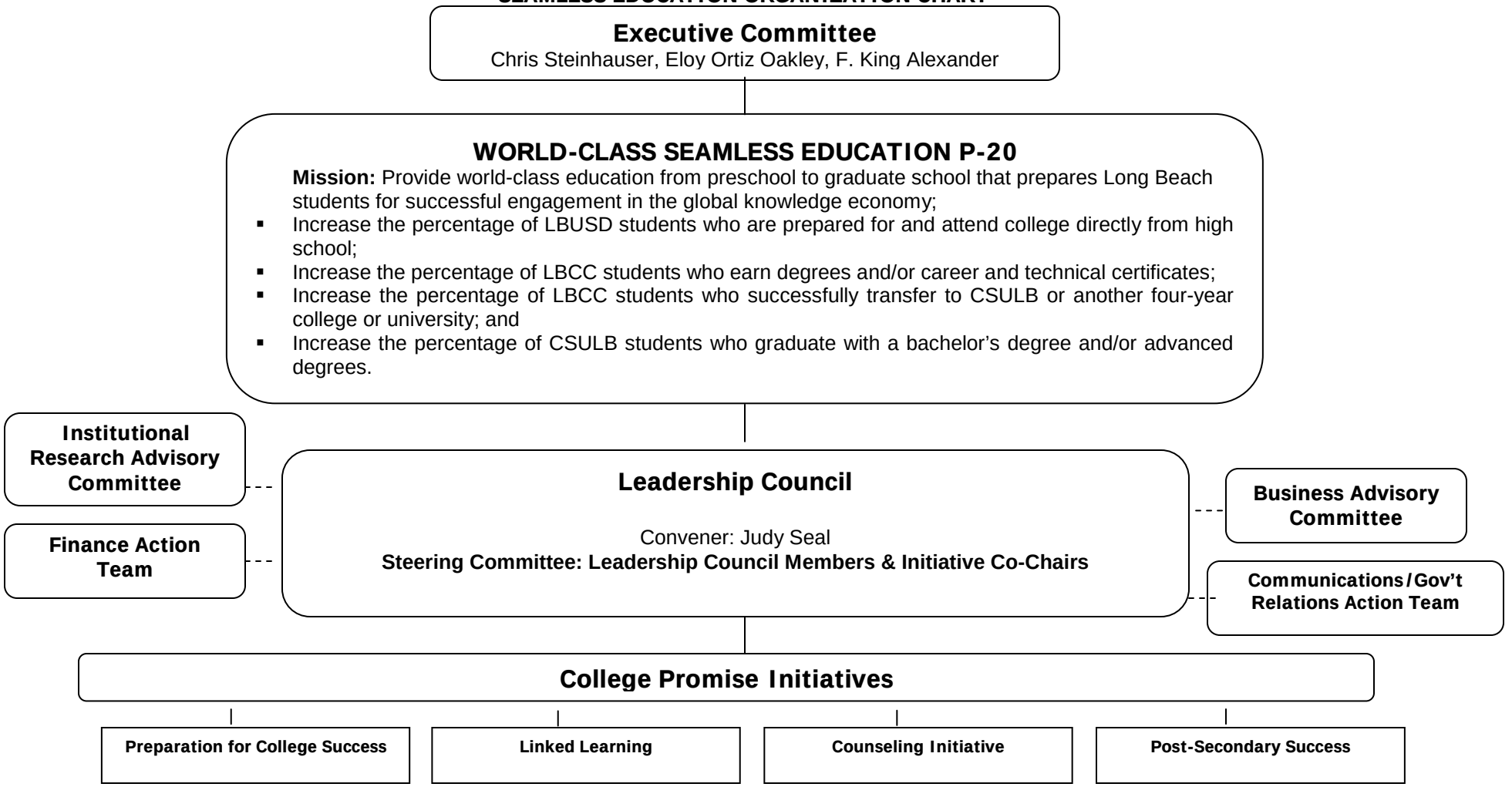
Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent, Long Beach Unified School District

Eloy Oakley, President, Long Beach City College

F. King Alexander, President, California State University Long Beach

**LBUSD • LBCC • CSULB**

**SEAMLESS EDUCATION ORGANIZATION CHART**



long beach unified school district

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LONG BEACH 1949

# LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE PROGRESS REPORT • MARCH 2012

WWW.LONGBEACHCOLLEGEPROMISE.ORG

**Against all odds, the promise endures.**

Four years ago, we signed the Long Beach College Promise and committed our institutions to providing local students greater opportunities to pursue and complete their college education. Today, the College Promise is a nationally recognized effort that is getting results.

Against difficult odds, including hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding cuts to our three institutions, we see encouraging signs of success. More high school graduates here are enrolling in college, and more of those students are prepared for rigorous college-level classes. As part of the College Promise, thousands of students have taken full advantage of a free first semester at Long Beach City College and guaranteed admission to Cal State Long Beach with minimum CSU eligibilty requirements. Our organizations continue to collaborate on pathways that offer students smoother and more efficient transitions from high school to community college and university.

We remain firmly committed to continuing our progress. This fall, LBCC will implement a new initiative called Promise Pathways which provides guaranteed access to courses and academic support for all Long Beach Unified School District graduates who enroll full-time in the fall. In addition, new placement procedures, which better reflect students' college readiness, will enable more local students to enroll and succeed in college level courses in their first semester. We also reaffirm our pledge to provide a local guarantee to students seeking access to the state university system.

As we have stated with increasing urgency in prior reports like these, however, California must find a way to stabilize its volatile funding for K-12 and higher education. Without such a basic commitment of resources from our state, the College Promise is in greater peril than ever. In fact, state cuts already are impacting students in significant ways, and yet further cuts to education loom as the state continues to predict budget deficits.

Together our three institutions will continue doing their part to meet the goals of the College Promise, but we must provide our educational institutions the resources they need to succeed. You can help by learning more at www.longbeachcollegepromise.org and by demanding that elected officials in Sacramento protect our students and our future.

Chris Steinhauser
LBUSD Superintendent

Eloy Ortiz Oakley
LBCC Superintendent-President

F. King Alexander
CSULB President

# GOALS OF THE LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE:

- Increase the percentage of **LBUSD** students who are prepared for and attend college directly from high school;
- Increase the percentage of **LBCC** students who earn degrees and/or career technical certificates;
- Increase the percentage of **LBCC** students who successfully transfer to **CSULB** or another four-year college or university; and
- Increase the percentage of **CSULB** students who graduate with a bachelor's degree and/or advanced degrees.

## More Students Attending College:

Nearly three of four (74%) LBUSD graduates are pursuing post-secondary education within one year of graduation. Half of those students are enrolled at CSULB or LBCC.

729 LBUSD students entered CSULB as freshmen in 2011 – more students than ever before – and a 40% increase from 2008 when the Long Beach College Promise began.

LBUSD freshmen now comprise over 18% of CSULB's entering freshman class.

LBCC fall 2011 enrollment of LBUSD graduates increased to 1,675 despite state funding reductions which have curtailed course offerings at LBCC.

## Unprecedented Scholarship Support:

Every local high school graduate who enrolled at LBCC this fall paid no enrollment fees - over 1,600 students this year alone - thanks to the Long Beach College Promise Scholarship. The LBCC Foundation has raised more than $6.5 million and established an endowment with those funds to pay the first-semester enrollment fees for all qualified local high school graduates who enroll at LBCC.

## Students are Better Prepared & Persistence is Up!

LBUSD students' English and Math proficiency rates, as measured by the Early Assessment Program (EAP), improved even as participation rates increased significantly.

While the number and proportion of CSULB freshmen from LBUSD has grown, the percentage requiring math and English remediation has decreased.

LBCC students from LBUSD continue to be much more likely to persist in college. LBUSD students' persistence dramatically outpaces the persistence rate of students entering from other high schools.

Since the establishment of the Long Beach College Promise, CSULB transfer students from LBCC are retaining at a higher rate than non-local community college transfer students admitted under more rigorous criteria.

# College Promise Partners Attract State, National Attention

## *Governor Signs Long Beach College Promise Act*

*On March 20, 2008 the Long Beach College Promise was signed by CSULB President F. King Alexander, LBCC Superintendent-President Eloy Ortiz Oakley and LBUSD Superintendent Chris Steinhauser.*

In a move that will help more Long Beach Unified School District students attend and succeed in college, California Gov. Jerry Brown recently signed Senate Bill 650, the Long Beach College Promise Act, lifting a state cap on concurrent enrollment and allowing more local students to take community college courses while in high school.

Sponsored by LBUSD and LBCC, the bill was authored by State Senator Alan Lowenthal, a former psychology professor at CSULB.

The College Promise Act provides participating LBUSD students with an aligned sequence of rigorous high school coursework leading to capstone college courses, creating a more streamlined path to college.

"This bill will give us more flexibility to ensure that our students are adequately prepared to enter higher education institutions and to transfer in a timely fashion," said LBCC Superintendent-President Eloy Ortiz Oakley.

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long beach unified school district

Over the past year, LBUSD has been lauded by a variety of national officials and organizations citing the school district's college readiness efforts. The Broad Foundation's annual report praised the progress made in LBUSD over the past decade.

The American School Board Journal hailed the district's "world class" gains in student achievement despite tough times, and a representative of the Alliance for Excellent Education wrote of his recent visit to LBUSD: *"I was reminded of what is really possible in urban education. When we hear of great, transformative superintendents, we often hear names like Michelle Rhee (Washington, D.C. schools) or Joel Klein (New York schools). While I wouldn't take away anything from other leaders, to me, Chris Steinhauser and the LBUSD staff should be at the forefront of any conversation on great district leadership and the types of district systems to which the nation should aspire."*

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

Long Beach City College and the College Promise were cited as outstanding examples of student success in a report recently released by the independent California Little Hoover Commission, which recommends ways to improve state programs. The report called on the Governor and the California State Legislature to refine the mission of the community colleges and to refocus policies and resources on boosting students' basic skills, increasing their career and technical education options, and improving their preparation for transfer to four-year universities, much like the College Promise.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LONG BEACH 1949

Cal State Long Beach was one of just five universities nationwide recognized for meeting stringent criteria on affordability, access and quality in a report released last June by The Education Trust. Recognition was based on enrollment of a proportion of low-income students that is at or above the national average and graduation of at least 50 percent of all its students.

In addition, CSULB President F. King Alexander was one of just 10 university presidents and chancellors invited to a private White House meeting on Dec. 5 with President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to talk about affordability in higher education. During the meeting, attendees shared how they have worked to promote innovation, reduce costs and increase productivity during a time of reduced state funding.

# PROMISE PATHWAYS

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

*A New Path to Academic Success*

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

## A NEW PATHWAY

The Promise Pathways is a new college-wide initiative at Long Beach City College (LBCC) designed to dramatically increase the number of Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) students who successfully complete college. The Promise Pathways will help more students reach their goals in less time by increasing academic preparation in high school, aligning that preparation with college readiness standards, and creating well defined and supported educational pathways for all students.

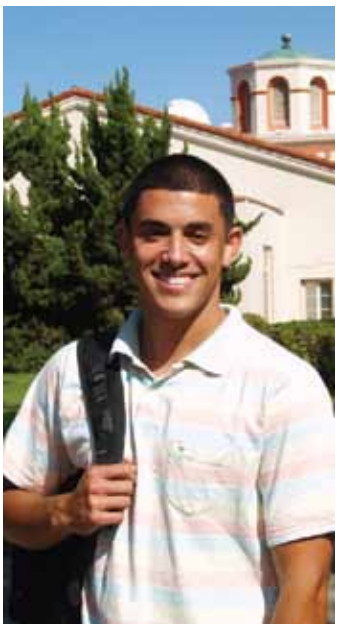
The Promise Pathways program is an extension of the well-known and nationally recognized Long Beach College Promise, a partnership between LBUSD, LBCC, and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) which began in 1994 and was refocused on increasing college access and success for students in greater Long Beach on March 20, 2008.

## THE PROMISE PATHWAYS PROGRAM

LBCC's Promise Pathways emphasizes early academic and career preparation, guaranteed and prescriptive course schedules based upon student goals, and integrated support services.

LBCC faculty members are working closely with their colleagues from LBUSD and CSULB to align both academic coursework and college readiness expectations so that more students graduate from high school ready to enter and succeed in college level work.

By creating customized and prescriptive schedules for each of the nearly 1,000 students in the initial cohort, the Promise Pathways frontloads students' key foundational coursework in English, reading and math courses to reinforce the skills they need most to succeed in college. Students will continue to take sequences of courses in subsequent semesters that advance them toward their goal of transfer, degree or certificate attainment.



Moreover, this program builds on the groundwork laid by the Long Beach College Promise. The Promise Scholarship pays first semester registration fees for all greater Long Beach area high school graduates that attend LBCC in the first semester after their graduation. The Promise Pathways requires students to attend school full-time, immediately after graduation which significantly increases students' likelihood of succeeding in college. The Promise Pathways has already more than doubled the number of students from LBUSD enrolled full-time in the first-semester of the program.

# PROMISE PATHWAYS

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

**"Long Beach is in the forefront of a movement in community colleges nationwide to reassess the use of placement tests for incoming students."**

*— Los Angeles Times*

## STREAMLINED PATHWAY TO COMPLETION

LBCC has developed and implemented new methods of placing students in English and math in the Fall of 2012. These placement pilots use predictive analytics to more accurately place students at the level at which they are likely to perform well. Doing so significantly increases students' placements into college-level work, allowing hundreds more students to begin college-level English and math courses immediately upon enrolling at LBCC. As a result of this effort, students in Promise Pathways are expected to avoid approximately two semesters of remedial coursework they would have otherwise been required to take.

The innovative predictive placement method utilizes comprehensive analysis of students' high school academic records rather than assessment scores alone. This model is supported by a growing body of statewide and national research which demonstrates that high school performance is a better predictor of success in college courses than standardized tests. The research on which LBCC's predictive placement is based received the 2012 Excellence in College Research award from the Research and Planning (RP) Group and is being tested for potential expansion to other colleges by the RP Group and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.[1]

Promise Pathways students also will benefit from a contextualized reading pilot. Developmental reading courses have been paired with electives from other academic disciplines. The faculty members coordinate assignments, allowing students to learn reading skills in the context of their academic coursework, increasing the likelihood of success in both courses.

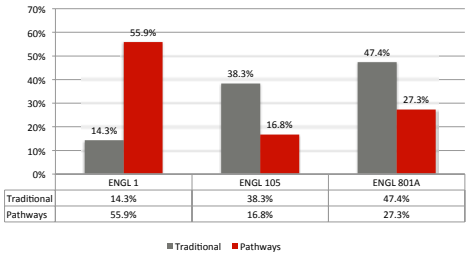
During their academic career, every Pathways student will receive a variety of integrated support services to provide students with a close, personal connection to LBCC and to provide the College with the ability to monitor and guide students' progress. Specific measures include the integration of our College's success courses into a unified, coherent sequence and the development of a coaching pilot to provide personalized advising and additional academic support.

## A COLLEGE-WIDE EFFORT

Long Beach City College's Promise Pathways has been developed by an extensive team of faculty, staff, and administrators in close and regular collaboration with colleagues from LBUSD. All involved are confident that the Promise Pathways will significantly increase the number of students who will achieve meaningful educational outcomes and are strongly committed to ongoing evaluation and continual improvement of the program.

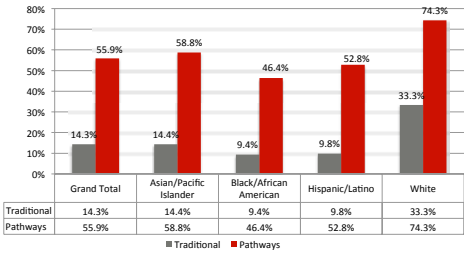
[1] Additional information about the placement pilot and the award available at: http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/promising-pathways

**English Placement - Fall 2012 at LBCC**
**Alternative Placement vs. Traditional Placement**



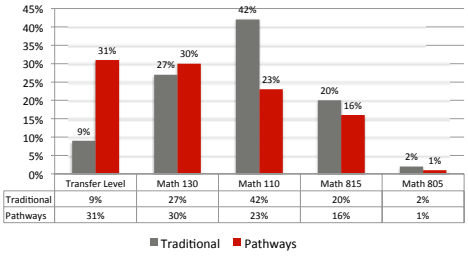

| | ENGL 1 | ENGL 105 | ENGL 801A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 14.3% | 38.3% | 47.4% |
| Pathways | 55.9% | 16.8% | 27.3% |

**Student Placement in Transfer-Level English**
**Alternative Placement Pilot by Ethnicity**



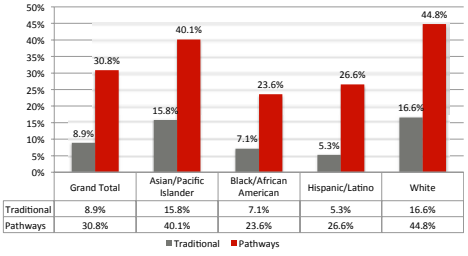

| | Grand Total | Asian/Pacific Islander | Black/African American | Hispanic/Latino | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 14.3% | 14.4% | 9.4% | 9.8% | 33.3% |
| Pathways | 55.9% | 58.8% | 46.4% | 52.8% | 74.3% |

**Math Placement - Fall 2012 at LBCC**
**Alternative Placement vs. Traditional Placement**




| | Transfer Level | Math 130 | Math 110 | Math 815 | Math 805 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 9% | 27% | 42% | 20% | 2% |
| Pathways | 31% | 30% | 23% | 16% | 1% |

**Student Placement in Transfer-Level Math**
**Alternative Placement Pilot by Ethnicity**




| | Grand Total | Asian/Pacific Islander | Black/African American | Hispanic/Latino | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 8.9% | 15.8% | 7.1% | 5.3% | 16.6% |
| Pathways | 30.8% | 40.1% | 23.6% | 26.6% | 44.8% |

**Long Beach City College** | 4901 East Carson Street | Long Beach, CA 90808

**For more information:**
www.lbcc.edu/promisepathways
**(562) 938-4206**

Los Angeles Times

LATEXTRA

MONDAY, JUNE 25, 2012 ▪ LATIMES.COM/LANOW

BON CHAMBERLIN Los Angeles Times

**PLACEMENT TESTS** won't hurt Edward Yacuta: Long Beach City College is using his high school grades to decide which English class he should take.

# Gauging students' skills

## Long Beach and other two-year colleges are rethinking how they place new freshmen in classes.

BY CARLA RIVERA

Edward Yacuta felt rushed and nervous when he took a test to determine whether he was ready for college-level English classes at Long Beach City College.

The 18-year-old did poorly on the exam, even though he was getting good grades in an Advanced Placement English class at Long Beach's Robert A. Millikan High School.

Most community colleges would assign students like Yacuta to a remedial class, but he will avoid that fate at Long Beach. The two-year school is trying out a new system this fall that will place students who graduated from the city's high schools in courses based on their grades rather than their scores on the standardized placement tests.

Long Beach is in the forefront of a movement in community colleges nationwide to reassess the use of placement tests for incoming students.

The issue is especially acute in California, where about 85% of students entering a two-year college are assigned to remedial English classes and 73% to remedial math, mostly based on placement tests. Only about one-third of those students go on to earn an associate degree or transfer to a four-year college, according to California's community college system.

Remedial classes — sometimes referred to as developmental or basic education — typically don't offer credit that counts toward graduation. Many students must take multiple levels of remedial courses to catch up. And some research indicates that remedial courses don't adequately prepare students for more advanced courses.

Nationwide, students and states spent about $3 billion on remedial education last year, according to a report by Complete College America, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C.

[See Placement, AA2]

# Colleges rethink placement tests

[Placement, from AA1]

"We're concerned about the additional costs of time and tuition these students may be taking on unnecessarily," said Judith Scott-Clayton, author of a recent study on remedial placement by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University.

"But in addition," she said, "many students may get discouraged and say 'forget it.' "

Research by Scott-Clayton and others indicates that the placement tests are a poor predictor of how students will perform in college classes and that high school grade point averages can be a better barometer.

Scott-Clayton said that the placement tests are not without value but that they should be one of several measures to determine proficiency. She acknowledged that would be more time-consuming and would pose a logistical challenge to high school counselors and college advisors, particularly those who handle large numbers of students.

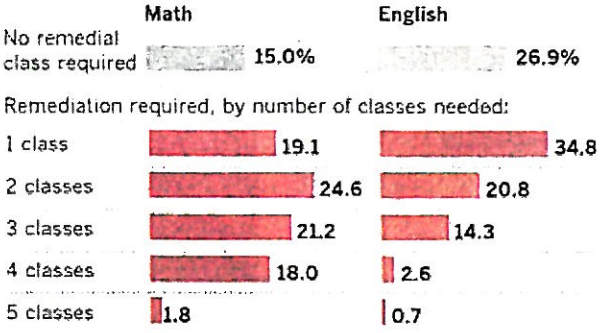
Many school systems are revising their programs. Connecticut passed legislation last month to replace most remedial education at public colleges with intensive college-readiness programs and supplemental support. The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District in San Diego County worked with local high school teachers four years ago to coordinate their English curricula and place students who earned an A or B in senior-year English directly into college-level English.

California law requires the use of multiple criteria — such as test scores, study skills, educational background and goals — to determine which classes to place students in. But the placement test is the primary tool, and transcripts and grade point averages are not widely used.

## Playing catch up

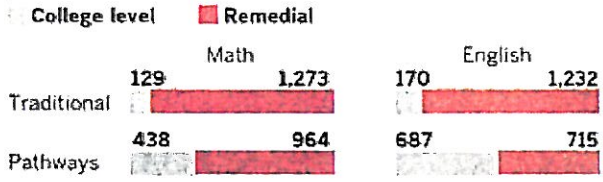
Based on standardized placement tests, most students entering community colleges in California are assigned to various levels of remedial classes. Such classes typically don't provide credit toward graduation or transfer to the UC or Cal State systems.

### Placement test performance, fall 2009




### A new approach

At Long Beach City College, the Promise Pathways program is taking high school grades into account when placing new students. So far, here is how the program is affecting placements for fall 2012:




Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding and levels not shown.

Sources: California Community Colleges chancellor's office, LBCC.

KHANG NGUYEN Los Angeles Times

In response to the Long Beach initiative and research, the office of California's community colleges chancellor is conducting a statewide study to determine whether high school transcripts and grade point averages should be incorporated into placement decisions at the state's 112 two-year colleges.

Twenty-two colleges are participating in the study, with a report due in October. One outcome may be an online database where all colleges can access high school transcripts, said Sonia Ortiz-Mercado, dean of matriculation and early assessment in the chancellor's office.

"If students can start at a higher level, their chances of success are going to be far greater," Ortiz-Mercado said. "It would have a great impact on persistence rates and completion rates. And at a time when the colleges are financially strapped and course capacity is limited, being able to get them through quicker is important."

The Long Beach program, called Promise Pathways, could provide a model. The college, which has a long collaboration with the Long Beach Unified School District, will use high school transcripts and senior English and math grades to determine the appropriate college classes, which students must take in their first semester.

The new approach came after the college found that 60% of students it placed in remedial English classes had earned an A or B in their high school English course. Meanwhile, 35% of students placed in college-level English had received a C or D in high school. And a small number of students who failed English in high school wound up being placed in the college-level class based on the placement test.

Typically, about 170 of the 1,400 incoming freshman coming from Long Beach Unified would be placed in college-level English this fall and about 130 in college-level math.

Under the new system, the college estimates that 800 students will be placed directly in college-level English and 450 in college-level math.

Students in the program will also have to enroll in a college success course to help them with time management, note-taking and other study skills.

Officials estimate that the average student will save a semester and a half of remedial coursework. The system is expected to especially benefit black and Latino students, who are disproportionately assigned to remedial classes, said Long Beach City College President Eloy Oakley.

"We're confident in the data we've looked at and confident that students will be placed into the appropriate class," Oakley said.

Yacuta, the Millikan graduate, said he wants to major in business administration and eventually transfer to Cal State Long Beach. He's hoping that going directly into a college-level class will save time and money.

"Being accepted into the program is a real convenience for me because it's going to help me to get out sooner," he said.

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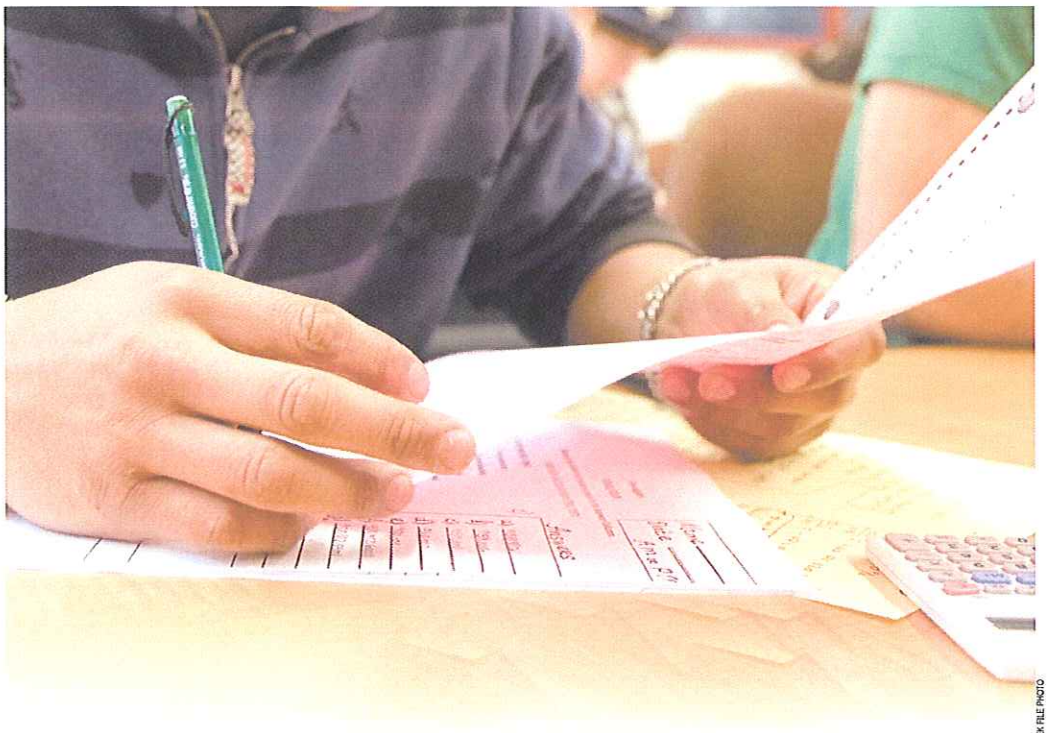
COVER STORY

# Making The Cut

## Colleges, State Re-Examine Placement Tests

By Paul Bradley



CCWEEK FILE PHOTO

Consider the cut score, that all-encompassing, essential number that determines the future of legions of community college students.

Score above the cut score on a standardized placement test and proceed to college-level course work, greatly enhancing the chances of eventually earning a college degree.

Earn a score below the cut line and get a ticket to one or more developmental courses, a place sometimes dubbed the Bermuda Triangle of higher education — the place where students go in, but never come out. Only a tiny percentage of students who take remedial courses ever finish college.

That high-stakes nature of placement tests employed by community colleges across the country is among the factors driving a fundamental re-examination of the exams, raising questions about whether they create a serious impediment to the college completion agenda.

An emerging body of research indicates that standardized placement tests are poor predictors of college success and that a student's high school transcript does a far better job of telling a college where a beginning student belongs.

That hypothesis is now being tested by Long Beach City College in California, which just admitted a cohort of nearly 1,000 students whose placements were determined not by a placement test, but by their high school grades.

"I don't think that tests are the evil here," said college President Eloy Oakley. "The way we have used the tests are the problem. We have leaned on the placement tests almost totally to place students. I don't think you can rely just on a test to judge a student's capacity to succeed."

Last month, Oakley was among the college officials who greeted the new cohort of students, who are graduates of schools in the Long Beach Unified School District, which has had a long partnership with the college. The students, part of a project called Promise Pathways, enjoyed a picnic lunch, met with counselors and learned about the expectations of college life.

For LBCC, the challenge is particularly acute. More than 90 percent of incoming students typically test into one or more developmental courses. Worse, a study conducted by the college found that "the average number of semesters of development coursework our students are required to complete reached 5.6 semesters in fall 2011. The amount of remediation required significantly increases the time needed to complete educational goals and for far too many students becomes an insurmountable barrier, dissuading many from completing."

The study, which examined a five-year cohort of more than 6,000 students, also found a wide gap between the results of placement tests and the performance of students in high school classrooms. More than 60 percent of students placed in remedial English classes had earned an A or B in their senior year English class. At the same time, one-third of students placed in college-level English courses had received a D or an F in high school English.

"Taken together, these results suggest

the possibility of a dramatic misalignment between the measures we commonly used to assess and place students and those most likely to predict performance in our classrooms," the study found. "Moreover, increasing the alignment between how we assess students and how they are likely to perform in our courses may have dramatic potential for both our students, by aligning their placements more closely with their zone of proximal development, and for our instructors in the classroom."

The findings buttress those of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. A study the CCRC released earlier this year found that up to one-third of students assigned to remedial courses through placement tests are improperly assigned, and that high school transcripts are a better indicator of college readiness.

Under LBCC's new initiative, 52 percent of cohort students will be taking college-level English, compared to just 11 percent during the first semester last year. The college predicts that 571 Promise Pathways students will complete transfer-level English in their first year of college, compared to 101 Long Beach high school graduates who were admitted in fall 2010.

The idea is to start students at a higher level and boost their chances at success by preventing them from languishing in developmental education classes. Hispanics and blacks, who are disproportionately assigned to developmental education classes, are expected to benefit from the initiative.

Oakley said the approach is not a pilot program, but a permanent change. It is being closely watched in California; the office of California's community college chancellor is studying whether high school transcripts and grade point averages should be made part of placement decisions at all of the state's 112 community colleges. A report is due in October.

"The program will be reviewed, and we'll take a close look at the effect to see if we can scale it up to all freshmen," Oakley said. "We hope to find many thousands of students are succeeding in their first year, getting through college English and math. And I hope we can close some the achievement gaps that affect students of color."

LBCC's work is the most vivid example of efforts to boost student outcomes by improving assessment and placement at community colleges. But it's not the only one. A broader movement is taking hold across the country to embrace a more holistic approach to determining student placements in developmental education courses.

Some states are rewriting tests to better align with curriculum. Others are keeping the tests, but combining them with other data such as high school grades.

In Connecticut, for example, a new state law will drastically reduce remedial placements in 2014. Only the most severely unprepared students will be able to take a remedial course, and it will only last one semester. For other students, developmental education will be embedded into college-level coursework.

Austin Community College in Texas is evaluating student essays to refine placements for students at or near the cutoff score. Both Florida and Virginia are developing customized placement tests that are closely tied to curriculum.

The movement is described in a new report by Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based nonprofit that studies education and workforce issues. Titled "Where to Begin? The Evolving Role of Placement Exams for Students Starting College."

The report describes a "new narrative" that questions many of the assumptions that have long shaped thinking on student readiness. This new narrative is based on five key elements, the report said:

- Placement tests are high-stakes exams that could affect a student's entire educational trajectory.
- The effectiveness of traditional developmental courses is unclear. They may hinder rather than help a student's educational progress.
- Accelerating students through and out of development classes, condensing their time there, leads to better outcomes.
- Placement exams are weak predictors of success in gateway courses. High school transcripts do a better job.
- Math and English assessments provide a narrow picture of student readiness, not measuring things such as motivation, persistence and critical thinking.

**"Our goal is to get more people to finish. We want to close those achievement gaps that have been so stubbornly persistent."**

— Eloy Oakley, President
Long Beach City College

While states and colleges are looking at different approaches, one thing is clear: the one-size-fits-all approach to assess and place students, as embodied on standardized tests, is quickly falling out of favor.

"The states are at the forefront of this movement," said Gretchen Schmitt, program director for post-secondary state policy at Jobs for the Future. "Different states and different colleges are taking different approaches. It's part of a more holistic approach to the student success initiative."

Schmitt said the movement is being fueled by technological advances which have made data more accessible and useful than ever before.

"It's not just the access to data," she said. "It's also the ability to use it, to get it into the hands of practitioners. It's not just the institutional research people who have the data now. The data is no good unless you can use it."

Oakley hopes the data that LBCC will develop will advance the completion agenda.

"Our goal is to get more students to finish," he said. "We want to close those achievement gaps that have been so stubbornly persistent. Developmental English is such a huge barrier to our students."

Even as colleges implement new assessments, more research is needed, Schmitt said. Researchers should examine whether the customized assessments are better in predicting student success than off-the-shelf diagnostics. They also need to study whether informing students of the high-stakes nature of the test makes a difference in test scores and predictive value.

She foresees a day, perhaps within five years, when tests are just part of a larger assessment of a student's readiness.

"Some kind of assessment will be needed to determine where a student has deficiencies," she said. "But the tests won't be all or nothing. They'll be part of a larger process." ▲

PHOTO COURTESY LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

**Long Beach City College President Eloy Oakley (left) meets with faculty members at an event welcoming a new group of students whose academic placements are based on their high school transcripts.**

## Research Writes a New Narrative About Placement Tests

| TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE | REFORM NARRATIVE |
|---|---|
| Placement exams are low-stakes tests. | Placement exams are high-stakes tests. |
| Developmental education helps underprepared students succeed in college. | The effectiveness of traditional developmental education is unclear. |
| Students cannot successfully skip recommended developmental courses. | Accelerating some students through or out of developmental courses seems promising. |
| Placement exams predict whether students can succeed in college-level classes. | Placement exams are weak predictors of gateway course success; high school grades do a better job. |
| The math and English skills as assessed by placement exams (and taught in remedial courses) are critical to college success. | Math and English assessments provide at best a narrow picture of students' college readiness—and some assessed skills may not be needed by all college students. |

SOURCE: JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

**It's YOUR TURN** CCW wants to hear from you!

**Q** Do standardized placement tests represent a serious impediment to the college completion agenda?

Share your Comments: **ccweekblog.wordpress.com**

ALL THINGS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
www.ccweek.com

# SENATE BILL No. 650

**Introduced by Senator Lowenthal**

February 18, 2011

An act to add and repeal Sections 76001.5, 76002.1, 76003, and 76004 of, and to add and repeal Article 1.5 (commencing with Section 48810) of Chapter 5 of Part 27 of Division 4 of Title 2 of, the Education Code, relating to the College Promise Partnership Act.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 650, as introduced, Lowenthal. Postsecondary education: the College Promise Partnership Act.

Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Existing law authorizes the establishment of community college districts under the administration of community college governing boards, and authorizes these districts to provide instruction at community college campuses throughout the state.

Existing law authorizes the governing board of a school district to authorize pupils, with parental permission, who would benefit from advanced scholastic or vocational work to attend community college as special part-time students to undertake one or more courses of instruction at the community college level. Existing law authorizes the parent or guardian of a pupil to petition the governing board of a school district to authorize the attendance of the pupil at a community college as a full-time student on the ground that the pupil would benefit from advanced scholastic or vocational work. Existing law further authorizes the governing board of a community college district to admit those students to any community college under its jurisdiction.

This bill would enact the College Promise Partnership Act, and authorize the Long Beach Community College District and the Long

Beach Unified School District to enter into a partnership, as specified, to provide participating pupils with an aligned sequence of rigorous high school coursework leading to capstone college courses, as defined, with consistent and jointly established eligibility for college courses. The act would authorize the governing board of the community college district to admit specified students to any community college under its jurisdiction as a special part-time or full-time student pursuant to the act, and to assign priority for enrollment and course registration to certain students.

Existing law authorizes a community college district, for the purposes of receiving state apportionments, to include special part-time and full-time students in the district's report of full-time equivalent students if those students are enrolled in community college classes that are open to the general public.

This bill would authorize the Long Beach Community College District to include high school students who attend a community college within the district who participate in a partnership under the act to receive state apportionments on the same basis as other community college districts.

The bill would require the Long Beach Community College District to report to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges the moneys utilized for the partnership by no later than November 1 of each year the partnership is in operation.

The provisions of this bill would become inoperative on June 30, 2018, and, as of January 1, 2019, would be repealed, unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date that the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least 4 of 6 specified goals.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the Long Beach Unified School District and the Long Beach Community College District.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) In order to attain and surpass the education levels of some of the most competitive economies in the world, the number of students earning college degrees in California each year would

have to increase by more than one million by 2020, nearly tripling the number of annual completions today.

(b) Research by the Institute for Higher Education Policy shows that only 30 percent of the students who in enroll in California community colleges successfully complete a certificate degree or transfer within six years. Only 25 percent of African American students, and 18 percent of Hispanic students, achieve the same result.

(c) The Long Beach College Promise partnership, which includes the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), the Long Beach City College (LBCC), and the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), is a nationally recognized partnership that is committed to increasing college success for students in greater Long Beach.

(d) The Long Beach College Promise partnership provides early and sustained outreach to students and families through college transition, academic support and guidance, guaranteed admission to CSULB, and a tuition-free first semester for every local high school graduate who enrolls at LBCC the fall following graduation. Together, these efforts have proven to have a positive impact on students' college attendance, persistence, and college readiness rates.

(e) The Long Beach College Promise partnership has increased the number of LBUSD students who attend college and significantly increased the acceptance rate of Long Beach kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, students desiring to go directly to CSULB.

(f) The Long Beach College Promise partnership has allowed CSULB to accept over 80 percent of LBUSD applicants.

(g) LBCC's student success initiative requires students in key gateway courses to compete directed learning activities with assistance from learning specialists and has increased the overall success rates in these courses. Students who complete the activities are three times more likely to successfully complete the course.

(h) A 2010 report by McKinsey & Company, entitled "How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better," identifies LBUSD as one of the world's top 20 school systems in terms of sustained and significant improvements, and as having made significant improvements in elementary math scores from 2004 to 2009, inclusive.

(i) The McKinsey & Company report ranks LBUSD as one of the top three school districts in the United States. The McKinsey & Company report concludes that the best school systems partner with higher education, have community and parental support, and communicate well with stakeholders.

(j) Innovative and creative programs that involve the collaboration of each of the state's education systems provide the most promise for student success and ensure future competitiveness of California's economy and workforce.

(k) A 2009 survey by the Legislative Analyst's Office found that for kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, categorical flexibility has had a positive impact on many school districts' ability to implement their strategic plan, and made it easier to develop and balance a budget, dedicate resources to local education priorities, make staffing decisions, and fund programs for struggling students.

(*l*) The state's ongoing economic crisis necessitates providing flexibility to educational institutions that agree to partner in order to effectively utilize resources, improve student academic successes, and provide a seamless bridge to college for all pupils.

(m) The Long Beach College Promise will allow the public education institutions in Long Beach, which have a proven track record of success in improving outcomes for all students, to move their partnership to a new level and to help create a model through which California can begin to increase completions at a scale and pace to meet President Obama's 2020 completion goals.

SEC. 2. Article 1.5 (commencing with Section 48810) is added to Chapter 5 of Part 27 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Education Code, to read:

Article 1.5. College Promise Partnership Act

48810. This article shall be known and may be cited as the College Promise Partnership Act.

48810.5. The Long Beach Community College District and the Long Beach Unified School District may enter into a partnership to provide participating pupils with an aligned sequence of rigorous high school coursework leading to capstone college courses, with consistent and jointly established eligibility for college courses. As used in this article, "capstone college course"

means a community college course described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (d) of Section 48800.

48811. (a) The purpose of the partnership authorized by Section 48810.5 shall be to provide a seamless bridge to college for pupils not already college bound and to reduce the time needed for advanced students to complete programs.

(b) A pupil who elects to participate in the partnership authorized by Section 48810.5 shall complete the augmented California Standards Test in grade 11 to determine readiness for college-level coursework, and shall enroll in coursework during grade 12 to remedy any deficiencies diagnosed by the augmented test.

(c) Article 1 (commencing with Section 48800) does not apply to pupils enrolled in a partnership operating pursuant to this article.

48812. (a) The Long Beach Community College District and the Long Beach Unified School District shall design focused curricular pathways leading to credit in general education or a career technical certificate or degree, including at least one capstone college course.

(b) The partnership shall coordinate the delivery of student support services, including counseling, to participating pupils.

(c) The Long Beach Community College District shall not be eligible to enter into a partnership unless it participates in the Early Assessment Program (EAP) as described in Section 99301.

48813. (a) For purposes of allowances and apportionments from Section B of the State School Fund, the Long Beach Community College District shall be credited with additional units of full-time equivalent students (FTES) attributable to the attendance of partnership pupils at the Long Beach City College.

(b) Pupils of the Long Beach Unified School District who attend Long Beach City College pursuant to this article shall, for purposes of allowances and apportionments from Section A of the State School Fund, continue to receive credit for attendance by those pupils computed in the manner prescribed by law, and a pupil's attendance at school for the minimum schoolday shall be deemed a day of attendance for purposes of making the computation.

(c) The Long Beach Community College District shall not receive an allowance or an apportionment for an instructional activity for which a school district has been, or shall be, paid an allowance or an apportionment.

48814. This article shall become inoperative and, as of January 1, 2019, is repealed on June 30, 2018, unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least four of the following goals:

(a) An increase in the percentage of school district students who attend college directly from high school.

(b) An increase in the percentage of school district students who are determined, by assessment or other means, to be prepared for college-level English and mathematics by the commencement of their first regular semester at the college.

(c) An increase in the average number of college units completed prior to first semester enrollment by entering freshmen from the school district.

(d) An increase in the number of students who successfully complete college-level English and mathematics in their first year.

(e) An increase in the number of students who complete 25 transferable units in their first year.

(f) An increase in the number of school district students who earn a degree or certificate at the college, or successfully transfer to a four-year university, within four years of graduating from high school.

SEC. 3. Section 76001.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

76001.5. (a) The governing board of a community college district may admit to any community college under its jurisdiction as a special part-time or full-time student, in any session or term, any student who is eligible to attend community college pursuant to Article 1.5 (commencing with Section 48810) of Chapter 5 of Part 27 of Division 4 of Title 2.

(b) The attendance of a student at a community college pursuant to this section is authorized attendance, for which the community college shall be credited or reimbursed pursuant to Sections 48802 and 76002, provided that no school district has received reimbursement for the same instructional activity. Credit for courses completed shall be at the level determined to be appropriate by the school district and community college district governing boards.

(c) This section shall only apply to the Long Beach Community College District.

(d) This section shall become inoperative, on June 30, 2018, and, as of January 1, 2019, is repealed, unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date that the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least four of the following goals:

(1) An increase in the percentage of school district students who attend college directly from high school.

(2) An increase in the percentage of school district students who are determined, by assessment or other means, to be prepared for college-level English and mathematics by the commencement of their first regular semester at the college.

(3) An increase in the average number of college units completed prior to first semester enrollment by entering freshmen from the school district.

(4) An increase in the number of students who successfully complete college-level English and mathematics in their first year.

(5) An increase in the number of students who complete 25 transferable units in their first year.

(6) An increase in the number of school district students who earn a degree or certificate at the college, or successfully transfer to a four-year university, within four years of graduating from high school.

SEC. 4. Section 76002.1 is added to the Education Code, to read:

76002.1. (a) For the purposes of receiving state apportionments pursuant to Section 76002, the Long Beach Community College District may include high school students who attend a community college within the district that participate in a partnership pursuant to the College Promise Partnership Act (Article 1.5 (commencing with Section 48810) of Chapter 5 of Part 27 of Division 4 of Title 2).

(b) This section shall become inoperative on June 30, 2018, and, as of January 1, 2019, is repealed unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date that the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least four of the following goals:

(1) An increase in the percentage of school district students who attend college directly from high school.

(2) An increase in the percentage of school district students who are determined, by assessment or other means, to be prepared for college-level English and mathematics by the commencement of their first regular semester at the college.

(3) An increase in the average number of college units completed prior to first semester enrollment by entering freshmen from the school district.

(4) An increase in the number of students who successfully complete college-level English and mathematics in their first year.

(5) An increase in the number of students who complete 25 transferable units in their first year.

(6) An increase in the number of school district students who earn a degree or certificate at the college, or successfully transfer to a four-year university, within four years of graduating from high school.

SEC. 5. Section 76003 is added to the Education Code, to read:

76003. (a) The Long Beach Community College District shall report to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges the moneys utilized for the partnership pursuant to Article 1.5 (commencing with Section 48810) of Chapter 5 of Part 27 of Division 4 of Title 2 by no later than November 1 of each year the partnership is in operation.

(b) This section shall become inoperative on June 30, 2018, and, as of January 1, 2019, is repealed, unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date that the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least four of the following goals:

(1) An increase in the percentage of school district students who attend college directly from high school.

(2) An increase in the percentage of school district students who are determined, by assessment or other means, to be prepared for college-level English and mathematics by the commencement of their first regular semester at the college.

(3) An increase in the average number of college units completed prior to first semester enrollment by entering freshmen from the school district.

(4) An increase in the number of students who successfully complete college-level English and mathematics in their first year.

(5) An increase in the number of students who complete 25 transferable units in their first year.

(6) An increase in the number of school district students who earn a degree or certificate at the college, or successfully transfer to a four-year university, within four years of graduating from high school.

SEC. 6. Section 76004 is added to the Education Code, to read:

76004. (a) The Long Beach Community College District may assign priority for enrollment and course registration to any of the following:

(1) Students pursuing and making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree, certificate, transfer, or basic skills objective that is declared or reaffirmed upon enrollment in each academic term.

(2) Students pursuing and making satisfactory academic progress pursuant to an approved individual education plan toward a career development objective that is declared or reaffirmed upon enrollment in each academic term.

(3) Students registering for precollegiate basic skills courses in which they have been placed based upon the diagnostic results of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) described in Section 99301 or the equivalent.

(b) This section shall become inoperative on June 30, 2018, and, as of January 1, 2019, is repealed, unless the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the State Board of Education jointly certify before that date that the Long Beach College Promise partnership has achieved at least four of the following goals:

(1) An increase in the percentage of school district students who attend college directly from high school.

(2) An increase in the percentage of school district students who are determined, by assessment or other means, to be prepared for college-level English and mathematics by the commencement of their first regular semester at the college.

(3) An increase in the average number of college units completed prior to first semester enrollment by entering freshmen from the school district.

(4) An increase in the number of students who successfully complete college-level English and mathematics in their first year.

(5) An increase in the number of students who complete 25 transferable units in their first year.

(6) An increase in the number of school district students who earn a degree or certificate at the college, or successfully transfer to a four-year university, within four years of graduating from high school.

SEC. 7. The Legislature finds and declares that a special law is necessary and that a general law cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because the Long Beach College Promise partnership has been successful in providing quality education for pupils from the Long Beach Unified School District and there is a need to continue this partnership into the future with the Long Beach Community College District.

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