

Abstract

John Paul Black. THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS OF NORTH CAROLINA DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY AT LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES. (Under the direction of Dr. David Siegel) Department of Educational Leadership, November, 2008.

The purpose of this study was to examine the interpretive processes of administrators and staff at individual community colleges in the North Carolina system. The study examines how developmental education policy, established at the state level, is interpreted and applied at the local community college. The study examines how administrators and staff in the North Carolina system interpret their role in serving growing numbers of new and returning college students, many under-prepared for college level work. In particular, the study looks at internal and external influences that shape the interpretive process for individual administrators and staff as they balance the influences of state legislators and state higher education authorities with local needs in serving under-prepared students at the local community college.

The study used a qualitative case study methodology to examine local developmental education policy at three community colleges in the North Carolina system. The study used current research on developmental education policies from a variety of states as a point of reference for the processes that take place at local community colleges in the North Carolina system. In addition, it used leadership theory to guide the study of internal organizational processes at local colleges and institutional policies at the state level.

From the research conducted, I have concluded that community college administrators and staff are following a process of interpretation that considers local

organizational influences, local community influences, and external institutional influences as part of a larger state system.

THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS OF NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY
AT SELECT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Dissertation Presented to
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by

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COLLEGE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY
AT SELECT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents James and Catherine Black. It represents a lifetime of their efforts to change the course of our family's path, and it demonstrates the role that education can play in changing the lives of the next generation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The American College is obliged to supplement the American school. Whatever elementary instruction the schools fail to give, the college must supply.” From the inaugural address of Charles W. Elliot, President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869 (Elliot, 1869, Retrieved February 8, 2007, from http://hul.harvard.edu/huarc/eliot_inaug.html).

Overview

The role of the American college in serving students at all levels of college readiness is part of a long tradition in higher education. The ways in which colleges and universities have provided “open access” to students have developed over time, and they have been interpreted by schools to meet the demands of a changing society. Thelin (2004) describes federal and state changes in higher education policy since the 1970’s, which have provided seemingly “universal access” to higher education, while ignoring the impact on individual colleges in serving large numbers of under-prepared students. The role of federal and state higher education policy related to open access to higher education is the subject of ongoing debate for both policy makers and the institutions, which must comply with state higher education mandates. Serving under-prepared students in higher education presents specific challenges for state governing boards, which must often try to satisfy the will of the people through legislation and policy (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Public higher education is obliged to adapt to policy mandates as established through legislation, and colleges must try to make sense of the mandates while considering local organizational and institutional needs as they

implement state higher education policy. Spillane et al. (2002) assert, “To explain influences on implementation, we must explore the mechanisms by which implementing agents understand policy and attempt to connect understanding with practice” (p. 391). Policy interpretation and implementation needs to be considered in light of the broader context of the individual college, because college or university administrators may be influenced by various factors beyond the original state policy.

According to Phelan (2000), community colleges in the US serve approximately 10 million students, and almost half require at least one remedial course. With such large numbers of students requiring additional non-credit courses, state governing boards and legislative bodies are taking a greater interest in the outcomes of learners as determined by standardized performance measures and system wide policies (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002).

The primary focus of this research was to examine the implementation of state public higher education policy related to developmental education in the North Carolina Community College System, and the interpretative processes used during the implementation of the policy at individual community colleges. The study was conducted using multiple-site qualitative case study research. System-wide state policies present challenges to local community colleges as they attempt to meet the needs of all students who apply for admission. For community colleges, the goal of maintaining an “open door” policy for admission requires management of various competing interests to balance standards and access. Levine (2004, para. 8) highlight many of the diverse areas that community colleges must manage as part of their changing mission:

Community colleges are facing an onslaught of new students asking them to provide -- at higher levels than ever before -- access to college, English-language instruction, continuing education, professional development, contract services, vocational education, worker retraining, and upper-division collegiate programs.

Developmental education encompasses many of the programs cited by Levine (2004) as a first step in serving students as part of an open access policy.

Community colleges in North Carolina assess and place students according to standards that are set at the state level, in light of federal standards for access to higher education (Higher Education Act of 1965, 1965, Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/HEA.htm>). In order to understand how local developmental education policy is interpreted at the local college, it is important to understand the influences that affect local interpretations of developmental education policy as local college administrators and staff members implement the policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of state higher education policy on local community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) as they attempt to balance institutional requirements from the state higher education authority with local organizational needs. The study examines, documents, and analyzes the interpretive processes of individual colleges as they implement developmental education policy articulated at the state level. The reinterpretation of the policy by individual institutions is a process that is important to research in order to

determine the true impact of the relationship between state higher education systems and local institutions. The study may serve to spur greater awareness of how state higher education systems establish educational policy in general and how local institutions apply the policy.

Significance

The role of state higher education governance and its impact on the mission, standards, and curriculum of higher education is an area that requires more analysis. While there is a great deal of research that focuses on evaluating policies related to access to higher education (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Boylan, 2001; Spann 2000), the process of interpreting and applying policy is less understood. Much of the educational research related to developmental education programs at community colleges and universities in the United States focuses on pedagogy, student outcomes, and other classroom level practices that may help to shape the way in which students are educated (Perin, 2006). In particular, Perin cites numerous studies that have looked at the issue of developmental education's impact on higher education (Gumport & Bastedo, 2001; Mazzeo, 2002; Shaw, 2000). Perin points out that the individual institution's interpretation of developmental education policy is an area that clearly needs more attention. The types and strictness of state policy for remedial education have been traced to variations in the level of higher education coordination (Shaw, 2000), differences in ideology (Gumport & Bastedo), and the level of interest in raising educational standards (Mazzeo). Shults (2000) and Jenkins and Boswell (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002) summarized the remedial policies of

states and community colleges, but neither study aimed to review the practices of specific institutions in relation to the policy of the states in which they were located.

Conceptual Framework

The study of community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System as interpretive systems was based on a theoretical model by Daft and Weick (1984), which examines organizations as interpretation systems and draws from the research of Weick (1976) and Orton and Weick (1990). Weick reevaluated popular organizational theory and specifically how educational systems function from the perspective of organizational theory. Weick challenges the popular view of educational institutions as strict well-defined organizations, and he examines educational organizations to reveal all of the different interests and influences that are present within the organization. Weick terms the relationship between the various components that make up an educational organization as “loosely coupled”; the defined path to achieving a common goal may be different depending on the perspective of the individual or group interests. Weick describes how tightly coupled systems might define their internal processes:

An organization does what it does because of plans, intentional selection of means that get the organization to agree upon goals, and all of this is accomplished by such internal operations of rationalized procedures as cost-benefit analyses, division of labor, specified areas of discretion, authority invested in the office, job descriptions, and a consistent evaluation and reward system (p. 3).

From the perspective of organizations as loosely coupled interpretation systems, state higher education policy implementation depends on the interests and actions of individual administrators and staff as stakeholders at local community colleges. The stakeholders attempt to comply with the demands of the state developmental education policy while simultaneously attempting to satisfy local organizational needs. In the North Carolina Community College System there has been an evolution in the policy for serving under-prepared students over the past 15 years as documented through legislation and policy mandates beginning in 1993 (SL 1993-321, Section 108). The most recent policy update regarding developmental education and placement testing in the NCCCS came into effect on August 24, 2006 (Lancaster, 2006). The implementation of the policy at local community colleges may be impacted by institutional influences from the state system and organizational needs at the local colleges. The relationship and level of interaction or “coupling” is relevant to this study in helping to analyze factors that may influence the process of interpretation of developmental education policy at the local college; i.e., how much supervision and support is provided by the NCCCS.

Dyer (1999) describes how the lack of attention to the processes of implementation of policies has a critical effect on the development of innovations or adjustments to existing policy. If there is a lack of shared understanding of the process of implementation, then the benefits of the collective experiences of multiple institutions will never be realized by all of the members of a state higher education system. The study used the model provided by Daft and Weick (1984) in developing a clear organizational analysis of developmental education policy in the North Carolina Community College

System by using multiple-site qualitative case study analysis to examine and document the process of implementation of developmental education at local community colleges in the NCCCS. Daft and Weick's model served as a guide for analyzing the interpretation processes at each school by conducting individual site analysis and later cross-case analysis to look for similarities and differences in the ways in which community colleges interpret and apply developmental education policy. Daft and Weick's model helped explain how and why a single state-mandated policy was interpreted differently across community colleges in the North Carolina system.

Research Questions

For the purposes of this research, the study examined how the individual community colleges within the North Carolina Community College System interpret and apply developmental education policy in three areas: admissions and placement requirements, academic programs, and program management. The overarching question guiding the study was: How do community colleges interpret and implement state policy mandates related to developmental education? Sub-questions of interest include:

- a) What are the environmental and organizational influences that guide the individual community college to interpret the NCCCS developmental education policy in the manner it does?
- b) Who are the principal actors involved in the process of interpretation and implementation, and what are the dynamics of the interaction between them?

Context of the Study

Throughout the United States, colleges and universities struggle with the balance between access to higher education and the need to maintain program standards. Perin (2006) defines access in this way: “Access goals are achieved if all applicants with a secondary education credential are admitted to postsecondary programs” (p. 340). According to a 2004 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 42% of all entering students at two-year public institutions required at least one remedial course, which is a direct reflection of the gap between secondary school preparation and the standards for higher education (p. 5). With such large numbers of students requiring additional time to complete a program of study, the costs to the states, workforce, and the individual learner are straining the resources of higher education. It is estimated that 1.4 billion dollars per year goes to provide remedial education in the United States (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). This amount reflects direct appropriations to colleges for the courses offered; it does not reflect the overall cost for the institution, state government, and society to provide services to developmental education students. In some states, such as California, the number of students requiring developmental education services at a community college may be as high as 90% of incoming freshman (Sengupta & Jensen, 2006). The Public Policy Institute of California (Baldassare & Hanak, 2005) sponsored a study of the labor needs for California by the year 2025; educational attainment is considered one of the key drawbacks to California has continued economic growth. According to Baldassare and Hanak, to limit access to higher education would make the shortage of educated workers event more critical in

California. Vaughan and MacDonald (2005) assert that there are institutional policies in states throughout the US that use remedial education at the community college as a means to provide greater access and opportunity in society without necessarily considering the impact on the local college. By conducting a comparative analysis of colleges applying the same policy within a given state, this may be a way to more clearly describe the impact of developmental education policy.

The needs of developmental education students go beyond simply offering courses; there is a range of services that are part of developmental education programs at colleges and universities. While this is not a new problem, due to the increase in the number of students seeking post secondary education over the past fifty years, the need for remedial courses in reading, writing, and mathematics has also increased. The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) documents a 21% increase in higher education enrollments between 1994 and 2004. According to the NCES (2004), the percentage of students requiring more than one year for developmental education increased from 28% to 35% between 1995 and 2000. While there is no single standard or definition to encompass all of the services provided to developmental education students, the National Center for Developmental Education (NCDE) defines the role of developmental education in serving under-prepared college students: “Developmental education programs and services commonly address academic preparedness, diagnostic assessment and placement, development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and affective barriers to learning” (National Association of Developmental Education, 2001). Remedial courses are only part of a larger range of services; individual

states and even institutions may define the standard in varying ways for students to be able to move out of developmental education programs and towards a degree-credit course of study (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002, p. 3).

Developmental Education Placement Policies

Mandatory placement is an issue debated by those seeking to maintain open access and those that advocate more control over placement of students and maintaining quality standards. While all students are accepted at community colleges regardless of their academic level at the time of admission, the services they are provided may vary greatly from state to state and even school to school (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002). In a 2002 report sponsored by the Education Commission of the States (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy), it is revealed through a survey of the nation's community colleges that approximately 20 states have mandated placement-testing standards for community colleges. In other cases, individual institutions may establish their own policies for placement testing (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, p. 3). The variation across the nation in developmental education policy and the corresponding assessment makes it difficult to establish any clear pattern for examining the interpretive process at the individual community college based on a common standard. It is unclear how much of the implementation of developmental education policy at individual colleges is truly a decision of the administration at the college and how much is based on

the influences from the state higher education board or other external forces (Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1985). It is this point in the process that may provide an opportunity to examine how state policy affects the individual institution and at what level “organizational” decisions are made on how to interpret the policy (Daft & Weick, 1984).

Community College Governance

It is helpful to examine community college governance systems to understand how state policies, in a general sense, are managed from the policy maker’s perspective and are passed forward to the individual college. The role of state policy and the process for applying that policy at colleges and universities is critical to understanding how students in colleges and universities are assessed, placed, and guided through their educational experience. State Higher Education Executive Offices (SHEEOs) essentially control higher education policy in each state by working with legislators to develop new policies (Boylan, Saxon, & Boylan, 1999). The federal government does not require a common standard for higher education governance. Developmental education is an example of a program that is affected by policies promoted by state higher education authorities. In particular, state community college systems in the United States have tremendous diversity in policies between states and amongst institutions within a given state, and this may lead to great variance in the ways students are assessed and served at individual colleges. Perin (2006) describes, “The inconsistencies that exist between state policy and community colleges may result in marked inconsistencies in the delivery of services to students within the same system” (p. 341). Key differences between the goals of state policy makers and individual community colleges may have several

consequences: (a) individual colleges may find ways to passively ignore the true nature of the state mandate, (b) the goals of external governance may not match the reality for individual colleges, and (c) the individual college's adaptations of state policy may make it difficult to measure the success of the policy according to a common system-wide standard (Burke & Minassians, 2004).

Across the United States, there are a variety of administration and governance structures of public two-year community and technical colleges, including state boards of education, consolidated boards, coordinating boards, and independent state boards. Higher education governance structures are relevant to this study to establish the basis of the impact of state policy at local institutions. Concerning the specific challenges facing state boards in serving under-prepared college students, Mills (1998) explains, "State higher education coordinating boards, in particular, have become the policymaking bodies that translate concerns about remediation into operational imperatives for public colleges and universities." Community colleges in the United States serve almost half of all higher education students in the US; according to the American Association of Community Colleges (2007), community college enrollment constitutes about 46% of all undergraduates in higher education.

Summary

The need for developmental education has been established through studies conducted by Jenkins and Boswell (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002), and the National Center for Educational Statistics (2004), which reveal that as the population of college-bound

students has increased the number of students in need of developmental education has increased proportionally. In the absence of a federal policy for the assessment, placement, and curriculum for developmental education students, states are required to create their own policies and procedures for managing developmental education. The variation across the states and even within states is an area that needs to be examined for its impact on local colleges that must interpret and apply state policy. This study examines the North Carolina Community College System developmental education policy and explores how local community colleges interpret and apply the policy. This study seeks to not only explain how local college administrators and staff implement state policy, but also the interpretive processes that are applied to create a local policy that makes sense of the state policy in light of local needs.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 includes a review of all relevant literature related to the history of college remediation and the roots of developmental education programs. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to compare the interpretive processes at three community colleges within the North Carolina Community College System. Chapters 4, 5, 6 analyze the policies and implementation practices utilized by the three colleges that are the subjects for this research. Chapter 7 offers conclusions and discusses implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this literature review is to provide background and context to more accurately examine how higher education systems in the United States establish and apply developmental education policy at the state level and the process for implementation at an individual college or university. There is particular focus on the interpretive process and its impact on the implementation of state policy. Four interrelated sections comprise the review of literature: (1) the history of remediation and access policy in the U.S. higher education system, (2) the foundations of developmental education in the community college, (3) the current policy environment for developmental and remedial education, and (4) higher education institutions as interpretation systems.

The History of Remediation in the U.S. Higher Education System

Casazza and Silverman (1996) outline the debate over college admissions standards and the definition of a “college level” curriculum for higher education. This issue has been part of an ongoing debate between educators and administrators since the beginning of higher education in the US. There are three questions that are used to summarize this debate: (1) What is the purpose of post-secondary education? (2) Who should attend college? (3) What should the curriculum look like? Scholars and academic leaders have struggled to answer any of the three in a definitive way. An examination of the historical perspective on remediation allows for an understanding of how the organizational and institutional influences have affected developmental education

programs over time. In addition, the historical record will shed light on continuing challenges over time in serving under-prepared students.

Since the inception of higher education in the United States, education has been viewed as a personal – rather than a government – prerogative (Kennedy, 1952). Phipps (1998) describes the practical need for remediation during the 17th century. Its purpose was to provide under-prepared students with the skills necessary to succeed in college and gain employment in the labor market. Remediation in Latin and Greek was a documented need at institutions in the new world. Beyond the need to remediate students of privilege having difficulty with Latin and Greek, there is some sense from the literature that the founding fathers understood the social impact of providing higher education and the equalizing effect it would have in ordering the social structure of a new nation. In more recent times, postsecondary education has become a necessary path to employment and economic independence. As more and more students seek to benefit from higher education, colleges and universities have had to adapt to those needs. As a result, colleges and universities have had to manage a larger population of incoming students that may not possess the necessary academic skills to be successful.

In 1636, at the first chartered college in the United States, Harvard College, there was a need to help students with the basic skills of reading and writing so they could further their education beyond grammar school. Harvard recognized this challenge and expressed the needs of the society in its initial mission statement: “To advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches” (Harvard University, 2007, para. 4). The traditions of early American universities

reflected the influences from Cambridge and Oxford style curricula and admissions requirements (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). The curriculum at Harvard, Yale, and William & Mary reflected their primary religious influence. As the nation grew, the role of higher education became more significant in helping to form the next generation of leaders with their own unique American identity. Although the role of government in higher education was not notable in the beginning of higher education in the US, Thomas Jefferson espoused the value of an educated populous. In an 1813 letter to John Adams, Jefferson expressed his belief in the value of education as a means to bring about greater equality in society through merit rather than birth (Cappon, 1998). Jefferson connected the role of government to educate its citizens with the democratizing effect that education could have in promoting equality in society. This represents a change in the role of the state in promoting education for the masses.

The diversity of subjects remained limited in the beginning of American higher education and reflected strong traditions. Entrance requirements in the early years of higher education focused on a student's proficiency in Latin and Greek. The original entrance requirements of Harvard required incoming freshman to be able to read required selections in Latin and Greek. For those students unable to meet the entrance standards, there were tutors provided to assist students; Harvard had an institutional policy that provided for remediation to meet the local standards of the time (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Because of the stated requirements, which other schools such as Yale and William & Mary also mandated, grammar schools were obliged to prepare students in the skills needed to succeed in college. Each college attempted to establish clear standards. In

1828, The Yale Report stated that admissions to the university should be limited to those who could pass the entrance exam and meet the standards as established by the faculty of the university (Casazza & Silverman, 1996). This debate at a single institution signifies the complex nature of the larger national debate over how to balance standards and access. In 1830 at Cornell University, there was a similar debate (Casazza & Silverman) as Ezra Cornell, President of Cornell University, wanted to know why so many students were failing the basic entrance requirements. The response from the faculty was, “They don’t know enough” (Casazza & Silverman, p. 5). Casazza and Silverman highlight an anecdote that demonstrates the difference between the approach of the administration in maintaining access to the university and the faculty who had an interest in maintaining standards that reflected on the reputation of the institution. Ezra Cornell wanted to know why the faculty could not simply teach the students what they did not know, while the faculty felt that this was not the role of a college professor.

The policies at early American colleges were based on standards set by the faculty and the administration. The measure of the student’s ability to comply with institutional standards was regulated locally at the university, not by a formal government policy. The tradition was accepted by the educational community at all levels, as there was no formal government policy to guarantee access to higher education; the college interpreted its role in serving students based on the local institutional needs. The colleges determined whether a student was ready to enter as a freshman based on the skills determined as necessary to succeed at a college level. Cohen and Brawer (2003) explain the impact of inconsistent admissions standards for 18th century higher education. Early American

colleges set their admissions policies as independent authorities; the needs of society were the external influences of the time, but without any representative body to advocate for the public. At the time, there was no formal secondary school system to prepare students for post-secondary education. Cohen and Brawer go on to discuss the role that the individual colleges played in providing their own system of remediation or preparation within the college. The range of subjects that were taught in higher education during the middle to late 17th century was very limited. The role of higher education in the lives of the residents of the United States colonies was also limited, when one considers the total number of qualified students studying at the time. Casazza and Silverman (1996) point out that Harvard only had 465 graduates during the entire 17th century. Without a formal system of secondary education, colleges were forced to provide remediation within academies that were part of the college. According to Rudolph (1962), “The colonial college failed to establish itself as a popular institution intimately affecting the lives of the people” (p. 19).

From the late 17th century through the mid 18th century, colleges expanded the curriculum and thus, the requirements for admission also expanded. There is some debate within the literature as to whether the colleges were actually in control of entrance requirements or whether there was more remediation occurring than was reported, with the goal of saving the prestige of the institution. In 1879, Harvard developed an exam to test the writing skills of entering freshman. Almost 50% of the incoming freshman failed the entrance exam, and Harvard was obliged to provide remediation to help students reach a level that allowed them to be successful in their chosen program of study

(Casazza, 1999). As secondary and preparatory schools became more common, colleges adjusted their curricula. One of the ways that colleges adjusted the curricula was by moving subjects that were originally taught in college down to the secondary schools. Stephens (2001) explains that early American higher education was in a constant process of adjusting curricula and standards in order to maintain a level of service, while attempting to preserve standards and prestige. As public primary and secondary education became more prevalent, the challenge of preparing students shifted from the college to grammar schools and high schools. The fact that there were under-prepared students did not drive curriculum development. The higher education community established the standards based on the needs of the professional community that recruited the students into service (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). The secondary schools adapted their curricula to the changing demands of postsecondary schools, rather than functioning in isolation. Policy was established by the higher education community. The educational community as a whole chose to adopt a common standard or institutions established their own variation. In most cases, the prestige of the institution drove the other colleges and universities to adopt the same standards as the most prestigious schools.

With the United States formally established as an independent nation in the early 1800's, the education of its citizens became the responsibility of state leaders. Front among state leaders advocating for an educated citizenry were the likes of Thomas Jefferson in Virginia and Benjamin Rush in Pennsylvania. What is different about this era in higher education is that politicians became more interested in education and its impact on the nation. Previously, the individual institution established the priorities and policies

based on the needs of its constituents, as was the case in traditional English higher education (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). One of the first clear examples of the role of state leaders in forming the American higher education system is reflected in the founding of the University of Virginia in 1825 (Brubacher & Rudy). Thomas Jefferson was deeply involved in trying to reform or, as stated, “democratize” higher education to offer more options to learners. The policies in this case changed from being driven exclusively by the individual institution and its ability to control primary and secondary education, to new policies that were driven by the masses and established by those in power as representatives of the people. Casazza (1999) discusses one of the challenges facing colleges in the early years of higher education in the US related to opening access and breaking down barriers. During this period, higher education took on more of a role in serving the masses. Higher education was seen as an important part of the “democratization” of the new nation. It represented part of the struggle for a more egalitarian society, moving away from elitism. For the first time, colleges had to interpret the will of the people rather than establishing standards for the people. The need for college remediation continued to be a factor in admissions to higher education. What changed over time was the number of students, the diversity of the areas of remediation, and the shared governance over the standards for admissions.

New colleges were founded in the 19th century as a growing democracy sought to provide access to students in a variety of new careers to serve the social and economic challenges of the time (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Thelin, 2004). These colleges were established through land grants throughout the heartland of the US and represented a

continuing process of the “democratization” of higher education. Richardson and Skinner (1991) discuss the formal beginning of states’ influence in higher education in relation to federal law beginning with the Morrill Acts of 1862 (Retrieved August 17, 2008, from <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=012/llsl012.db&recNum=534>) and 1890, which encouraged states to provide public education to prepare a new industrializing society. Soliday (2002) explains that higher education had always felt the need to support the development of the next generation of students as part of its obligation or self-imposed responsibility to the larger culture. Soliday discusses the role of “social stratification” in adjusting to the needs of particular constituencies and its long tradition as part of the U.S. higher education system. The American public higher education system has long been seen as a democratizing institution that provides opportunity and equity through academic and professional advancement. Nevins (1962) describes that the original mission and ideology of state public higher education systems were to represent the social and economic opportunities of a growing democracy. The role of the American college and university in serving under-prepared students is part of the assumed responsibility that is necessary to help advance students from diverse social and economic backgrounds.

In the case of the formation of state higher education systems in the late 1800’s, the role of government in managing the education of its citizens represented a “higher” cause. Individual states and local institutions were responsible for interpreting the developmental needs of students and then creating appropriate programs of study. One of the great differences that occurred with formalized systems of public higher education

was that policies were legislated by states rather than individual institutions managing their own policies. The shift was from the college to the governing board, whose interest was the will of the people, not necessarily the will of the institution. Therefore, the college or university adopted a system of interpreting the will of the people through the policies set by the governing bodies. For public colleges or universities, there was a need to serve an ever-increasing student body that needed advanced skills to participate in a growing economy. The states became the keepers of access and equity as a result. However, public institutions had to balance their standards in light of the increasing role that the state and federal government played in managing access to the public higher education system. The increasing influence of the state in higher education was also part of an economic breakaway from the private or semi-private Ivy League schools, which were founded with an institutional “open door” policy, by serving all students who possessed the necessary skill level to achieve. By the late 1800’s those schools had become so costly that they excluded the average citizen, and as a result, public universities took on the role of serving the masses, no matter what their level of preparation.

The transition from private colleges to public universities came at a time when there was a great deal more state involvement in the curriculum of higher education, as well as a struggle to determine who actually had control over the operations of the higher education system (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Casazza & Silverman, 1996). Kennedy (1952) expands on the role of higher education in promoting equality and access:

American colleges and universities must envision a much larger role for higher education in the national life. They can no longer consider themselves merely the instrument for producing intellectual elite, they must become the means by which every citizen, youth, and adult is enabled and encouraged to carry his education, formal and informal, as far as his native capacities permit (p. 34).

One of the key changes that came about as a result of increased access to state-managed higher education was “external governance” (Hines, 2000). External governance refers to influences outside the individual college or university campus and organizational structure. Political leaders have a self-preserving need to satisfy their constituents, and the policies they legislate are created with the influence of many external forces. Hines points out politicians are not solely focused on the interests of higher education, but rather they have to consider the needs of a much broader constituency. Higher education institutions may be required to serve students under a statewide policy that may be incompatible with the local institution's needs, but may serve a perceived larger interest. State higher education leaders establish policy that will affect the individual college, yet the college may have very little input. The college or university is left to integrate a policy mandate and interpret the role of the policy within an existing system.

There is an ongoing debate in the literature as to the political and social intent of greater access to higher education. Kennedy (1952) suggests that providing more access to higher education without providing goals and standards will not serve the best interest of society. Kennedy explains that education must be based in quality for there to be any benefit to the larger society. There was a common belief at the time of the Truman

Commission Report in 1947 that the democratization of education was in large measure the responsibility of higher education institutions in their role as “change agents.” State higher education policy and federal funding became the mechanisms by which colleges and universities were coerced to make changes in the way they served students. The role of the federal government in moving states towards greater access to higher education for the masses is reflected in the Truman commission report on higher education. Kennedy states that, “Federal support for higher education should assist the states and localities to provide equality of educational opportunity for each individual able and willing to receive it” (p. 38). As pointed out in the report, there was an expectation that primary and secondary schools would provide the necessary scholastic preparation for students to be prepared to attend a college or university.

With the published results of the Truman Commission Report on Higher Education, a new era in state higher education governance took on a more formal and political context. The autonomy of the individual college or university was mitigated by the need for the state and federal government to determine what was in the best interest of the populous. With that change in policy for higher education, colleges and universities became more of an instrument for social and economic change by democratizing access to post-secondary education.

Cohen and Brawer (2003) discuss that open access to higher education has formally been a priority for colleges since the 1960’s. During this period, there was a series of reforms through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which was a direct attempt by the federal government to provide

more access to higher education for underprivileged adults. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was established to provide more opportunities for access to a college education through additional funding and financial aid. In more recent times, the Congress of the United States passed the Higher Education Access Act of 2007. This law reaffirms the federal role in higher education as one that promotes access through financial means, yet does not play a role in the curriculum or standards for admission to higher education. It is a way for the federal government to provide support to individual states, without becoming involved in the rights of states to manage their own higher education systems. Education has been seen as a way to bring about more social equality and economic opportunity for all. In reality, the debate over access to higher education has been a part of the system from the beginning of formal higher education in the United States. Since the state and federal government began to play a more decisive role in higher education by insuring open access through legislation and policy, the changes that have taken place have become more evident through higher education policy.

The Foundations of Developmental Education in the Community College

At the beginning of the 20th century, as public universities expanded across the US, the idea of a two-year college was born to help students improve their basic skills. There was a continuing need to help students fill the gap between a secondary education and the demands of a post-secondary education. As more students saw the value of pursuing a college education, universities struggled to maintain their admissions standards and at the same time serve the public interest. Absent any governmental program to deal with the issue of under-prepared college students, community colleges

were established to serve a local population and provide its constituents the opportunity to enter post-secondary education through a four-year college transfer mission (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Gleazer, 1980; Vaughan, 2003). In 1901, the first formal two-year college opened in Joliet, Illinois. The classes were offered in a high school in response to the need expressed by the President of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper, who articulated an agreement with Joliet students to transfer their credits to the university upon completion of a preparatory program (Callan, 1997). There were other educational leaders who saw the value in providing an additional path to a four-year college education. David Starr Jordan at Stanford and Alexis Lange at Berkeley are examples of educational leaders who helped develop the modern community college model. There was a clear, albeit informal and unlegislated, policy that recognized under-prepared students needed more specialized preparation in basic skills prior to entering the university. From their inception, two-year colleges were defined by public schools that saw them as an extension of current services provided by secondary schools, and four-year institutions that defined them as a filter for under-prepared high school graduates. What can be drawn from Callan is that community colleges have served as a bridge between high school and four-year institutions as part of their original mission. The need to identify and define its role as part of higher education continues to be difficult, as community colleges are often seen by the public as a bridge to higher education rather than being a legitimate part of higher education. Community colleges have been used since their inception as an alternative for state higher education boards, which may leave

community colleges to serve the needs of an ever-changing public interest, facing dynamic challenges as society's changing needs require.

During the early 1900s two-year colleges and technical institutes began to serve a growing number of middle-class students who were seeking advanced training for a marketable skill as part of the growing industrialization in the United States (Brint & Karabel, 1989). These institutions would go on to serve a growing number of veterans returning from World War I, and with that surge in the non-traditional student class, the need for remediation grew proportionally. This represents a more "open door" policy than had been part of the land-grant institutions of the late 1800s. As Roueche and Baker (1987) describe, the majority of the literature on the American community college refers to its role as a democratizing force in higher education by providing a path to post-secondary education. Serving under-prepared students has been part of the responsibility of higher education since its foundation, yet developmental education remained an informal and internal academic program until 1889. The University of Wisconsin was the first university to formally establish a defined program for developmental education in the areas of math, reading, and writing.

With the end of World War II, the growth in access to higher education was further supported by the G.I. Bill of 1944. The name "community college" was established during the time of the Truman Commission (Kennedy, 1952), and as veterans from World War II required more local services, the community college expanded its role in higher education. Nearly 50% of all college students were veterans by the end of the 1940s, and the need for remedial education was further highlighted. By the 1960s the

federal government addressed issues of access for minority students, and community colleges were chartered throughout the United States, with the primary goal of preparing the workforce by training students in vocational and technical skills. One primary area of service was the adult literacy program, which offered a first step for those seeking to enter a vocational or technical program or seeking to complete a high school equivalency. As a result of the expanding federal influence on state higher education through changes in funding during the 1960s and 70s, the challenges in serving under-prepared students were even greater, and the community college began to reinforce its role as a first stop for many students who needed remediation.

The Current Policy Environment for Developmental and Remedial Education

State higher education systems in the United States are diverse organizations that are governed by a set of standards established by the federal government but that must set policy for the local higher education institutions within their individual states. The combination of federal standards blended with state standards and policy creates variance in the way education services are provided. Higher education policy often focuses on outcomes, but how standards are set and how the individual institution applies state and federal policy are ongoing subjects of debate.

Mazzeo (2002) explains that remedial education has become one of the most debated topics in higher education over the past two decades and an area of increasing governmental action. As a result there is an increasing need to research the practices and processes in individual states and at individual colleges to establish a more formal system of assessing the impact of state policies. Boylan and Bonham (2007) describe that while

there have been improvements in the way that community colleges apply research in establishing developmental education programs, there is still a need for more shared research into policies and practices at individual colleges.

Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) explain that the federal and state government has played a role in creating policy, but the implementation is left to the local district, system, or institution. They further emphasize the lack of engagement in policy implementation by the state and federal government. State higher education systems have seen their role as governing bodies to propose reforms in higher education, yet they do not develop processes that improve the chances of successful implementation. Martinez and Nilson (2006) explain that the separation of policy maker from the policy itself is an issue that requires attention in higher education, noting, “The process of policy making cannot be completely separated from examining the outcomes of a policy nor can those who are involved in defining the rules and championing the policies be separated from examining the outcomes” (p. 302). It may be necessary for the policy maker to examine not only the outcome, but also the process of implementing the policy in the context of the individual institution.

Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) contend that part of the disconnect between the policy maker and the college or university that must implement the policy is due to a large bureaucracy in the middle, which includes law makers, college presidents, testing agencies, deans, faculty associations, and other counsels that influence the implementation of a policy. Part of the issue related to the large bureaucracy that drives state higher education policy is the role of funding and accountability (Hearn &

Holdsworth). In recent years, states have become much more demanding of colleges and universities in promoting improved return on investment. At the same time, state funding has declined. Student loans and other private financial aid sources have allowed colleges and universities to continue their level of service, but governing boards and state legislators have taken a more prominent role in the outcomes of student performance.

There is a primary role that states have assumed over the past few decades as a voice for the demands of the public for access to higher education (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002). The policy differences among state higher education organizations make it difficult to establish best practices that can be shared across community colleges, and local influences at each college affect policy decisions in their own unique ways. State leaders must adapt to the changing issues and priorities of their constituents, and their higher education governing boards are the mechanisms through which they exert their influence over the educational policies at the individual college or university. Specific curriculum and program management appear from the literature to be outside the area of interest of state boards and legislators, but there is a broader influence by managing the means and the desired outcome through accountability measures. Performance measures and funding formulas are examples of how legislators and governing boards represent the interests of the public by managing higher education institutions. According to Martinez and Nilson (2006) and Hearn and Holdsworth, state higher education leaders are less interested in the process to implement a policy than in the favorable outcome, which will satisfy the demands of the public.

The Community College “Open Door” Policy

Over the past 100 years of the growth of the community college, its purpose has been defined in varying ways depending on the perspective of the times. Cohen and Brawer (2003) define the role of the community college in a lasting way by tying its past and its future to the democratization of education. They point out that access to higher education by those that were unable or under-prepared for baccalaureate institutions has always been part of the community college mission. Cohen and Brawer explain that what has changed over time is the governance of community colleges on a state and national level, which takes away from the local control that had characterized the individual community college up to the last decade of the 20th century. Tensions still exist within community colleges to accurately define their role in serving higher education and maintaining an “open door” policy. The role of the community college is ever changing due to its status as a first stop for many on the path to higher education. Evans (2001) explains:

Before 1960, much of the role of America's two-year colleges was the transfer mission. We dealt with college-level, often university-bound students, who came with fairly adequate backgrounds in reading, writing, and general education. They may have had personal, financial, or other constraints that needed the tender loving care of our campuses, but they were not that different from the university-bound student bound directly for four-year colleges and universities (p. 187).

For today's students, Evans believes that the need for higher education has changed the nature of the student seeking post secondary education. Evans describes that one key

difference in students in two-year colleges prior to the 1960s and today's students is the motivation for attending college in the first place. Evans (2001) asserts, "They are not theoretical thinkers and learners. They are not even sure they belong in college, but they know they need the skills and knowledge offered to get the job they so desperately need" (p.187).

The Current Need for Developmental Education

McCabe (2000) highlights an important issue related to developmental education policy. Over the past decade there have been changes in educational policy brought about in part by social and economic globalization. McCabe feels that remediation is inevitable because of the need to educate students to compete in a global economy; therefore, colleges must adapt to this social change and address the needs of the students.

Oudenhoven (2002) describes in short the opposite view of those that advocate for more attention to the needs of students in developmental education. She explains that many in the educational community view remediation as a means to solve a complex problem of educational achievement and access to the benefits of higher education. Oudenhoven expresses that "Remediation, these researchers argue, is not the problem; it is the solution to meeting the educational needs of large numbers of students who might otherwise never become productive members of a society that desperately needs their contributions" (p. 36). Breneman and Harlow (1999) discuss the inevitability of developmental education for lack of any positive alternative. For community college administrators, faculty, and staff, the need to maintain standards and reach performance measures must be balanced against the potential outcome if they refuse to serve under-prepared students.

One of the nation's strongest advocates for developmental education, Hunter Boylan, President of the National Association of Developmental Education, cites two key reasons why colleges and universities provide developmental education for under-prepared students. First, Boylan states that for most public colleges and universities there is an institutional need to serve under-prepared students to fulfill the mission to society and develop a skilled workforce through open access to higher education. Second, colleges and universities must maintain a level of enrollment, which justifies its purpose for continuing (Boylan, 2001). The reasons stated by one of the leading researchers on developmental education in the US are useful to this study in examining the internal and external influences on community colleges in North Carolina. Boylan speculates that colleges and universities such as Harvard or Stanford need not lower their standards to serve under-prepared students, even though remediation is relative to the standards at any given institution. For all colleges and universities, except for the elite, there is an inevitability that they will serve under-prepared students. This study does not argue for or against providing remediation, but rather examines how the individual college is affected by offering developmental education as mandated by state higher education policy.

The profile of the students who need developmental education crosses all lines of age, race, and gender. While there are concentrated needs in low-income and ethnic minority communities (Evelyn, 2003), the research suggests that one group in particular is surprisingly in most need of developmental education: the recent high school graduate. Ignash (1997) highlights that 60% of the remedial students consists of students who attend college immediately after high school, but are still not prepared for the "13th

year.” Even though students are faced with years of developmental courses and academic challenges, students may not be aware of the impact on their future prospects in higher education. It is as if there is disconnect between the reality for higher education standards and the goals of the learner. A national survey conducted in 2005 found that 81% of high school students plan to seek post-secondary education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006; as cited in High School Survey of Student Engagement, 2005). While the numbers of students seeking post-secondary education is often seen as a positive trend, there are clearly challenges in serving such a large under-prepared population. These numbers are reflected in the surveys provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2004, p. 17) report on remedial education at degree-granting institutions in the US. At two-year public institutions, there is an average of 42% of freshman taking at least one remedial course.

While there are differences between states and the way in which policies are applied, there are similarities in the challenges that are present in defining the clear mission of the American community college. In California, the community college system is struggling to manage the diverse programs offered to the community in trying to fulfill its “open access” mission (Fisher, 2007). The state's 110 community colleges serve more than 2 million students each year. The statewide community college chancellor, Marshall Drummond, explains that the lack of preparation is a key reason community college students do not succeed. Drummond reveals that as many as 90% of incoming students test below college level in mathematics, and over 70% test below college level in reading and or writing. The example of California is one large illustration

of what is happening across the nation. As more students see post-secondary education as an option, the role of the community college in serving those that are under-prepared becomes more relevant to the overall process in higher education.

Community colleges inevitably act as a feeder system for baccalaureate institutions and with that responsibility, the role of state policy and governance has an even greater impact on the success of the mission. The role of state policy in helping or hindering the success of post-secondary students is clearly defined in a February 2007 report from the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at the California State University, Sacramento, California. The report outlines in detail the specific role of state policy and its impact in helping under-prepared students achieve the goal of successfully completing a two-year program of study or moving on to a college transfer baccalaureate program. The significance of the report to this study of the North Carolina system is that it highlights the gap between what state policy makers establish as a goal and the reality for the individual college to implement the state policy. With three-fourths of all undergraduates in California enrolling in community colleges, the issues of open access and student performance require coordination and cooperation between the state and the local college. This example is typical of other cases throughout the United States, in that each state must define its policies in serving those students who arrive without the necessary skills to achieve the institutional goal of graduating or transferring to a four-year college. The local colleges' goals may be at odds with the legislative or governing board's goal as reflected in California's struggling system. A report from California (Shulock & Moore, 2007) states, "For too long, Californians and their elected officials

have been satisfied with high levels of access and have focused policy attention on removing barriers to enrolling in college” (p. 4). This statement offers context to this study in that state policy often serves to let more students in to the system but does very little to determine how they will be served and the impact of the policy on the individual college.

Bailey and Morest (2006) address the issue of access to higher education and the role of the state in protecting access to higher education. They define three areas that reflect equity and opportunity to access the benefits of higher education: (1) adequate preparation to attend college, (2) access to college, and (3) successful completion of a college program of study. Bailey and Morest explain that only considering access to higher education without considering all of the other factors that will actually help students achieve their educational goals are missing the point of higher education. They assert that legislators and policy makers for state and federal programs ignore academic preparedness and focus solely on access to higher education. Bailey and Morest highlight the role that community colleges play in serving students of all levels, and as access to higher education increases, the challenges facing community colleges will be even greater.

Developmental education programs and remedial courses have served as the preferred method of dealing with the basic skills needs of incoming freshman, but the students may not be fully aware of their special status within higher education. Students are taking courses at the college, but they are not accumulating credits towards a degree; they are satisfying institutional and state requirements to reach a college level program of

study. The way that students perceive themselves as part of the institution is a reflection of the institutional practices in implementing developmental education policy. The need for community colleges to improve completion rates as part of an overall issue of accountability creates unique ways of guiding students through their academic experience. Grubb (2001) discusses how the responsibility for the success of an individual student has shifted from the student to the institution. This can be seen through accountability and performance based funding. The students are guaranteed access and the institution must find ways to serve them. There are differing degrees of intervention determined by the defined standards in each system. For many community colleges, under-prepared students may follow a seemingly endless path of non-credit courses, which creates a separate class of “college” students and indirectly causes social stratification within the individual college. Developmental education students are in effect part of a college within a college and they are provided a separate curriculum for the first year or two of their post secondary education.

The process of creating policy at the state level and applying the policy at the institutional level may have a cause and effect relationship regarding the unintended consequences of creating a more “open door” policy to higher education without assessing the process for managing the impact of the policy. Adelman (2007) provides context to issues of policy and process. He asks the question, “Is there really a problem of access to higher education or is there a problem of students graduating?” This point relates to the study in that there is recent legislation, i.e., Higher Education Access Act of 2007 (Miller, 2007), that addresses the issues of assisting students to attend colleges and

universities, yet there is very little connection to the successful completion of a program of study. Individual colleges are required to accept students no matter how much remediation they require. It is important to look at how policy makers assess the impact of the legislation governing developmental students. Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) point out that students may feel as if they are prepared to study at a college level when in reality they are attending a college but they are taking middle school and high school level courses. It appears from the research that the lack of attention to the overall educational process leads to confusion and disconnect as the student attempts to move on to higher education.

The relationship between an individual community college and state higher education policy makers affects the way that students are served. Decisions of academic standards, program pre-requisites, as well as assessment and placement, are all areas that are mandated in part or in full by state-level governance. The way in which the institution adapts to the changing needs of society is reflected in higher education legislation and policy and is an area that needs further examination as Cohen and Brawer (2003) explain:

The governance within community colleges that address the issues of changing demographics, the needs of the learners, labor force and other societal changes, are all part of the role of leadership within the community college as an organization. Whether it is the state or the local institution that decides how best to make the changes is part of the debate.

Green (1994) explains the different levels of purpose and action within state higher education policy; specifically, the difference between policy analysis and political analysis:

Policy analysis can be defined as the rational or technical assessment of the net marginal trade-offs between different policy choices. Unlike policy analysis, political analysis is concerned not with determining the net benefits of a given course of action, but with measuring their political weight. The aim is not so much to determine the net social benefits of a particular policy, but to determine its constituency (p. 4).

To determine if the policy processes within the North Carolina Community College System reflects common interests and practices between the system and the individual colleges, this study used the policy analysis definition proposed by Green (1994) as a point of reference in examining the interests of government and the individual colleges. With respect to the present study, the process of establishing, interpreting, and applying local developmental education policy should be considered in light of the state higher education authority and its impact on the local policy implementation. Underestimating the process of policy implementation is a common mistake (Dyer, 1999). It is overlooked in many cases as being insignificant in determining the successful outcome of a policy. If the implementation is not carefully planned as part of the development of the policy, there may be inconsistencies in the way that the policy is interpreted by individual members who are affected by internal organizational influences, as well as local external influences.

In order to more accurately discuss policy issues regarding developmental education and the remedial courses that are offered as part of these programs, it is necessary to define the standard by which students are classified as developmental. Merisotis and Phipps (2000) define the standards that colleges and universities apply when determining student admissions:

The term "college-level" suggests that agreed-upon standards exist, or at least enjoy a consensus by educators. A reasonable assumption would be that the academic community has identified specific knowledge and skills that are required of students to be successful in a college or university. Conversely, if students do not possess the specified knowledge and skills, remedial education is needed for academic success (p. 70).

As part of the discussion of policies and standards for developmental education programs, Merisotis and Phipps (2000) describe one of the key impediments to progress in establishing common standards for college-level admissions and developmental education policy. There is a need to define the role of developmental education as part of the higher education system, there is a need to define academic competencies so that there will not be such marked differences between developmental education programs, and finally there is a need to know how much developmental education cost colleges and universities. Throughout the research presented, there is a common reoccurring theme of the need to share information, standards, and practices related to policies in serving under-prepared students.

To identify the most urgent policy needs in serving under prepared students, it may be necessary to examine the most pressing institutional needs in providing a consistent path from initial assessment to classroom instruction. Perin (2005) looks at the role of institutional decision making in the context of community colleges and developmental education. Perin finds that one of the reasons for strong debate surrounding developmental education is due to the lack of an ideal model. There is a need to define the role of developmental education as a legitimate part of higher education, in order to establish a more standardized process for serving the students. According to Perin (2005), there are systematic strategies that colleges and universities need to apply in creating more productive developmental education programs in light of the absence of clear policy guidelines. Boylan et al. (1999) and Keimig (1983) discuss the need to promote an institutional commitment to developmental education. They assert that developmental programs are most effective on campuses where there is an institution-wide commitment to the success of under-prepared students. Advocates for developmental education and researchers who believe that it is an inevitable part of the community college curriculum do agree, as has been cited, that the issue must receive more attention at the local college. Oudenhoven (2002) discusses that colleges face challenges from society and academia that feel remediation at the college or university level is providing services that high schools should have already provided. Another key challenge to developmental education is the notion that developmental education programs are “dumbing down” the curriculum so that students are able to pass the course. One question for college faculty and staff is; are students really performing at the college

level? These debates are played out both in the academic and political settings; they challenge the very idea of what constitutes college level work.

There is great debate as to where developmental education programs fit into the overall institutional and organizational structure of higher education. Boylan (2001, pp. 2-6) summarizes key areas that are part of the policy debate for developmental education for both two-year and four-year institutions:

(a) There is an established need for colleges to admit under-prepared students to maintain enrollments, (b) students must improve their basic skills in order to advance to a college-level field of study, (c) developmental education has a long history in American higher education, (d) developmental education should be treated as a formal part of the higher education curriculum, (e) admissions standards should reflect the actual needs of the learners and not be used as a political tool.

The ongoing policy debate from a legislative perspective, as well as the institutional debate of how to serve under-prepared students, offers a unique opportunity to examine higher education policy not only from a theoretical perspective, but also a pragmatic approach to assess interpretive processes in general. While Boylan (2001) approaches the debate from the perspective of advocate, it is also true that the seven areas of policy debate that he summarized could be debated on behalf of the opposite perspective. This fact highlights the need to understand the motivation for applying a particular policy and how it affects the individual institution.

In a 2005 report, *Standardization vs. Flexibility* (Prince, 2005), the argument is made that serving under-prepared students requires a systematic approach in order to be effective in serving developmental education students. If institutions have too much flexibility regarding assessment and placement then students may be led to unrealistic expectations by institutions seeking to maintain the open door policy regardless of the outcome. Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) describe the process of decision-making within a two-year college and how it is influenced in unknown ways and must be examined in the context of the local institution, considering external influences as well. Kozeracki and Brooks (2006) describe how community colleges are beginning to recognize the magnitude of the issue of serving under-prepared college students. As a result, all of the departments within the college should be part of designing a program of study for developmental students as a formal part of the institution. It is clear from the research that the debate over institutional autonomy versus standardization through state higher education policy is an issue that requires further examination (Bladh, 2007; Romo de la Rosa, 2007). Developmental education programs provide an opportunity to review state higher education policy in a way that may serve to explore the wider implications in other areas of educational policy. The interpretive process at the individual college may not be fully characterized from the outside; the nature of the decisions made on behalf of a local constituency must be examined in the context of the institution to appreciate how and why the decision was made. This makes the case study approach all the more effective in examining how the institution decides to serve the students.

Each state is responsible for the implementation and funding of developmental education programs. In some states like North Carolina, funding for adult education is balanced between federal and state funds, with the largest share coming from the state. In other parts of the country, local school boards may manage the adult literacy program with alternate governance and funding. Spann (2000) outlines a key problem related to the consistency of policy, in that schools act in isolation with very little sharing of information. As Spann points out, the goals of the individual community college often do not reflect the reality of the situation as whole. This point prompts reflection back to the issue of the development of policy and the process for determining how and why the policy will be implemented. The diversity of policy and governance within community college systems has historically been one of the problems with trying to define national standards for providing services like developmental education. Each state is autonomous in defining how it will address the issue of under-prepared students; the fact that there is open access is a federal mandate but states receive no formal guidance in the way the mandate is applied at the local institution.

Higher Education Institutions as Interpretation Systems

In any organization, there is a culture that is particular to the individual group, and how the group interprets its role within the framework established for it at a higher level is what determines the application of a policy created either within the group or, in this case, by the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). Schein (1985) defines organizational culture in the context of a relationship between those that create a policy and those that must apply the policy.

The process of interpreting a policy is unique to each group. The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed, in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (p. 9).

As the educational community reacts to the needs of society and prepares students to fulfill a higher cause, they act as interpretive systems (Daft & Weick, 1984).

Organizations develop survival mechanisms to interpret events that require an appropriate response based on a set of standards coordinated through a higher authority, as well as managing external influences from the public. Kazis (2006) describes the changing role of college administrators in satisfying the demands of higher education authorities and legislators by demonstrating the benefits of higher education to larger public interests. This process helps the members of an organization develop meaning to satisfy larger institutional goals, while preserving local organizational structures. Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) describe the significance of the process of developing higher education policy and its impact on the overall relationship between the state and the higher education institution. It is not only the nature of the policy but it is the communication between the state governing board and the institution that is critical to promote a clearer understanding of the policy and the process for its implementation. Community colleges, from an institutional perspective, as part of a larger system, may interpret the same statewide mandate in different ways and apply practices that are

different because of the individual dynamics present within a single community college. Daft and Weick explain how the individuals within an organization will apply different strategies and individual practices because it is the convergence of individual interpretations that comprises the organization as whole. It is the process of translating an event and shared understanding that permits the organization to move forward as a cohesive unit (Daft & Weick). It is possible that for an individual community college, policy interpretation may be a senior administrative level process, but the process of applying the policy and interpreting the process of the implementation of the policy is a shared responsibility.

Daft and Weick (1984) outline four basic assumptions about the way organizations interpret information: (1) Organizations are open social systems and process information from the environment, (2) Individuals within the organization interpret information in different ways, which affects the interpretive process for the entire organization, (3) Strategic level managers formulate the organization's interpretation; they set the tone for the entire organization, and (4) Organizations differ in the ways that they interpret the environment. Weick (1976) provides this study with an education context to examine higher education organizations from the perspective of the relationship between the North Carolina Community College System and the individual community college. Developing meaning between the institution and the state is a necessary part of the interpretive process.

Weick (1976) more clearly states the nature of the relationship between policy makers and higher education institutions: "Intentions are a poor guide for actions" (p. 4).

Weick proposes more research be conducted within actual educational organizations, so that the relationships between all of the stakeholders within the organization can be documented in a descriptive manner. This type of study may promote greater understanding of the relationships that make up educational organizations and the nature of “coupling,” which Weick defines as the level of interaction and coordination among organizational authorities (p. 17). Weick asserts that inconsistencies in outcomes can be attributed to the lack of continuity and understanding among policy makers, administrators, and those that must implement policy.

Martinez and Nilson (2006), Martinez (2002), and Martinez (1999) provide relevant research regarding the role of state higher education boards and legislatures in designing and applying educational policy. Previous studies have examined state higher education organizations and the role of policy management between state and local institutions (Mills, 1998; Spillane et al., 2002). Martinez (2002) describes that it is important to determine if the state higher education authority, as policy maker, is separated from or attached to the implementation of the policy at the individual college or university. While Weick (1976), Daft and Weick (1984), and Martinez and Nilson (2006) discuss the relationship between governance and higher education, according to Dyer (1999) and Perin (2006) there is very little review of the actual processes of interpreting the policy itself by examining them in light of individual institutional needs.

There is much discussion in contemporary educational research about the issue of unfunded mandates, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2002, Retrieved June 17, 2008, from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>); unsupervised and

unmanaged mandates may have just as critical an impact on the successful outcome of higher education policy. Titus (2006) cites federal reforms such as the 1992 Higher Education Act, which helped establish State Post-Secondary Review Entities (SPREs) in an attempt to create higher education performance measures. For public colleges and universities, the need to interpret what is expected of them by the federal, state, and local government requires an even broader system of interpretation. Bracco, Richardson, Callan, and Finney (1999) clearly describe the balance between state authority and local autonomy as an issue that has been long debated by educational researchers. The primary question has typically been framed in terms of institutional autonomy versus state authority, or centralization versus decentralization.

Shaw (1997) explains the challenge of consistency in the interpretation and implementation of state higher education policy. The ideology of the policy makers influences their decisions on what is best for higher education. In the case of developmental education policy, there is no clear consensus as to what is best for higher education. In this context, Shaw asserts that inconsistency in policy and practice are a result of the differing interests of those that create the policy and the understanding of those that implement the policy. Morgan (1997) defines the impact of competing interests on the decisions that are made within an organization. According to Morgan, "In talking about 'interests' we are talking about predispositions embracing goals, values, desires, expectations, and other orientations and inclinations that lead a person to act in one way rather than another." Oudenhoven (2002) explains that the debate for most community colleges is not whether developmental education programs are needed, but rather how the

colleges should provide the service. In this sense, the need is identified as one of clarity, understanding, and interpretation. There are questions that remain to be answered concerning the best approaches for serving under-prepared students; there is little sharing of ideas, practices, and strategies and no clear standards regarding institutional policy. These differences in the interpretation of “college level” create challenging inconsistencies for students that need developmental education courses in order to advance in subsequent courses of study (Oudenhoven). There are issues in colleges regarding transferability of course work and standards for admissions between institutions within the same state.

Over the past twenty years there have been notable studies conducted regarding the role and impact of developmental education in community college systems. While developing the focus of my research, I examined three prior studies related to developmental education as part of the review of literature for this study. I first looked at a study conducted by the Michigan Department of Public Instruction in 1988, which conducted a community college system-wide survey to determine individual college practices regarding developmental education. In addition, the Michigan study provides an extensive review of the opinions, philosophy, and concerns about developmental education from individual colleges. In 2002, Jenkins and Boswell conducted a national study of community college developmental education policies regarding placement testing and financial aid. In 2005, Rick Mason, Ed.D, studied the Kentucky Community College System policies related to developmental education, which focused on Rational Choice Theory for those that create and apply developmental education policy. An

analysis of the implementation of state-wide developmental education policy at individual community colleges is an area that appears to be lacking in the research to this point.

The policies that are governmentally mandated for colleges and universities are translated into practices at the local institution. A unique example of the implementation of college and university developmental education policy that has been discussed in an open and public manner is the 1999 policy update of the College and University System of New York (CUNY). The Board of Regents approved a policy to remove remedial courses from four-year colleges and universities and place them in the community college (Hebel, 1999). Over a period of three years there was debate within the institutions and outside in public forums; the future impact on the students was an unknown and there was a great deal of debate over how best to implement and support this change in educational policy. What this case exemplifies is the complex nature of higher education policy and the numerous internal and external influences that affect the implementation of the policy. In the end, the educational administrators, staff, and faculty at the community colleges were obligated to interpret the policy in a way that reflected the demands of the state higher education authority, while translating the policy into practical services for the students. The CUNY processes of interpreting and applying the policy are relevant to this study, and provide a model for examining external influences on state higher education policy.

Summary

Throughout the research presented in the review of the literature, the problem of serving under-prepared students is clearly expressed. There are numerous issues related to the challenges of providing developmental education at post-secondary institutions and specifically the role of the community college:

- an open door policy
- declining resources for colleges and universities
- the failure of secondary schools to adequately prepare students to transition to higher education
- the political influence on state higher education legislation
- the gap between the state governing board and the local institution
- the need to maintain standards while preserving access
- the need for greater understanding of individual college processes in offering developmental education

All of these issues and more are cited throughout the research presented, but there is one area that is still not clearly defined for its effect on the process of serving under-prepared college students. The issue of consistency in standards at the state level, as applied at the local college, is also part of the gap in the research related to higher education policy.

Perin (2005, p. 28) explains how the lack of research on processes and practices hinders the establishment of such standards:

Ideally, educational institutions should be able to base instruction and services on systemic evaluation data that point clearly to the benefits of one approach over

another. However, such studies have not been conducted in most community college developmental education programs and colleges cannot wait for controlled studies before they make decisions about how to promote the educational achievement of academically under-prepared students. Pending such studies, they can consider adopting practices that other institutions have found promising.

The process for the state governing board is to define a policy and forward the prescribed mandate to the senior level administration at the individual college. The interpretation and implementation of the policy is expressed in light of local institutional needs and resources. The gap in the research related to this topic lies in the lack of understanding of the process for establishing state level community college educational policy and its impact on local institutions. It is important to study in detail the process of identifying, assessing, interpreting, and implementing developmental education policy. Boylan and Bonham (2007) describes the more recent and encouraging signs for the future of developmental education as colleges and universities are treating these programs as a formal and legitimate component in higher education. Through the use of educational research, institutions can take a more systematic approach in serving under-prepared students

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study examined three community college developmental education programs within the North Carolina Community College System. In order to establish the common policy standard for developmental education, which governs all community colleges within the NCCCS, I focused on the legislation, written policies, and numbered memoranda provided by the system office to the individual community colleges. This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct the study. The research design, selection of participants, rationale for the sample, data collection procedures, analytic strategies, and procedures for validating the study are detailed in the sections that follow.

Research Design

In order to more accurately reflect the nature of developmental education policy interpretation and implementation, this study employed a qualitative research methodology. As Slavin (2007) explains, “Qualitative research typically seeks to describe a given setting in its full richness and complexity or to explore reasons that a situation exist” (p. 8). Qualitative research emphasizes the study of context, which includes people, places, and circumstances that cannot be accurately expressed in an unqualified response. It is most appropriate in this case to understand the specific processes that college administrators and staff employ in the implementation of developmental education policy and to document the processes in the context of Daft and Weick’s model of organizations as interpretation systems. It is important to see the process of implementation through the actions of community college developmental education coordinators as they make sense of state policy in light of local needs. By employing a variety of investigative and

observation strategies, qualitative methods aim to assure that a more holistic view of the phenomena is presented in the most realistic manner.

The study utilized a multiple-site case study model. Yin (1994) explains that the rationale for using this methodology is based on the need to compare a set of circumstances at more than one institution. Miles and Huberman (1984) clarify the interchangeable use of the terms “site” and “case” as they refer to the units to be examined. For the purposes of this study, multiple sites are used to conduct the case study of developmental education policy for the North Carolina Community College System.

Context of the Study

North Carolina is one of 22 states in the United States that has a separate governance structure for two-year and four-year public institutions. In 1980, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), following the recommendations of the Sanford Commission, was officially separated from the state board of education, and a state governing board was created to govern all of the community colleges in North Carolina related to funding and institutional policies (see Appendix H).

One of the areas that the NCCCS currently governs for all 58 community colleges in the system is initial placement and assessment of students for admissions purposes. While the community college system in North Carolina has a stated open admissions policy, the academic level of the student is considered when admitting a student into a given vocational or academic program. On July 1, 1993, the North Carolina State Legislature (SL 1993-321, Section 108) established a special provision for “remediation measures” to manage the standards for placement testing at community colleges:

Sect. 108 (a) The State Board of Community Colleges shall study the different tests by colleges to place students in developmental courses. This study shall determine appropriate tests and proficiency levels to be used in selecting and placing students in developmental courses.

(b) The State Board shall report its finds to the General Assembly by May 1, 1994.

The Community college system in North Carolina adopted policies in 1994 and 1999 that required each college president in the system to establish a local placement testing policy utilizing a pre-approved assessment, and the results of the testing data were transmitted to the system office electronically via an established data management system. In 1999, the NCCCS formed a placement testing committee that met periodically to review the placement testing standards and guidelines. The process included meeting with community college presidents selected to participate in the policy review, state-wide memorandums sent to chief academic officers at individual colleges, and periodic updates to the policies and procedures regarding placement testing standards throughout the system.

In addition to system policy on remediation, the Community College System in North Carolina is one of seven states that currently require state-mandated placement for admission to community colleges. A survey conducted by Jenkins and Boswell (Jenkins, Boswell, & Education Commission of the States, Center for Community College Policy, 2002) reveals that only seven states have a state-mandated college placement exam: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming. For

other states, there are various combinations of state and local policies. In effect, the placement testing policy for North Carolina mandates the standards for full-time admission to an approved program of study, and it is based on a written memorandum from the President of the North Carolina Community College System (Lancaster, 2006). The policy is written to provide schools with guidelines for testing and assessing student needs and is a prescriptive tool in determining the level of remediation needed for an incoming class of applicants. One question that remains from the placement testing policy is how the individual college should manage the implementation of the developmental programs. As stated in the placement testing policy, each college must develop its own local policy for serving under-prepared students beyond the prescribed initial assessment.

The policy for college placement in the NCCCS addresses which placement test should be given and an appropriate score for full-time admission to a program of study. In addition to the placement testing standards, North Carolina Community College developmental education policy also includes core competencies that each college must provide students according to their level of placement. The core competencies are addressed in assigned courses that developmental education students must take to satisfy state admissions requirements to college level programs. However, the manner in which the individual community college implements the policy in serving developmental education students to reach an acceptable level of academic performance is not supervised at the state level. Vaughan and MacDonald (2005) highlight the external influences that impact how community colleges manage their role in providing open

access, while at the same time managing internal organizational needs. Colleges face challenges from reduced funding and ballooning enrollments; yet, serving under-prepared students may take away resources that could be used in other areas, such as higher credit hour courses that may be more productive overall for the college. The example of remediation policy and placement demonstrates one policy area in which the interpretive process for an individual college is central. At the individual college level, this study examined the institutional and organizational customs, policies, standards, and norms that were present at each community college that participated in the study. The interpretive processes at each college were examined in light of institutional mandates at the state level.

Selection of Participants

There are 58 community colleges in the North Carolina system, which are governed by the state board and must comply with state level policies. The role of external and internal governance is a key factor in examining how the individual community college interprets and applies state higher education policy. It is a documented goal for the North Carolina Community College System (Lancaster, 2006) to establish a common and standardized isomorphic structure regarding developmental education policy, but it is unclear that, in local processes and implementation, individual colleges are truly implementing a common standard regarding developmental education policy. Scott (2001) asserts that organizations, which are part of a larger governance structure, are conditioned to look like their counterparts in order to maintain a legitimate place within the larger body. While all 58 community colleges in the North Carolina

Community College System may appear the same from an institutional view, their organizational structure may reflect unique processes for managing internal and external influences. For the purposes of this study, I defined policies that are involuntary for the individual community college as institutional because they are part of a standard created by the NCCCS and are created outside the internal organizational structure of the individual college. This study defines organizational policy as those policies that are created within the individual community college.

The following criteria were adopted to select the colleges participating in the study:

1. the colleges offer developmental classes as part of a published schedule of courses;
2. each college has a total curriculum enrollment between 2,000 and 5,000 students to ensure a manageable organizational size for the study, while providing a large enough administration and staff to offer valid sampling;
3. the President of the college has been in place for at least two years to ensure that the local college policies reflect the leadership of the existing administration;
4. the colleges are separated by at least 75 miles from one another to control for any regionally adopted policies or shared practices related to developmental education; and
5. each college is located within 50 miles of a major industrial or commercial area.

The first criterion established that the college recognizes developmental education as a formal part of the college curriculum. The analysis of the data collected at each of the three sites helped determine how each college views the role of developmental education as part of the organizational structure of the college, whether centralized or blended into individual departments. The second criterion limited the number of colleges that are part of the study by excluding very large multi-campus institutions that may vary in their own interpretation of developmental education policy, while at the same time excluding very isolated colleges that may not provide an accurate view of the issue of serving developmental education students as part of a larger academic setting. The third criterion provided more assurance that the current college administration has had the opportunity to address the issues surrounding developmental education policy, and allows for a more reliable analysis of current policy at the college. The fourth criterion established geographic parameters regarding the impact of location on developmental education policy. If two colleges are part of the same region this may bring into question the efficacy of the study in duplicating the process in other areas due to regionized training and sharing of strategies that may influence the interpretive processes at colleges located in a bordering service area. By establishing that the colleges are located at least 75 miles apart, the study reflected a broader view of developmental education policy and allowed for more generalization. Moreover, this latter criterion provided an opportunity to study a geographic area that is more likely to have a higher demand for developmental education courses due to employment opportunities. The geographic locations of the college do not factor into the study for purposes of making

generalizations about the location. The geography only serves to provide distance between the colleges to avoid any regional adoptions of policy.

Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation of this study is that it does not address the relationship of the college president to the policy implementation process. I gained information about the role of the presidents from the deans that participated in the study, but I would have liked to have more cooperation from the presidents to tell their side of the story as integral links between the state higher education authority and the internal organizational processes. This study only included three colleges within the NCCCS. It may be necessary in future studies to work with a larger sample or include colleges from different states.

Based on the application of stated criteria, there were various colleges within the North Carolina Community College System that were identified as suitable to participate in the study. Three initial community colleges were selected to participate, representing the east, central, and western North Carolina regions, and alternate colleges were identified to provide redundancy if one or more of the colleges was unable to participate. Of the three initial colleges selected, only one of the college presidents responded to a formal introduction letter and request for access to the personnel and documents needed to conduct the study. I used follow up strategies through e-mail, intermediaries, regional conferences, and phone calls to gain access to the colleges as outlined in the institutional review board request for approval. Two additional colleges that fit the criterion for the study were also contacted through an approved letter of introduction and follow up e-

mail. The colleges did not respond beyond an initial e-mail response through an intermediary. All attempts to schedule interviews with any of the college administrators or staff that work in developmental education received no response. I then focused on the developmental education coordinators at the colleges from a list of schools that fit the selection criterion. I contacted the developmental education coordinators directly by identifying them through the college web sites or by asking a department supervisor for contact information. Through the use of a variety of strategies, one college responded as originally outlined in the initial proposal. The president from Central Community College recommended the appropriate staff members to interview for the study. Two other college developmental education coordinators were contacted directly and I scheduled interviews with them. In the initial proposal for the study I planned to interview administrators and staff members from admissions and placement, academic programs, and student services. In particular, the study required the participation of representatives that specifically manage developmental education within their respective departments; therefore, developmental education coordinators were identified as the most comprehensive point of contact to complete the study. I sought to document their experiences as part of the larger college organization as they interpreted developmental education policy. The study does not identify the names of individuals or the names of the colleges but will refer to the geographic region of the college and the subjects' position within the college.

The three community colleges that had been selected to participate in the study represented the east, central, and western regions of the state. This allowed for maximum

cross-case analysis and validity within the study by excluding characteristics particular to any single region; however, the geographic location of the college plays no part in the data analysis. The individual members of each local college were analyzed as an entire unit; therefore, each college is considered a unit of analysis. The goal in this case was to examine the practices and processes of all those responsible for creating, implementing and managing the developmental education programs at each college. The differences in the roles of the administrators or staff members identified at individual colleges did not affect the study, in that the goal was to determine how each college interprets a common state policy within the context of local organizations, not to focus on a particular position within the college.

Data Collection

To examine fully the impact of state higher education policy on the individual college, it was necessary to qualify the relationship between the policymakers and the local college administration to determine how the decision makers interpret the relationship with their external environment. Does the individual college fully understand what is expected from the state-mandated policy? Do they believe that the policy is clear, firm, measurable, and determinant (Daft & Weick, 1984)? To better understand this phenomenon, the following overarching research question was used to facilitate the inquiry: How do community colleges interpret and implement state policy mandates related to developmental education? Sub-questions helped to focus the inquiry:

- a) What are the environmental and organizational influences that guide the individual community college to interpret the NCCCS developmental education policy in the manner it does?
- b) Who are the principal actors involved in the process of interpretation and implementation, and what are the dynamics of the interaction between them?

By way of overview, the proposed data collection process included the following:

1. a historical review of state policy for developmental education;
2. current state policy document review; local policy document review for individual colleges;
3. interviews with a North Carolina Community College System representative; and,
4. interviews at the local institutions.

This listing, however, may not be exhaustive, as Miles and Huberman (1984) explain that in a qualitative case study methodology the researcher must be flexible during the data collection process. The researcher must begin the process of analysis during the data collection process in order to take advantage of new information that was not present during the initial design of the study. Data collection during the study can be divided into two phases: document analysis and interviews.

Document Analysis

The process of data collection began with an initial document review, which included state policies, numbered memos, and published minutes from the North Carolina Community College system office, North Carolina legislative sessions, and the North

Carolina University System Board of Governors. Merriam (1998, pp. 121-122) explains that one of the challenges in reviewing documents during case study research is to reconstruct the process. The researcher must try to place the written record in the context of the process that produced the original document. Therefore, the historical record was analyzed along with the most up-to-date information related to the state policy regarding developmental education policy.

In pursuing the chain of policy documents, it was my aim to review the process and the path of the flow of information from the state office to the individual college in order to establish a baseline for the flow of information that represents an established policy at the state level. In this study, policy documents refer to NCCCS Memorandums and North Carolina State Legislation that refer to the laws and policies related to developmental education at community colleges in the system. It was my goal to view the same data that an individual college president may have access to or that may be part of routine policy updates forwarded by the state system office to an individual college. I then analyzed policy documents and their iterations as they descend the chain of command of the individual community colleges to those persons responsible for policy implementation. I was seeking a clear view of what any individual college could expect to receive from the NCCCS regarding developmental education policy. In a broader sense, it may be possible to generalize how any new policy or update would be provided to the individual college by reflecting standard practices at the state level. By establishing the baseline of the flow of information, any individual practices for acquiring information at the local college could be factored during the process of examining the local college

and also considering their particular actions while interpreting developmental education policy. In this vein, the study more accurately reflects the true nature of the dissemination of information from state policy makers to the individual college. I then examined documents at the local community colleges and reviewed how the policies are similar or are different in light of the state recommendations. Documentary analysis was ongoing as new memos and policy artifacts were gathered.

I began the document review process by examining the most recent developmental education policy update (Lancaster 2006). After meeting with the NCCCS representative, I was provided two key documents that explained the level of management by the NCCCS and the use of performance measures by state and the local community colleges (see Appendixes J and K).

In order to understand more clearly the role of the state as an influence in developmental education policy, I examined the beginning legislation that established policy standards for developmental education for the community college system in North Carolina (SL 1993-321, Section 108). As part of the same legislation package (SL 1993-321, Sec. 313) related to state appropriations for the UNC University System and the North Carolina Community College System, section (e) outlined the state's role in establishing the policies that would follow, which highlighted the input and influence of the public towards higher education policy and related economic development issues. Sect. 313 (e) states , "The first step in developing the plan shall be to develop an 'environmental scan' based on the input from economic development parties and the public and on information about the economic environment in North Carolina."

This legislation was followed by additional performance measures as outlined in Appendix L. In 1999 the North Carolina General Assembly mandated that the NCCCS should establish twelve performance measures for funding purposes. The community college system developed two of the twelve measures for developmental education. The NCCCS organized a task force to establish performance standards for developmental education. A memorandum from the NCCCS provided a clear historical analysis of the intentions of the NCCCS regarding developmental education and its association with performance funding (see Appendix M). The most recent document related to developmental studies that was reviewed for this study was a memorandum from the NCCCS on November 15, 2007 (see Appendix N). The document explains recent changes to the performance measures reducing them from 12 to 8, with developmental studies remaining as 2 of the 8 measures. The documents reviewed in this study helped bring together the history, the context, and the purpose of developmental education policy. They support the investigation proposed for this study and help answer the questions proposed by the study. The documents reviewed were utilized throughout the study in their appropriate context and are part of the appendices of this dissertation.

Interviews

The interview stage of data collection was two tiered, beginning with an interview at the system level with a representative from the NCCCS. During this interview, I sought to define as clearly as possible the established state policy regarding developmental education assessment, placement, and prescribed service. By beginning the interviews at the state level, I was able to have a better understanding of the intention of the policy at

the state level, and this information served me in targeting specific issues when interviewing staff members at individual colleges. I wanted to examine the level of interaction between the NCCCS and the local community college administration regarding developmental education policy.

Informant

The interviews conducted for this study included five semi-structured interviews with a representative from the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Eastern Community College (ECC), the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Program Head at Central Community College (CCC), and the Developmental Studies Department Chair at Western Community College (WCC). The initial semi-structured interviews were followed up with phone calls and email correspondence to clarify policies and practices.

The semi-structured interview with the NCCCS representative was conducted on May 5th, 2008 at 8:00AM and lasted for one hour and fifteen minutes. It included issues related to the origin of state developmental education policy, the NCCCS role in the implementation of developmental education policy, and the expectations at the state level for local community colleges. The NCCCS representative asked that no audio recording be saved, additionally she requested the opportunity to review the notes and make any corrections necessary. A complete transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix F.

The next tier of interviews occurred at the level of the institutions and included interviews with the staff member or administrator identified as the developmental

education coordinator. The identification was carried out by using the web site personnel directory or through the recommendation of the senior college administration. Miles and Huberman (1984) affirm that it is important to have some orienting focus of the study even though the researcher should be open to go where the field research dictates. I adjusted the sample as each college's organizational structure required. The initial interview protocol is located in Appendix D. The purpose of the interview protocol was two-fold. First, it helped to establish a clearer understanding of the standard operating procedures of the three colleges regarding local developmental education policy. Second, the questions helped during the data analysis phase to focus on key similarities and differences in the practices of the various departments within the community college. The questions were not used as a quantitative measure, but rather to serve as a guide for key areas of discovery during the data collection phase. Elements of Daft and Weick's (1984) framework, depicted in Figure 1, are imbedded in the interview protocol. The framework provided by Daft and Weick assisted the research by establishing a common process to examine how state education policy in the community college system is interpreted at the local institution. Through the use of the initial interview questions, I was able to determine if there were any fundamental differences in the understanding and practices in the implementation of state-mandated developmental education policy at the participating colleges. The study was designed to be flexible and move in an indicated direction to provide a more thorough examination of individual institutional practices.

The selection of the most appropriate person to interview at ECC was accomplished by reviewing the college's web site to identify the coordinator of

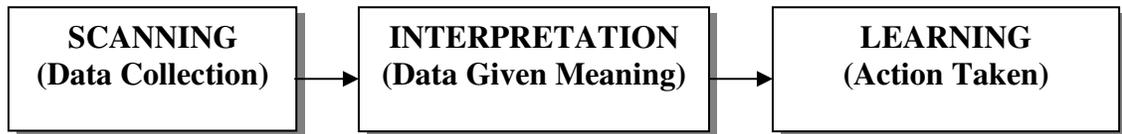


Figure 1. Organizational interpretation processes.

developmental education. In this case, the Dean of Arts and Sciences was identified as the coordinator of developmental education. The dean was contacted by phone and I discussed the goals of the study and the context of the proposed interview. We spoke initially for approximately fifteen minutes, and I scheduled a face-to-face interview with her for May 13, 2008. The interview lasted for 48 minutes and the content of the interview is discussed in chapter 4.

CCC was the only school contacted for this study where the president of the college participated in the identification of the most appropriate informants to interview. I contacted the president of the college through a formal letter (see Appendix B). The president identified the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Program Head as the staff members most informed about developmental education policy. The president scheduled interviews on May 29, 2008. The interview was conducted during the first thirty-eight minutes with the program head and then for an additional forty-five minutes with both the dean and the program head. The majority of the interview was recorded by audio recorder, there were other parts that were transcribed while taking a break from the formal interview to clarify points. The contents of the interview and its relevance to the study are discussed in chapter 5.

The Developmental Studies Department Chair at WCC was identified through the college's web site as the coordinator of the program. I contacted the department chair by telephone and scheduled an interview with him through e-mail for May 21, 2008 at 1:00 PM. The interview lasted one hour and five minutes, there was no audio recording of the interview at the request of the department chair. I transcribed notes from the interview

and followed up through multiple e-mails to ask additional questions and to clarify key points. The findings from the interview are discussed in chapter 6.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data in a qualitative case study is an ongoing process from the beginning of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The data analysis focused on three key areas: internal and external influences, local organizational practices, and state and local cooperation and interaction. This served as a starting point, while allowing flexibility to go in the direction that the case led. However, this initial grounding was important in order to establish certain guidelines and expectations in the beginning as a point of reference (Gerring, 2007).

Organization of Data

To begin data analysis, I created matrices for the individual sites (community colleges) to reflect the data collected, participants' positions and roles within the site, and any defining practices or characteristics found useful in the final analysis within and across sites. The first matrix included a context chart of the participants at each college, the participants' role in creating and implementing developmental education policy at the local institution, and responses to the interview protocol. In so doing, this analysis heeds Miles and Huberman's (1984) caution against the empty practice of providing initial information about a case without providing a context. A second matrix of a case dynamics design (Miles & Huberman, 1994) served to help understand the reasoning within the local organization for the decisions that are made regarding developmental education policy. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 149) outline four purposes that a case

dynamics matrix can serve in the analytic process by beginning to answer the question, why?

1. implementation problems
2. effects on organizational practices
3. effects on organizational climate
4. explanations for effects on the organization

The matrix used for this study served to highlight particular characteristics at the local college that were compared across all three sites. This provided an opportunity to outline similarities and differences in the way that each school applied developmental education policy.

Data was initially analyzed within the individual community college units, then across the units in a cross-site analysis. Miles and Huberman (1984) explain that the benefit of analyzing more than one site within the same case study allows for more generalizability and more importantly allows for the discernment between overall trends and individual practices that are particular to an individual site. In this case, the study was able to compare the interpretive processes at three community colleges and examine how local influences, practices, and policies impact the implementation of developmental education policy. By using field notes and summarizing matrices from the individual sites, I was then able to create a matrix that highlights key similarities and differences in the interpretive process of each college. The study provides a chart that compares the responses to the initial interview questions, a comparison of the roles of the administration and staff in their contexts, and a comparison of site-specific explanations

for the policy interpretation at each college. The combination of written summary and matrices allowed for the synthesis of a large amount of data in an ordered manner, while helping me to maintain the focus of the study by documenting specific characteristics reflected in the matrices. The study provides a written summary outlining key components of the field research and observations that may support the data presented in the matrices in a more informative and explanatory manner. The study utilized a variety of strategies to present the data in a way that allows for the maximum amount of individual site information, while providing a summary of the data across sites.

Conceptual Framework Guiding Analysis

The research combines elements from the research studies cited in chapter 2 and moves beyond previous studies to look at the actual processes and practices at individual colleges in light of organizational and institutional influences from the state higher education authority, in this case the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), and other external and internal interests that may influence how educational policy is interpreted and applied at individual colleges.

The study employs the conceptual framework of Daft and Weick (1984), which analyzes organizations in general terms as interpretive systems: “Interpretation is the process through which information is given meaning and actions are chosen” (p. 294). Organizations react to external influences in different ways depending upon how concrete the nature of the relationship is with the external environment (Daft & Weick). The individual components of the organizational interpretive processes summarized by Daft and Weick are as follows:

1. Scanning- The process by which the administration and other members of an organization receive the information they need to perform their daily tasks.
2. Interpretation- The process by which information is synthesized in a way that provides meaning within the context of the local organization.
3. Learning- The manifestation of the collective understating of the members of an organization by the actions taken based on a common standard.

The study uses the model from figure 1 and applies it to the North Carolina Community College developmental education policy as outlined in Figure 2. The model provides a guide to examine how individual community college administrators and staff determine local developmental education policy, and the internal organizational processes that are required to implement the policy to comply with state institutional policy demands. The interpretive processes of college administrators and staff members are documented and explained to provide a basic analysis of the processes from the perspective of the individual administrator and staff member from each college. Additionally, the study uses cross-case analysis to determine similarities and differences between colleges related to the collective interpretation and processes for the implementation of developmental education policy.

By using the framework of Daft and Weick (1984), the study can take advantage of certain expectations about the established behavior of organizations. First, the members of an organization will attempt to behave in a manner that reflects the expectations of the external environment, if they believe that it is in the best interest of the organization. If the individual community college and the system office do not have a

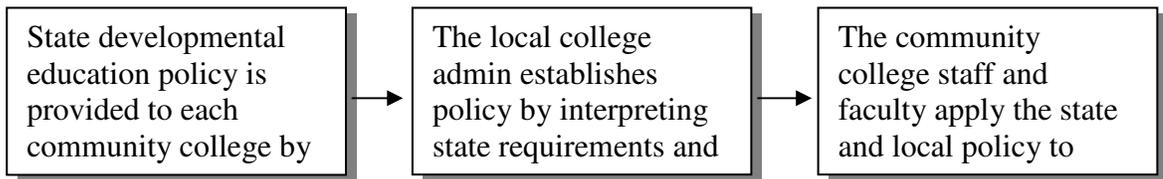


Figure 2. The interpretive process of NCCCS developmental education policy.

strong connection in determining how institutional policy is applied, a “disconnect” may be reflected through inconsistencies in the interpretation of system-wide policies. Second, the internal organization relationships amongst the administration and the staff may also play an important role in determining the interpretive process. If there is an established organizational structure between the administration and the staff reflected in the processes of determining local policy, then the interpretive processes are likely to reflect more of a shared influence with the leadership. If the local organization has more of a top-down structure in interpreting policy, then the understanding and experiences of the leadership will be reflected in the interpretation of the policy. If all community colleges must serve under the same statewide placement testing policy and develop their own local developmental education policy, the relationship with external influences may greatly affect the way in which the local college applies the policy. Each of these premises was tested and examined under the present study. Differences in the way that local colleges may view the same state policy may be based in large part on internal organizational differences in managing the external influences, in this case the North Carolina Community College System and state higher education policy.

Validity of the Study

The replication of studies in the social sciences is considered to be problematic because, as Merriam (1998) has noted, “human behavior is never static” (p. 205). This study managed the question of reliability in two primary ways. First, the study used a multiple case methodology. Second, the use of triangulation of data sources was part of the study design. The study looked at all published policy for developmental education at

the state level and local level. The information provided was compared to interviews, local practices, and responses to specific questions that were used to replicate the processes of the study.

External Validity

Validity refers to the ability to apply the findings from one study to other situations (Merriam, 1998). This study was designed to examine the interpretive process of local community colleges in light of state higher education policy. Developmental education policy was used in this case as one example of a policy that can be assessed in its interpretation and implementation from state mandate to local practices. It is one of the goals of this study that it may serve to highlight the interpretive processes of state higher education policy in general. The same review of documents for developmental education policy could be applied to other policy studies. The analysis of state higher education governance structures could be applied to studies of other higher education policies. The community colleges selected for this study were chosen based on criteria that are not specific to any single policy. Future studies may be able to select a completely different group of colleges with a completely different policy as the focus and apply the same interpretive process analysis model. This study in particular has established a broad goal of examining the interpretive processes of higher education policy; it has applied the research to the study of developmental education policy in the North Carolina Community College System as one example of the interpretive processes of state higher education policy by community college administrators and staff. The

potential impact of the study may provide a model for research of higher education policy processes on a much broader scale.

Internal Validity

According to Merriam (1998), “Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). This study was designed to fill in the gaps from previous studies on higher education policy at community colleges; specifically, previous studies of developmental education. The study provides a comprehensive and complete analysis of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) developmental education policy and charts the path of the policy to the local community college where internal organizational decisions are made in light of state-mandated institutional policy. The study compared three community colleges from different regions of the state and examined how each college interprets and applies the same state policy. The study looked at not only standard state-wide reporting data presented by the college, but through interview, observation, and document analysis, the reality of developmental education policy at each of the community colleges was reviewed in the context of local internal and external influences.

Establishing North Carolina Community College Developmental Education Policy

Prior to beginning the site visits and semi-structured interviews at individual community colleges, I met with a representative from the North Carolina Community College System to discuss the March 24, 2006 state developmental education policy update (see Appendix A). The information gathered from the interview and the clarification of state policy provided by the NCCCS representative allowed me to focus

on specific issues and performance measures that directly influence developmental education at individual colleges. I chose to meet with the NCCCS representative prior to visiting individual colleges so that I could have an understanding of the established common policy of the North Carolina system and apply that policy in analyzing the interpretive processes at each college I visited. As a result of the interview, I was also able to target specific documents reflecting the history of developmental education policy at the state level. This information was valuable in examining local policies at individual colleges to determine the level of interaction (coupling) between the state developmental education administration and local college developmental studies administrators.

Summary

The role of state higher education policy is a topic that continues to develop over time as the role of the state adapts to changing needs of society. The way in which colleges and universities interpret their new role within the dynamics of funding, regulation, enrollment, and accountability may create unique processes within each college. This study provides a detailed analysis of the interpretive processes of community colleges within the NCCCS, and provides a realistic view of the impact of a single policy, developmental education, on the internal organizational and institutional practices within individual colleges. Perin (2006) and Boylan have highlighted the need for more research on the internal operations and practices at individual colleges in order to assess the impact of higher education policy. This study examines existing practices with the hope of shedding light on the impact of policies with a higher goal of promoting policy review and analysis by state higher education systems.

The selected methodology provides an opportunity to obtain a close and detailed examination of the internal processes of community colleges in the NCCCS, and to highlight internal and external influences that may cause administration and staff to make decisions based on their need to survive (Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick, 1976). The study makes no judgment as to whether colleges are implementing developmental education policy in the correct manner, but rather seeks to highlight how developmental education policy impacts an individual college as an example of larger issues related to the interaction and cooperation between state higher education authorities and local institutions. This study serves as an example of the daily operations of individual community colleges as they manage competing interests and influences to maintain a stable organizational and institutional environment. Through qualitative case study methodology, this study may provide a useful analysis of how and why developmental policy is interpreted and applied and the processes that community college administration and staff use to balance institutional and organizational needs and influences.

CHAPTER 4: EASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Eastern Community College (hereinafter as ECC) was one of three schools that were considered for participation from the eastern region of North Carolina. While ECC was chosen based on the selection criterion, there were additional factors that helped narrow the selection from qualified schools. ECC has an easily identifiable developmental studies program, which is highlighted on the college web page with staff and faculty directory information and a published admissions policy that includes developmental studies. ECC published its admissions policies on the college web site in a way that expressly highlighted its developmental studies program. In addition, ECC had its own internal program for developmental studies; it was not tied to the Achieving the Dream program as were other schools that were part of the selection process. This program seeks to assist community colleges in analyzing their practices, policies, and performance as part of a national initiative to improve graduation rates at community colleges. I felt that the presence of an external organization would affect the validity of the study by trumping state policy; therefore, I excluded schools that were participating as part of Achieving the Dream.

Moreover, the senior administrator for the developmental studies program was willing to discuss the implementation of the program in detail and was very open and helpful during the interview and subsequent follow up questions. The dean of developmental studies at ECC was very responsive and helpful in filling in the gaps of my research from document studies, web site reviews, and from collecting data on performance measures from college fact books. I used a semi-structured face-to-face

interview, as well as e-mail, and phone calls to ask questions and to fill in gaps during the data collection and subsequent analysis. From the initial interview, I gathered key information on the foundation and current implementation of NCCCS developmental education policy, along with information about the primary administrators and staff that manage the implementation of developmental education policy, as well as the primary internal and external influences that affect the interpretive process.

Background

Eastern Community College (ECC) serves a coastal plains community located near a military base in North Carolina. The college has an annual curriculum enrollment of approximately 4000 students distributed between full-time and part-time. The curriculum students have an average age of 30 and the students are divided along the lines of gender with 61% of the students being female. Of the total curriculum enrollment for 2006, 71% of the students work while enrolled in a college degree program. Almost half of the curriculum students live outside the county and commute to campus or take classes via distance education. Of the total curriculum enrollment for the 2006 program year, approximately 22% of the students required at least one remedial course, and of those students, 80 passed the courses needed to continue in a full or part-time degree program, which is in line with the state average (see Appendix J).

Community colleges in the North Carolina system are required to demonstrate that students who began in developmental courses are successful in subsequent college level courses. The 2005-2006 state average for comparing developmental students against non-developmental students in successful completion of college level courses is 86%.

There is no statistically significant difference at the state level in the success rate of college level courses between students that began in developmental courses compared with those that did not need remediation (see Appendix J). ECC's performance measure for the 2005-2006 program year reflected that 90% of developmental students were successful in subsequent college level courses, while 93% of non-developmental students were successful in subsequent college level courses. As compared to the rest of the system, ECC's achievement with developmental education students is remarkable. For the 2005-2006 reporting year, 37 of the 58 colleges met the required state standard; 20 colleges did not report due to data management system issues.

Eastern Community College's admissions and placement policies are institutionally bound by the August 24, 2006 placement testing policy update as described in Appendix A. ECC publishes a college catalog that describes the procedures for processing students that require placement testing as freshman at ECC. The developmental studies program and related courses, admissions policies, and grading system are found throughout the catalog appearing in five separate sections of the catalog. As part of the guidelines from the August 24, 2006 memorandum (Lancaster, 2006), each college is required to publish a local developmental education policy that takes into consideration the mandates for placement testing scores and appropriate remedial courses. ECC publishes its developmental education policy as part of its student-advising guide, which includes information for students and staff at various points in the process. The rest of this chapter reviews and analyzes the processes for the implementation of developmental education policy at ECC and highlights internal

organizational influences and external institutional influences that may affect the interpretive process.

Site Dynamics

Key Administrators and Staff Members

The primary administrator for developmental education policy issues and program management is the Dean of Arts and Sciences. She provides leadership at ECC in all matters regarding developmental studies. The dean acts as an intermediary between the senior level administration at ECC, including other deans, vice presidents, and the president of the college. The Chair of Developmental Studies serves as the primary link between the faculty and the Dean of Arts and Sciences. The role of the chair is to manage day-to-day issues that affect the faculty. The chair serves to guide the faculty regarding their individual responsibilities to the department, and serves as the chief academic officer for classroom and instructional issues. Most policy decisions at ECC lie with the dean primarily and it is her job to interact with the vice president of instruction and ultimately the president. The faculty members that teach developmental courses are exclusive to that program, and they have the support of a dedicated skills center for the students, which target the core competencies required under the 2006 developmental education policy update (Lancaster, 2006). The local implementation of services related to the core educational competencies required by the NCCCS are a combination of state policy and local interpretation. The instructors are responsible for helping students reach the required level of achievement to move on to degree credit courses.

Key Internal Organizational Influences

According to the Dean of Arts and Sciences at ECC, the president of the college is the primary point of contact for state developmental education policy. All correspondence from the NCCCS through numbered memoranda pass through the hands of the president of the college. There may be others that are included on the correspondence list, but the president is the primary point of contact for policy changes or updates. The president is responsible to the state to comply with the standards as set and therefore must ensure that the college faculty and staff are in compliance with state policy. According to the dean, the president has limited contact with the developmental studies administration and faculty; the president's role is primarily examining the student outcomes at the end of each semester. The dean clarified her view of the role of the president by saying that the president is available to provide support in the event of issues that affect the college as a whole.

The faculty members in the developmental studies program at ECC are required to teach all students that attend ECC, regardless of their academic levels at the time of admission. The faculty members are influenced by the need to adapt to the student population that is admitted to the college each year. The Board of Trustees at ECC reviews the local data on enrollment, graduation, and Full Time Equivalency (hereinafter as F.T.E.). The college faculty, staff, and administration are all responsible to the local board of trustees to provide adequate numbers of students attending and completing the courses for purposes of graduation and performance funding. The faculty and senior level administration in the developmental studies department have a thirty-year history of

working together to establish best practices in providing remediation. The developmental studies program at ECC is research based; the faculty and administration continuously review how the program is functioning to meet the needs of the students. The instructional strategies used at ECC are based on educational research over a twenty-year period. The foundations of the program highlight the influences of Keimig (1983) through her book *A Guide to Learning Improvement* that discusses how to set up a developmental studies program, how to establish educational goals, and how to manage the issues associated with the program.

Key Local and Institutional Influences

Local and institutional influences refer to influences that are external to the local community college. In this case, local influences refer to social and economic conditions that affect the demands on the local community college. The demands may include: serving increased numbers of students due to local job losses, academic achievement on state standardized placement testing by local high school graduates, a shift in business and industry that requires retraining of local employees, or simply a change in philosophy by the members of the community that leads more high school graduates to feel the need for more post-secondary education. In the case of ECC, a local military base is an example of a local influence on the interpretive processes for serving the community.

Institutional influences are those that require the local college to comply with a state policy as a member of a larger state higher education organization. For all three of the colleges that are part of this study, they are under the requirements of the North Carolina Community College System open admissions policy that requires all 58

community colleges in the system to accept any student 18 years of age or older who has received a high school diploma or a General Education Development (G.E.D.) equivalency (Admission to Colleges, 2006). The NCCCS developmental education policy requires state-mandated testing for all incoming freshman, with the exception of those that have a satisfactory score of 500 or greater on the math and verbal sections of the SAT. There are eight critical success factors that are used as performance measures by the NCCCS for funding purposes for the 58 community colleges in the system (see Appendix G). Two of the eight performance measures are related to developmental education. The State legislature, and by proxy the NCCCS, requires accountability for the success of the students that attend local community colleges. The community college system adopted a new student data management system 5 years ago; Datatel influences how colleges must manage enrollment and withdrawal from courses. The dean at ECC reported that 22% of all high school graduates that attend ECC require remediation to achieve the appropriate level to enter a degree-credit program of study according to the 2005-2006 reporting data.

Global labor and economic changes influence ECC as the shift in jobs brings students that may not have chosen to enter higher education previously but are forced to due to economic and social globalization. The local community has shifted away from a manufacturing based economy to a tourism and service economy. There is an education gap that is present as explained by the dean. The lower skilled jobs have been replaced by jobs that require more education, yet the local population is not prepared. The result is that you have more growth of people coming in from other parts of the country to fill the

higher skilled jobs and the local population returns to college to attempt to be part of the economy. The growth of the surrounding community influences ECC as the need to serve more and more students brings with it a proportional growth in the number of underprepared college freshman. An additional example provided by the dean that reflects the local influences are the military bases that serve a transient population of students that have unique challenges due to their unusual occupational demands and international travel regimen. There is a section of the college catalog that addresses the special attendance considerations in developmental classes offered to military personnel. While the dean understands the needs of the service personnel, she is still responsible for the performance standards set by the state.

Foundations of Developmental Education at ECC

ECC has a long tradition of serving students through developmental studies programs. The faculty at ECC requested the developmental studies program beginning in 1975 to serve students that were underprepared to enter college level courses after completing a high school diploma. They discovered that the students they were teaching did not have the skills necessary to perform at the required level to complete a two-year degree program. The faculty came together and discussed the situation and came to a common conclusion that under the current situation they were unable to serve the students without additional help and changes to the curriculum at the time. There were no state standards for developmental education. There were Basic Skills labs, but services were provided in an informal manner. The student population of the time consisted of high school graduates, and even though they were not traditional General Education

Development (hereinafter as G.E.D.) students, they were unable to perform at the college level.

There is an ongoing problem of academic achievement of students coming out of secondary school systems and entering community colleges in North Carolina. Nationally, approximately 42% of community college students need at least one remedial course, and 28% of four-year college freshman need remediation (NCES, 2004). At ECC, 22% of the students require at least one developmental course. That is well below the national average and some 40-percentage points below the other two colleges participating in the study. The dean had no explanation for why this number is lower than the national average, and so much lower than the other two colleges in the study. It may be attributed to the additional services that are provided to students at ECC to help them prepare for the state placement exam, and this may be a result of thirty years of practice in addressing the needs of under-prepared students. A review of the 1998 statistics on literacy rates in North Carolina showed the town where ECC is located as having 33% of the population over the age of 16 with level-1 literacy proficiency, which is the lowest on a scale of 1-5. This number appears to be on the higher end of the median score as compared to other comparable counties with a population of at least 5000. Much has been written about the gap between high school and college, and it has been present since the foundations of public secondary schools in the U.S. Historians such as Thelin (2004) explain that one of the problems is that there is no formal solution that includes secondary schools, community colleges, and universities. Colleges such as ECC interpret their role under the guidelines established at the state level and based on local needs.

During the 1970s, the faculty at ECC identified the problem of underprepared students and chose to share that information as a group with the administration of the college, and they asked for assistance with the situation. The college administration responded to the need internally and also felt the need to ask for help from the system office. This example represents a tight coupling between the faculty and senior administration at ECC, as well as a tight coupling between the ECC senior administration and the system office. The faculty and administration at ECC felt that the students should be served by the local college, even though they did not fall into an established category. They were considered to be college students even though their academic skills were not at the required level of performance at the time. The system office interpreted the situation by providing training to the faculty and staff to support the local college in designing and implementing remedial education to the students that were high school graduates but needed additional tutoring to reach the desired level of performance to be successful.

During the 1980s, ECC received support from the state through grants and training with the goal of providing a best practices standard for community colleges in the NC system. Over the past 10 years, ECC, led by the Dean of Developmental Studies, Arts and Sciences, and Basic Skills, has continued to refine the way the college offers developmental studies to recent high school graduates and returning non-traditional students who require a refresher course to be successful in college level work. Current ECC developmental studies leadership has no contact with any NCCCS representative and is unaware of any formal training provided by the state system to establish best

practices for the implementation and delivery of developmental studies. The developmental studies administration at ECC is aware of the 2006 placement testing policy update that outlines what each college should use as a standard for placement of entering freshman into degree credit programs. The Dean of Developmental Studies at ECC also teaches developmental education courses each semester to maintain a level of contact with the students and to help refine the delivery of services for the department. The dean is very involved in the day-to-day operations of the department, and the relationship reflects a tight coupling amongst the faculty, staff, and senior department administration. The dean explained that since the beginning of the formal program of developmental studies, there has been a strong connection between the individual academic and technical program areas and the developmental studies department. The dean described it as an alliance with a clear understanding that students must complete their developmental studies program first before moving on to other degree programs. This is a different philosophy that the other two colleges in the study that allow students to take other credit courses while completing the developmental courses. The tight coupling among the developmental studies department and the other academic and administrative areas at ECC is reflected in their relationships as expressed by the dean.

As a result of the efforts of the faculty and administration at ECC, the college recognized what was needed to serve underprepared students. ECC began a program of remediation that has been serving the community through a local implementation of developmental education. During the past 20 years, the faculty and staff have participated

in limited state sponsored training, but formed a strong locally sponsored training program that established a formal process for the delivery of services.

Current Developmental Studies Program

Beginning in the early 1980s, the current dean of developmental studies began to look at research that focused on the process for offering remediation to adult learners. The dean focused on recommendations from Keimig (1983) that outlines best practices for teaching remedial courses. Given that the relationship within the department of Arts and Sciences has been so strong among the faculty and staff for so long, there are some interesting dynamics that can be seen from the program at ECC. First, the senior level administration appears to defer to the developmental studies department for managing developmental education. Second, the dean of the department acts as the conduit to the president or vice president for any discussions of policy or implementation. The presidents past and recent have asked questions about the condition of the program but have mainly focused on the outcomes and any irregularities that may have occurred; as the dean stated, “When the President needed info he called.” This reflects a relationship based on performance and outcome. The presidents over the past twenty years have been supportive, but the decisions on how developmental education is managed at ECC lie with the department dean and the faculty. Given that the first implementation of developmental education at ECC was promoted and managed by the faculty at the college, rather than part of a state mandate passed down through the senior administration, there is a sense of departmental control over the management of developmental studies. The department dean appears to have a strong handle on the local

policy issues related to developmental education, and the senior administrators appear to have deferred to the department to establish the policies and procedures. The early contributions of the faculty at ECC may have lead to the sense of authority over its future implementation.

Placement Testing Policy

ECC uses the Compass and Asset assessment tools, which are part of the NCCCS approved list of assessments, to place entering students. The student services department is responsible for the initial placement and testing. If students do not achieve the desired score on the placement exam and require more than one remedial course, they are referred to a developmental studies advisor who explains the results and the appropriate path to enter degree credit courses. If students need only one remedial course, they are simply registered for the course and may take the remedial course as part of a standard curriculum of study. ECC has decided to use an alternative assessment beyond the current standardized assessments prescribed under the 2006 placement testing policy update (Lancaster, 2006). The department dean at ECC expressed the motivation for creating an alternative assessment:

The alternative assessment was to "catch" those students on the bubble - those who did not think the original placement testing was important or did not understand the ramifications. Especially in the area of math - we were able to send students to a higher level so they would not have so many levels of developmental classes to complete. In the English and reading area, we felt like a writing sample (which is not currently included in our placement testing) was

more informative than a grammar test. Therefore, an alternative reading test and a writing sample are taken. This also has helped to move students along successfully to the next level of developmental courses.

ECC had to assess the current situation of placement testing that in some cases required students to pass several levels of developmental courses, even though in many cases a refresher course or a more appropriate local assessment is available. The interpretive process of the developmental studies faculty and staff at ECC considered both the external institutional requirements of standardized placement testing as mandated by the state and blended state requirements with local needs to assess students in a manner that reflects the actual skills needed to be successful. In addition, the internal organizational strategies utilized by the dean, the chair, and the faculty helped develop an appropriate alternative to the state mandated tests that helped promote the organizational performance required by the local senior administration as well as the state.

Local Implementation

The Dean of Developmental Studies at ECC has managed the implementation of remedial courses based on solid foundations in educational research. The dean explained that in the absence of clear standards and objectives for serving under-prepared college students in the early 1980s, she turned to educational research to look for a guide to addressing the needs of students. The dean referred me to a 1983 guide written by Keimig (1983). She describes a process for colleges to improve learning in the classroom, and to manage the administrative impact of “maintaining enrollments by retaining whatever

students they have” (p. 1). Keimig summarizes the decision making process of educators in the context of serving under-prepared students.

Most educators make decisions that directly affect students’ learning and retention. Whether as faculty, administrator, program manager, student services coordinator, or specialist, an educator’s daily decisions have cumulative effects, for good or bad that may not be readily and immediately discernible. Yet a choice must be made, usually among alternatives that are poorly defined, shadowed by uncertainties beyond any one person’s control, and constrained to a less-than-ideal set of possibilities (p. 1).

What Keimig refers to as decisions is considered to be interpretive processes in the context of this study. The dean at ECC explained that the guide by Keimig has served two main purposes; first to provide a goal or a measure to compare current practices in the department, and second to help establish a framework for managing the relationships among the faculty, staff, and administration. Boylan and Bonham (2007) expressed the need for more colleges to apply solid educational research in designing their developmental education programs, and to use data collected from the programs to improve the delivery of services. The current model used at ECC is assessed by the department administration through continuous evaluation and a strong relationship among the faculty and staff; this model at ECC has been in place for more than 20 years. The college faculty and staff have developed a centralized skills center that is widely known and utilized by all students that require additional assistance to enter degree credit courses. The dean expressed that the program is student-centered learning; the instructors

help identify particular deficiencies and then assist the students to target those areas that are of most need to the student. There has been a large investment of time and resources to train the faculty and staff on how best to serve the students. The dean expressed that there are two types of students that attend the skills center. One type is composed of recent high school graduates that did not pay attention in high school or did not receive the necessary training in a particular skill area. The second type of student is the student that has been out of school for a while and is in need of a refresher course. In addition, ECC serves a large population of military personnel, which challenges the process of implementing educational programs due to their varying schedules and unusual responsibilities, but the dean expressed that the college faculty and staff adapt to the needs of the participants. In any case, the skills center focuses on moving students out of developmental studies and on to degree credit courses. The dean stated that at the last graduation in 2008, it is possible that 75% of the students on the stage had passed through the skills center. The dean feels that there is a direct relationship between the local implementation of the skills center at ECC and the overall success of the college. During my interview with the dean I asked if the skills center was widely known on campus; she responded that it is “institutionalized,” everyone on campus knows about the skills center. I verified the statement by doing a random search through the college catalog to find references to the skills lab. It is referenced in three places and includes the recommended uses for the skills lab. This was a unique practice in the study as compared to the other two colleges participating.

Challenges for Developmental Studies

While the local implementation of developmental studies at ECC is grounded in educational research, strong relationships among the faculty and staff, and a long tradition of serving students in a centralized learning center, there are internal and external influences that require consideration by the developmental studies administration and faculty. The primary challenge for the developmental studies program is the balance between access and standards. According to the dean, as more and more students decide that they need a college education in order to get a job, many students that did not prepare while in high school are choosing to attend college and they are under-prepared. The growth of students for the college is considered a positive trend, but the graduation rate is “abominable,” to quote the dean. The college administration, faculty, and staff must constantly adjust their internal practices to be able to comply with the open admissions policy of the NCCCS and maintain standards for student achievement and graduation.

On March 15, 2007, the General Assembly of North Carolina revised the 1999 North Carolina Community College performance funding measures as reflected in North Carolina House Bill 642 (see Appendix P). A March 16, 2007 memorandum outlines the state board of community colleges policy revision in response to the legislation. Local community colleges are required to apply the updated performance measures to existing educational programs. The updated performance measures contain eight critical success factors that are used for performance funding. This is reduced from twelve previous critical success factors as revised from the 1999 standards. Two of the eight critical success factors continue to measure developmental education: the percentage of students

that successfully complete remedial courses, and the percentage of students that successfully complete subsequent college level courses as compared to their non-developmental counterparts according to the state standard.

During the interview with the department dean at ECC, I asked how the new performance standards affect the implementation of the developmental studies program at ECC. The dean stated that there is a very specific option that must be considered in managing the open door admissions policies with the performance measures for developmental studies. Those students that do not demonstrate satisfactory progress during the semester must be withdrawn from the class prior to the end of the semester so that they will not count against the college for performance funding. ECC uses the following grading system for developmental studies as reflected in the 2008-2009 general college catalog (p. 79): SA- satisfactory progress with a grade of “A”; SB- satisfactory progress with a grade of “B”; SP- satisfactory progress for financial aid purposes, but the student must repeat the course; U-unsatisfactory progress. There is an additional grade of AW-automatically withdrawn for excessive absences, which does not count against the performance measures of the local college. The dean stated that this is the only way to ensure that colleges will meet their performance measures. There is an additional change that is being made this year as a result of the new student data management system, Datatel. ECC will provide an alternate assessment prior to enrolling the students in developmental courses, with the hope of helping students place out of developmental studies prior to enrolling in the program. This alternate assessment is being developed by the individual college and is given in addition to the state-mandated assessment. With the

new data management system, it is more complicated to drop a student from a class; therefore, the college feels it is better to help a student place out of at least one level of developmental courses.

Financial aid considerations were discussed as well. There is a federal standard for Pell Grant funds that every financial aid officer at every community college must comply with. Pell Grant allows for 30 semester hours of funding for completing remediation prior to entering a degree credit program. The dean expressed that one of the goals of the skills center is to help students to complete their remediation prior to using up their financial aid. The issue of dropping students and retaking courses is a costly practice for both the system and the student. If the student does not demonstrate satisfactory progress while in the program they lose their financial aid. The dean expressed that this is an ongoing problem for faculty and staff who try to help students achieve their academic goals, but the college must balance the required standards with the need to help students remain in the program.

State Policy Versus Local Implementation

I wanted to gain a clearer understanding of the level of interaction (coupling) between the NCCCS and the local college. In this case ECC has a long tradition of serving underprepared students as a formal program at the college. While the dean cited examples of state support and collaboration dating back at least 20 years, in more recent times the interaction has been through memorandums sent to college presidents and other senior academic leadership. The dean of developmental studies at ECC qualified the relationship in the following manner, “Community colleges are autonomous, the state

does not interfere, and that is a good thing.” The dean went on to say that there has never been a huge amount of support from the state. There have been moments when the state has attempted to be involved, but the dean expressed that ECC is not aware of any recent state sponsored training or support for the developmental studies programs. The dean believes that the decisions on how developmental studies should be implemented is a local decision because colleges know their student populations and they should have the right to manage the programs as needed. ECC respects and complies with the state standards as interpreted locally, but the dean is unfamiliar with the state leadership in the developmental studies program and has limited contact with the NCCCS office.

I asked how the new state placement testing standards (Lancaster, 2006) had affected the local implementation. The dean stated that there was no change for ECC, “All the schools are autonomous; the placement test scores were already our placement test scores, so there was practically no impact at all. I know that at other schools it impacted them significantly”. The dean expressed that there has been very little contact with the state regarding developmental studies. This is due, in part, to the long-standing program that was promoted by the faculty.

Summary

Scanning

More than thirty years ago, the faculty at ECC observed a need for remediation of college students that were part of a variety of departments within the college. The faculty came together to discuss the problem by sharing information, by revealing individual experiences and by requesting assistance from the local administration. The conceptual

framework by Daft and Weick (1984) proposes that senior level managers drive the changes that must occur for an organization to survive and maintain organizational performance. In this case, the faculty observed the need for change because of their close relationship to the problem. There were no external standards or state mandates that would have prompted the leadership to question the performance of the faculty and the students; at the time of the beginning of developmental studies at ECC, student data were not collected for performance-based measures. The scanning process of observing what is needed was carried out by the faculty due to their unique role with the students. That process continues today as the faculty and staff members are continuously reviewing the need to adjust developmental studies programs. The difference with today's program from pre-1993 programs is that the state has become involved in assessing the outcomes of the developmental studies programs with legislation that requires performance measures. The individual college president must look at the standards and requests from the state and determine if the level of performance locally meets that standard. In the case of ECC, there was already a program in place to address the issues proposed by the state; therefore, the interpretive process was initiated by mid level management and ground level faculty in the absence of any institutional or organizational demand. The college president is the intermediary between the implementation of developmental education locally and the requirements of the state. There is no interaction between the state administration and ECC regarding the implementation of developmental education policy. The August 24, 2006 placement testing policy update has had little if any

influence ECC; personnel are aware of it, but their internal system had addressed the requirements in advance of the mandate.

Interpretation

ECC senior level administration and the department administration, faculty, and staff interpret developmental education policy from different perspectives. Due to the institutionalized nature of the developmental studies program, little support is needed by the faculty and staff that provide the services. The faculty and staff must make sure that the students are performing at a level that will permit the program to continue, while placing a great deal of consideration on the individual learner. The department uses a student-centered approach that identifies individual deficiencies and uses a variety of instructional strategies to address the need. The department recognizes that as more students attend there will be more developmental students passing through the program. The faculty and staff recognize their role in serving a military population that may require additional accommodations due to their schedules and the nature of their service. The faculty and staff recognize that there are financial aid considerations that are part of providing developmental courses. There is a limited amount of aid, and the students must demonstrate satisfactory progress in order to maintain financial assistance.

The president and the senior level administration are focused on the state-mandated performance measures; they are concerned that the local program complies with state requirements. Their perspective is one of outcome rather than process. The discussions at ECC among the senior level administration are based on the NCCCS critical success factors and how the current program is serving the needs of the students

by measuring the outcomes. While the developmental studies administration and staff, as well as the college president and vice presidents, understand the need to comply with state policy and performance measures, the department administration and staff have to balance institutional needs with organizational realities, while considering the impact on the individual student.

Learning

There appears to be a solid balance at ECC regarding the relationship between the developmental studies administration, staff, and faculty and the senior level college administration. The developmental studies department has been in place for so long that it is a natural part of the college. There was one significant change in the organizational structure of the department over the past 25 years. Eight years ago the Dean of Arts and Sciences and Developmental Studies was given supervision over Basic Skills, which is a non-degree continuing education program. The president of the college felt that developmental studies was well suited to be integrated with basic skills and the dean of the program accepted. The president of the college unintentionally altered the way students in developmental studies were served by combining educational areas under a single administrator. In the process, the developmental studies program was integrated in a way that broadened its reach in the college to better serve the students. The president of the college interpreted a financial necessity in the college and the dean adapted to the leadership decision with a perspective that could only come from an administrator intimately involved in the process.

The use of a centralized skills center has provided ECC with a one-stop, individualized, student-centered approach to meeting the needs of underprepared students. As stated earlier, the program was proposed by the faculty, and as a result, it represents an organic approach to resolving an internal organizational need while recognizing the local external influences that perpetuate the need to provide the service. This fact is reflected in that the faculty identified a problem with student performance, and they recognized that the administration of the college needed to be part of the solution. The administration allowed the people closest to the problem to take the lead in determining how best to proceed. In this case, the organizational structure of the college was preserved in a way that respected the role of the senior administration. While at the same time, the administration recognized that to be successful the people closest to the problem would need to take a leading role in developing a plan of action. The dean of the department was very clear about the challenges facing the college in serving students out of high school that have limited academic skills, or the non-traditional student that for many years has not utilized the skills necessary to be successful in college level courses. All students that wish to enroll at ECC are permitted to under the community college open admissions policy. ECC offers one of the approved standardized assessments that state developmental education policy requires. ECC offers an alternative assessment that reflects the needs of the learners, as well as the administrative realities of managing a community college developmental studies program. ECC meets the state performance standards for developmental education by providing a student-centered learning skills center, remedial courses, and additional tutorials. The developmental studies

administration at ECC understands that if a student is not going to be successful in a remedial class then they must be withdrawn from the class or the program may risk not meeting the required state performance measures. The developmental studies program at ECC clearly reflects the balance between state policy, local organizational requirements, and external influences that require consideration, while managing an open door policy for higher education. The senior administration at the college, as well as the state leadership, clearly places an emphasis on student outcomes and performance, with little need to intimately manage the process. The department administration appears to be very positive about the program locally, and they feel as if they have everything necessary to be successful. The key influence for the faculty and staff at ECC is the challenge of serving an ever-increasing number of under-prepared students while promoting standards and access.

CHAPTER 5: CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Central Community College was selected based on the stated criterion for sample selection from chapter 3; it was one of two schools that were considered for participation from the central region of North Carolina. CCC was the only college participating in the study where the president of the college actively participated in the study by identifying the most appropriate staff members for the interviews and by directing the scheduling of the interviews with developmental education administrators. CCC has an easily identifiable developmental studies program on its web site that specifically explains the purpose of the program and outlines the courses that a student may need to satisfy the requirements for admission into a degree program. CCC developmental studies administrators were extremely cooperative and helpful in outlining the developmental studies program and providing valuable information through an initial one hour and twenty minute semi-structured interview. As a follow up to the interview, I reviewed the web site and examined the college catalog to follow the admissions and placement testing process as proposed by the administration. I compared the information in the catalog with data collected from the initial interview. To clarify policies and procedures at CCC I used e-mail to ask questions and to fill in gaps during the data collection and subsequent analysis. From the initial interview and follow up contacts, I gathered key information on the foundation and current implementation of NCCCS developmental education policy, along with information about the primary administrators and staff that manage the implementation of developmental education policy. In addition, I was able to identify and

document the primary internal and external influences that affect the interpretive process for providing developmental studies.

Background

Central Community College (hereinafter as CCC) is located approximately 50 miles from Raleigh in an area that has been economically distressed by the loss of manufacturing jobs in recent years. As a result of the changes in employment opportunities, more non-traditional students are returning to the community college in an attempt to enhance job skills or to alter their career path. For traditional high school graduates, opportunities to work locally are more limited than a generation ago and more recent high school graduates are choosing to attend a community college to improve their career options. For the 2006-2007 program years, the developmental studies program served approximately 70% of the students at the college with at least one remedial course. With the growth in the number of students choosing to attend college after high school or return many years later, the need for remediation has also increased and has required adjustments by the local community college. The mission of Central Community College, as stated by the president, is to prepare the students of the multiple counties that the college serves for the challenges of the 21st century. The president highlights the role of education for a new technology and knowledge-based economy, and the president states that one of the responsibilities of the community college is to establish partnerships that benefit the entire community. In serving the local community, the issue of under-prepared college students is one that affects the prospects of achieving the goals outlined by the president. The various local interests and influences must also be considered when

establishing local educational policy. This is part of the balance between state community college standards and access, and the needs of the local college and the surrounding community.

Central Community College admissions policies are governed by the August 24, 2006 placement testing policy update as described in Appendix A. CCC publishes a catalog for its faculty, staff, and students that describes the procedures for processing students that require placement testing as freshman at CCC. As part of the state placement testing policy, each college is required to publish a local developmental education policy that takes into consideration the mandates as described in the 2006 memorandum. CCC publishes its developmental education policy as part of its college catalog, which includes information for students and staff at various points in the process. The rest of this chapter reviews and analyzes the processes for the implementation of developmental education policy at CCC.

Site Dynamics

Key Administrators and Staff

The Dean of Arts and Sciences/ Developmental Studies provides leadership at CCC in all matters related to developmental studies. The dean acts as an intermediary between the senior level administration at CCC, including other deans, vice presidents, and the president of the college. The Program Head of Developmental Studies serves as the primary link between the faculty and the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the role of the program head is to manage day-to-day issues within the department and teach a full-time load in the department. Given that the developmental studies program at CCC is

decentralized, meaning that there is no separate department but rather the courses are taught within the various curriculum program areas, the program head coordinates faculty hiring, the number of course offerings, and student data collection through collaboration with various academic departments. The program head manages curriculum and testing issues as the senior administrator for classroom and instructional issues; at both ECC and CCC, policy decisions lie with the deans of developmental studies and they appear to be very active in policy decisions for the department. The faculty members at CCC provide instruction for the students under the direct supervision of the program head. At CCC, the instructors are responsible for helping students reach the required level of academic skills while the students are taking additional courses in their chosen field of study. At ECC there is a separate department with a centralized skills lab for developmental studies, but students are also allowed to take courses at the college level while taking developmental courses.

Key Internal Organizational Influences

Both CCC and ECC developmental studies deans identified the role of the community college president as the primary link to the state developmental education policy. There are separate developmental education faculty members at CCC, while the students are integrated into the various academic departments and they take their courses based on the requirements for their chosen program of study. The Board of Trustees at CCC reviews the local data on enrollment, graduation, and Full Time Equivalency (F.T.E.). The college faculty, staff, and administration are all responsible to the local board of trustees to provide adequate numbers of students attending and completing the

various degree programs for graduation. Given that the number of students requiring developmental studies is 70% of the total student population, developmental education is a normal part of the college curriculum and serves as a primary internal influence on the interpretation of NCCCS developmental education policy.

Key Local and Institutional Influences

From the data presented from the North Carolina Administrative Code, each of the schools in this study has the same requirement for open door admissions, and under the August 24, 2006 policy update (Lancaster, 2006) each of the colleges in the study must comply with NCCCS placement testing standards. The current developmental studies administration at CCC did not participate in the 2005 placement testing forums sponsored by the NCCCS to determine whether the placement standards were too high or too low for the local situation. The primary institutional influence from the NCCCS is reflected in the need to meet the performance measures that affect funding for the college, and the Full-Time Equivalency (F.T.E.) funding that is based on the number of students registered and the number of credit hours they complete. In my discussions with the dean and the program head for developmental studies, they both dismissed the institutional influence of the NCCCS in the daily operations of the department; they cited their neighboring colleges as being their guide to successful implementation of developmental studies policy. The role of the state level developmental education personnel appeared very limited from the perspective of the dean and the program head at CCC. The dean and the program head cited more systemic issues as having influence

over the interpretive processes at CCC. As cited earlier, performance measures and funding issues play a larger role as external influences.

The problem of under-prepared high school students was cited by the program head and dean as the number one local external influence at CCC. The dean and the program head cited the problem of the academic skills gap between high school and college as the most critical issue to the success of CCC's students. Global labor and economic changes influence CCC as the shift in jobs brings students that may not have chosen to enter higher education previously. As the dean and department head explained their enrollment increased in an unnatural way as the local job market suffered from the local effects of economic globalization. The program head explained that the number of students that were under-prepared for college level work increased in an overwhelming manner, in the chair's opinion due to the length of time that the displaced workers had been out of school.

CCC serves a large multi-county area and also serves corrections facilities. The developmental studies program head at the main campus is required to supervise the delivery of developmental education for all of the college's facilities. The program head expressed that the demands of the job leave little time to reflect on the outcomes for the students, but rather there is a constant flow of new students that must be added to the rolls. The demand for qualified instructors is cited by the program head as a primary influence in the implementation of developmental studies. The demand for instructors is balanced against the available funding and resources to serve them. Most of the faculty

for developmental studies at CCC is adjunct and therefore there is a constant challenge to meet the demand for quality instructors that are available.

Foundations of Developmental Education at CCC

CCC has been serving students through developmental studies programs for at least 20 years as an identified program. The current program head of developmental studies is unaware of the foundations of the current policies and practices at CCC, but she has had a long relationship with the program as an instructor and now as an administrator. She expressed that the current model has been in place for her entire tenure and appears to have been working well for at least the past ten years. During the one hour and eight minute face-to-face interview with the dean and the program head, I observed that the two seemed to have a very coordinated understanding of the challenges and opportunities in managing the developmental studies program. Through the interview and follow up contacts with each of them individually, I was able to establish a clear foundation for the current practices in delivering developmental education. The dean and the chair cited economic and social reasons for the need to offer developmental studies. The program head expressed that without developmental studies there would be a fraction of the students that could attend college in the area. From the perspective of the dean and the program head, the foundations of developmental studies at CCC follow the same path that higher education has followed over the past thirty years. As more access to college has been provided and desired by the public, the growth in the developmental studies program has followed the same trend.

Current Developmental Studies Program

The current developmental studies program at CCC provides instruction to approximately 70% of all students during any given semester. This makes developmental studies the largest single program at the college. At CCC the program head appears to manage the day-to-day operations for developmental studies in collaboration with the Dean of Arts and Sciences, who is the chief academic officer for the entire department for all of the counties and centers served. The role of the dean in managing developmental studies appears to be more focused on policy decisions and student outcomes. The program head has 10 years experience at CCC; she teaches a full academic load in addition to her supervisory role. The program head outlined her responsibilities in the following manner during the interview:

As the program head, I decide on the number course sections; I look at trends in student enrollment and the programs that they select; I manage the hiring of instructors; I coordinate with the deans of three satellite campuses; I provide instructors for the prison, as well as all classes on the main campus.

The developmental studies program is decentralized, meaning that there is no separate department for developmental education; the courses are taught within the various academic departments. I asked the program head why the college administration chose to not separate the program, and she stated that the program at CCC has always been decentralized; there has been no need to change the program design. It was discussed during the initial interview that one of the benefits of having a program that is decentralized into the various academic departments is that all students are seen as

college students. There is no difference between developmental and curriculum students; they see each other as equal.

Local Influences on Developmental Education

The ineffective secondary education in the counties served by CCC is considered by the developmental studies administration to be the number one cause for the high demand for remediation. The program head grew up in the area surrounding CCC, and she is familiar with the situation in the public schools that are feeders for CCC. The program head stated in the strongest terms that the students leave high school completely unprepared for a standard college curriculum. The students leave high school with a completely unrealistic view of what is required of them as they enter college. The program head stated that in many cases the high school teachers are long-term substitutes that may or may not have a bachelor's degree and in many cases may have no formal preparation as secondary educators. The dean at CCC stated that there is an ongoing problem in public secondary schools. They are passing students from one grade to the next year after year with no accountability by the student for their individual success:

The product of the schools is under-prepared students as a part of the system.

There is no incentive to follow rules under the current high school system, they manipulate the system, and their skills are very weak. The social skills have taken over the academic needs. When under-prepared high school graduates enter a college program and it is determined that they require remediation, it is a difficult realization for many students.

Administrators, counselors, and faculty must help students adapt to the demands of the college curriculum as community colleges in North Carolina are obliged to accept all students 18 years of age or older who have a high school diploma or its equivalency. There is a clash of responsibility and accountability as expressed by the program head at CCC. As the college must manage instructional costs through the use of adjunct faculty, the demand for more qualified instructors to appropriately serve the developmental education students is also increasing. CCC is required to provide remediation and adequately prepare students for degree programs; this responsibility becomes a conflicting demand when considered in light of a larger state mandate to meet performance measures that include developmental education. As the dean explained, the college is required to accept all students that meet the age and high school graduation requirements. They are accepted to college for a program that is a pre-college level. The college faculty and staff that work in developmental studies are judged on their ability to help students achieve college level status and the students' future success in subsequent curriculum courses. The conflict exists because the college has no right to refuse any student. There is no student level that is too low for college placement. The decision of the college faculty and staff is removed, and they are forced to accept college students that are not yet at college level and the college faculty and staff members are negatively impacted if they fail. CCC has a separate grading system for developmental education students, it has the same purpose as the one used by ECC faculty, but uses a different nomenclature: P- a grade of "A", "B", or "C" in a developmental pre-100 level college course; RF- satisfactory progress for financial aid purposes, but the student must repeat

the course; additional grades of WP- withdrew while passing or WF-withdrew while failing are used at CCC. These grades will affect students' financial aid, but do not negatively impact college performance measures. This is a clear example of the challenges facing local community colleges to manage internal and external influences.

Placement Testing Policy

CCC uses the Compass and Asset assessment tools, which are part of the NCCCS approved list of assessments, to place entering students. The admissions department manages the initial placement level set by the state; this is completed during the initial admissions process. CCC publishes an outline of the process for placement testing and remediation as part of the student catalog. One area requiring more clarification from this study is academic advising for the developmental studies program at CCC. Advisors for each academic department are required to follow the guidelines for admission and register the students for developmental courses as required by the college catalog. Academic advising appeared to be removed from the administration of developmental studies. I was unable to get a firm understanding of the relationship between student services initial placement testing, the developmental studies department, and the subsequent academic advising process within the department. The developmental education department staff at CCC responded in a very dismissive manner when I asked about their interaction with the admissions, and advising departments. This is an example of the need for the senior administration to help identify the major players in the developmental studies program beyond the primary departmental staff. The implementation at CCC varies from ECC, which has a centralized skills center that

includes the Basic Skills department. At CCC, students take developmental courses and curriculum courses as long as the pre-requisites for the courses are met.

One example of the implementation of developmental studies at CCC was provided by the program head. A student that may need remediation in English but not in Math may be allowed to take courses below a 100 level (pre-college level) and at the same time take college algebra or technical math depending on the individual department. In the case of students that need all developmental courses, they are assigned a developmental advisor. For these students, they may only take developmental courses until they satisfy the requirements for the particular academic skill. The program head explained that students who require several levels of remediation usually come and go and will never be counted for performance funding. If students do not achieve the desired score on the placement exam and requires more than one remedial course, they are referred to a developmental studies advisor who explains the results and the appropriate path to enter degree credit courses. If a student needs only one remedial course they are simply registered for the course and may take the remedial course as part of a standard curriculum of study.

CCC does not use an alternate assessment to place students out of developmental courses. Of the three colleges participating in the study, only ECC is using an alternate placement test, and it is just beginning to use it in the summer 2008. The program head at CCC explained that she sees no benefit in using an easier test to place students out of developmental courses. CCC uses an additional classroom diagnostic test to demonstrate to students the particular skill areas that require attention; this test is not used to place

students out of developmental except in extreme examples where the student's skill level far exceeds the goals of the classes. CCC had to assess the current situation of placement testing that in some cases required students to pass several levels of developmental courses, even though in many cases a refresher course or a more appropriate local assessment is available. The interpretive process of the developmental studies faculty and staff at CCC considered both the external institutional requirements of standardized placement testing as mandated by the state, combined with local needs to assess students in a manner that reflects the actual skills needed to be successful.

Challenges for Developmental Studies

The primary challenge for the developmental studies program at CCC is to provide adequate instruction for the number of students that need the services. There is a lack of qualified instructors to meet the demand, and as colleges use more adjunct faculty to reduce the cost of benefits for employees it becomes an even greater challenge. According to the dean, as more and more students decide that they need a college education in order to get a job, many students that did not prepare while in high school are choosing to attend college, and they are underprepared. The dean expressed that "There is a great deal of denial about the status of the students in regard to their lack of skills because they have been pushed through public school without any true accountability."

Local Implementation

During the initial interview, the dean discussed an issue related to the open door policy of the NCCCS and it highlights an unintended consequence of the state policy that is perpetuated on the local college:

The open door policy causes developmental studies to receive everyone. Some students are challenged in ways that are not standard academic issues, such as special needs autism and learning disabilities, which are included in developmental education. Developmental studies and the current performance measures are unfair to include students that are inappropriate for this learning environment. The state should examine how the program is implemented.

The dean goes on to explain that information about the special needs of high school students is not included on the transcripts received by the college. The students are placed in unfair circumstances that require additional services that are unaccounted for by the NCCCS and that unfairly challenge the college administration, staff, and faculty to serve students with performance standards that are unrealistic.

During the interview with the dean of developmental studies at CCC, I asked the same question that was asked of the dean at ECC regarding the new performance standards that were part of the developmental education policy update of August 24, 2006. The dean at CCC described the same option for student management as the dean at ECC. The students in the program that are obviously failing their developmental courses or are not attending regularly must be withdrawn from the class prior to the end of the semester. The dean at CCC explained that it is the only way that the college would be

able to report satisfactory completion of for the annual student data report on performance measures. All three of the colleges participating in the study described that withdrawing students who are failing from the classes is a helpful way to meet the performance measures. The program head at CCC describes the significance of withdrawing failing students from developmental education classes in this manner. Dropping students with poor attendance for the class is a necessity to meet the performance measures. The Program Head summarized her system for managing performance measures with instructors:

In short, the system is: emphasize, remind, monitor, and inform instructors of their individual performance measurement data; praise each instructor individually when the instructor reaches or exceeds the performance measurement; praise the entire team for a job well done; when applicable, dropping students with poor attendance for the class is a necessity to meet the performance measures.

The program head is continuously assessing the performance of the students in developmental classes because of the critical nature of state performance standards for funding purposes. The program head's interpretation of developmental education policy reflects the difference in meaning between decision-making and interpretation that arose during the review of literature and the design of the study. As explained by the dean at CCC, there is no discretion for the college faculty and staff regarding who is accepted to the college for admission. A decision for the college faculty and staff might imply a minimum standard on the placement exam or making recommendations on issues of

learning disability that might affect the students' performance. A decision implies a sense of authority or power to determine the appropriateness of a course of action regarding developmental education policy. In this case, the college faculty and staff at CCC interpret NCCCS developmental education policy with their best response to the inevitability of open enrollment and the implications of serving under-prepared students with no minimum standard for admission, but with a minimum standard for achievement. No community college in the NCCCS has the power to decide whether developmental education policy is right for their institution; they only have the power to manage the manner in which it will be implemented.

Administrative Support

The president at CCC actively participated in the identification of the most appropriate subjects to interview for this study regarding developmental education policy. As part of this study, I wanted to know how the president and the vice presidents were involved in the implementation of the developmental studies program at CCC. By not being able to include the presidents and vice presidents in this study, I feel that I did not obtain the full picture of the interaction between the developmental studies department and the senior administration. I did discuss this issue during the interview with the developmental studies administration so that I could get their direct views on the level of interaction between the developmental studies program administration and the senior college administration. The program head deferred to the dean due to the limited contact that the program head has with the president. The dean expressed that developmental studies and the associated performance measures are a regular topic of discussion. The

president of the college is responsible to the state to comply with developmental studies policies and procedures related to placement testing and course offerings. The dean stated that the president is supportive when discussing what is needed to be successful in the developmental studies program. I experienced the support of the president at CCC through his time and effort to schedule and promote the interviews conducted with the developmental studies administration. At both ECC and CCC the deans expressed that developmental studies is not a primary topic of discussion at administrative meetings but that it is discussed in terms of students outcomes. The department dean at CCC expressed that one of the key issues for the president is to get students out of developmental studies as soon as possible. The dean explained, "We lose students in developmental studies when they get stuck and that reduces graduates." At both ECC and CCC the deans expressed that that they prefer to have a level of autonomy from the senior administration regarding the implementation of developmental studies. There is a clear sense of the different agendas between senior level administrators and academic deans and department chairs. The senior level administration has a clear responsibility to perform as the state mandates require, while maintaining the autonomous role that community college presidents have as part of the NCCCS. The academic deans and department chairs are obligated to comply with the demands as set by the state through placement testing and course offerings, but each college administration has its own philosophy regarding the implementation of developmental studies. The gap that exists between policy and practice is reflected in the relationships between senior level administrators at the local and state levels and the actual implementation of the developmental studies programs at

the local college. All of the developmental education administrators participating in the study expressed that they had little or no contact with senior administrators related to the application of developmental education courses and support services. They all cited funding, student outcomes, and enrollment information as being the most critical issues for senior level administrators. This is also reflected in the memoranda from the NCCCS that rarely addresses the actual implementation of developmental education, but highlight performance measures and standards. Maybe that is the correct balance between administration and academic departments, but it has not been defined through educational research to this point.

State Policy Versus Local Implementation

The administration and staff at CCC in the developmental studies department expressed that there has been little or no contact with any representative at the state level regarding developmental studies policies, procedures, or practices. The developmental studies administration receives information from the local president and vice president related to numbered memorandums from the system office. These memoranda outline state policies that colleges must implement to comply with the state standard. How the college administration goes about managing the implementation of the policy appears to be completely determined by the internal organizational interpretation of the administration, staff, and faculty at each college. The NCCCS representative interviewed for this study explained that the system office does not get involved in the day-to-day implementation of developmental studies programs (see Appendix D). From the perspective of the developmental studies administration at CCC, the outcome as reported

in the annual student data report to the system office is critical to the college and the department. The college administration is responsible to the state legislature and the system office to meet the standards as outlined in Appendix G; the local college administration and staff must determine how best to achieve that goal while considering the local influences that impact college practices. The state establishes placement standards and curriculum pre-requisites, but there is an open admissions policy for any student age 18 or older that has a high school diploma or its state equivalency. The origin of the open door policy in the community college dates back to the early 1970s when college and university enrollments suffered declines. Universities relaxed admissions standards and provided financial aid, which placed community colleges and universities in direct competition for undergraduates with remediation needs. Community colleges established open door policies to shorten the admissions process and increase enrollments (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). From this history, the local community college in the NCCCS is responsible to accept any student that meets the state criteria regardless of their academic level. The dean and the program head at CCC pointed out that the local public schools have many issues that impact the preparedness of the students graduating from high school, but there is no consideration at the state level as to how the college is to manage students who are unable to perform at the desired level, without compromising the performance measures at the state level. The program head expressed that funding for services to students with learning disabilities is not considered under the open door policy, and that all students are counted equally, no matter what their academic needs require in services.

Summary

Scanning

The dean of developmental studies and the program head have focused on how to serve 70% of the student body of the community college while complying with state policy and local organizational demands. The program head of developmental studies grew up in the local community and is familiar with the primary issues that affect under-prepared high school graduates. The program head explained that the local school system is unable to provide adequate instruction due a lack of qualified teachers, geographic location, and poor economic resources. The program head identified external influences such as low literacy rates, inadequate public school staffing, poor job prospects for low-skilled laborers, and a societal change towards post-secondary education as need not an option. All of these influences affect the college administration, faculty, and staff to serve such large numbers of under-prepared students. The program head has been at the college for ten years, and the program has always been managed as it is currently. The program head has observed that the number of students attending college has increased due to job losses and changes in the economy. The dean and the program head feel that larger social issues cause students to feel that they do not need to work hard while they are in high school, and as a result large numbers of students enter through an open door policy that requires admission by the community college. The dean and the program head recognize that the community college is the last best hope for most of the students that enter through developmental studies and that it is a natural part of the college curriculum to offer remediation to 70% of the students.

The dean and the program head have observed little or no support from the system office regarding the implementation of developmental studies. They are aware of the performance standards and the state pre-requisites as outlined in numbered memorandums and directives from the state, which are passed through the president and vice president of the college. The senior administration collaborates with the department to ensure that the program is meeting the desired goals and that the students are served as required.

Interpretation

The senior college administration and the developmental studies administration appear to collaborate in a manner that reflects a common understanding of the needs and requirements of serving under-prepared students. The developmental studies administration and staff have interpreted their role as the primary service provider for students that graduate from high school without the necessary skills to perform at the standard college level as defined by the UNC Board of Governors and the North Carolina Community College System. CCC faculty, staff, and administration recognize that the majority of students that enter their institution will need at least one remedial course in math, reading, and writing in order to enter college level programs.

The senior level administration asks that the developmental studies department meet the state performance standards for developmental education, which are based on the percentage of students that enter the college and enroll in developmental studies. The college recognizes that no consideration is given to the number of students that the college enrolls or the academic levels of the students. The department dean and program

head at CCC understand that students with special learning needs may be enrolled in developmental studies classes and may not achieve satisfactory progress to continue in the program. The dean explained that the mandate from the state is that students who need remediation should be integrated into the college as a normal part of the academic experience and not separated due to their status in developmental studies. The program head in developmental studies explained that there is insufficient funding and attention given at the state level to developmental education. The lack of funding for adequate support services for developmental programs creates a pressure situation for the faculty and staff in developmental studies at CCC to comply with the competing interests of more access with fewer resources. The administration and staff at CCC view the relationship with the state developmental education program as one of policy mandates and directives but not direct support for the implementation of the program. They view the relationship as loosely coupled because they have very little contact with the system office other than to provide the necessary reporting data for performance purposes. They look to the internal organization to solve issues related to the local service area and under-prepared students. I asked the dean at CCC, through a follow-up e-mail question, whom he goes to with questions and concerns about developmental education. The dean stated that:

“Generally, I go down, up, and across. First, I ask my developmental program head her opinion. Next I go to the VP of instruction. Finally, I will try and find a resource at the system office, but I haven’t had too much success in figuring out who are the right people there”.

Examining the response from the dean at CCC, it is clear that the relationship with the system office as a source of information and support is not available. There may be reasons at the state level that are not considered as part of this study, but it is consistent with what the NCCCS representative stated during our interview (see Appendix F) that the colleges are autonomous and if they need help then they can ask for it.

Learning

CCC designed a developmental studies program that meets the needs of their community while providing for the satisfactory performance at the state level. The developmental studies program serves approximately 70% of all students that attend with at least one remedial course. Due to the large percentage of students that need remediation, the program is not separated from other academic areas; it is integrated into the various program areas. This means that students are allowed to take developmental courses and degree credit courses at the same time, as long as the student meets the requirements through state and local pre-requisites.

The developmental studies program at CCC is not seen as being unusual or second tier; it is an integrated part of the academic experience. The college administration and staff have successfully provided a local solution to a local problem by filling in the gap that is created in part by a public school system that is unable to prepare students with the necessary academic skills to perform at college level upon graduation. The senior level administration and the department leadership have responded to the local need for developmental studies by serving 70% of the students at the college with at least one developmental courses, and they recognize that it is part of a mandatory open door

admissions policy that is and will be part of the mission of the community college system in North Carolina for some time to come. The history of performance measures and the legislation reviewed for this study reflect a progression towards more accountability for community colleges.

The relationship between the state system office and CCC appears to be very limited from the perspective of the developmental studies department. The administration and staff measure their success against the mandated state performance measures, the required student data, and that the appropriate placement testing occurs as part of the admissions process. Beyond the benign reporting data that is sent to the system office, the local department at CCC is self-sufficient in determining the process for the implementation of the program and how best to serve students. The dean expressed that he would refer to other programs at other colleges to gauge the operation at CCC; in particular, he would look at the performance standards at other colleges as measure of the success at CCC. The administration and staff at CCC recognize that they are part of a larger state system as they are connected to the state system through funding, program oversight, and student reporting data, but there is no visible input from the state in the developmental studies process. Based on the interviews and program information gathered through the college catalogs, web site, and end-of-year reporting data, it appears that the CCC administration, staff, and faculty have adapted to the local demands and competing institutional interests, and attempt to satisfy all of the competing interests.

CHAPTER 6: WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Western Community College (hereinafter as WCC) was chosen after a review of potential participating colleges in the Western region of North Carolina; the selection was narrowed to two colleges. WCC has an easily identifiable developmental studies program on its web page with staff and faculty directory information and a published admissions policy for college placement testing and developmental education. The final selection of WCC was based on the engaging response from the department chair of developmental studies and the lack of response from the second college chosen in the western region. I made the choice to contact the developmental studies department chair based on the college catalog at WCC, which identified the senior developmental studies administrator. WCC's developmental education department chair has at least ten years of service both as an instructor and as an administrator at WCC. I used a semi-structured face-to-face interview and e-mail to ask questions and to fill in gaps during the data collection and subsequent analysis phase. The chair did not want to use recording equipment during the interview; therefore the use of e-mail to clarify points from the interview notes was necessary. From the initial interview, I gathered key information on the foundation and current implementation of NCCCS developmental education policy, along with information about the primary administrators and staff that manage the implementation of developmental education policy, as well as the primary internal and external influences that affect the interpretive process.

Background

WCC is located in the South Western Piedmont region of North Carolina. The college has a combined full-time and part-time curriculum enrollment of approximately 3,000 students divided between one main campus and one off-campus center. WCC reported data for the 2004-2005 NCCCS performance measures for developmental education in its most recent college catalog. Developmental education students at WCC had a passing rate of 86% in developmental courses. In subsequent curriculum courses, developmental education students passed at a rate of 81% compared to non-developmental students that passed at a rate of 83% for the reporting year. The current president of WCC has been with the college for almost two years. The college has had four presidents since the year 2000, including one interim president. The current local developmental education policy has been in place since the year 2000, and reflects the policy interpretation of a president who ended his tenure in the year 2000 after almost twelve years of service at WCC.

WCC admissions and placement policies are governed under the August 24, 2006 state placement testing policy update as described in Appendix A. WCC publishes a college catalog that describes the procedures for processing students that require placement testing as freshmen at WCC. The current president was not in place at WCC when the current state developmental education policy was voted on at the state level in 2005. The rest of this chapter reviews and analyzes the processes for the implementation of developmental education policy at WCC by examining the foundations of developmental education at WCC, and by identifying the key administrators, staff, and

faculty that were involved in the development of the current program. The study highlights internal organizational influences, external institutional influences at a state level, as well as local external influences that may affect the interpretive process related to developmental education.

Site Dynamics

Key Administrators and Staff

The Dean of Curriculum Studies acts as an intermediary between the senior level administration at WCC, including other deans, vice presidents, and the president of the college. The current dean served in the developmental studies program prior to her appointment as a dean. The Chair of Developmental Studies serves as the primary link between the faculty and the dean of curriculum studies; the role of the chair is to manage day-to-day issues that faculty may have, and the chair serves to guide faculty regarding their individual responsibilities to the department. The chair serves as the chief academic officer for classroom and instructional issues. All policy decisions lie with the Dean of Curriculum Studies, but the chair at WCC appears to play a major role in influencing policy decisions due to the absence of any other administrators that are involved in the daily operations of the program. The chair stated that the dean of curriculum programs is supportive, but has no background in this area. The chair has been involved in the developmental studies program at WCC since the beginning when the program was managed as part of a grant project. The current president of the college has had very little contact with the developmental studies program at WCC during his short tenure at WCC.

The developmental studies program at WCC is part of the curriculum studies department, and the faculty teaching developmental courses are assigned to groups of students within the various academic departments. The program is decentralized in that there is no centralized learning center and students are able to take program specific college credit courses while completing the developmental requirements. Each of the colleges participating in this study uses faculty who teach developmental courses exclusively. This fact is significant in that there are differences in the location of the courses and the local policies for students. ECC has a centralized program according to the standards as defined by Perin (2005). CCC and WCC allow students to take developmental courses as part of a college level program of study; however, developmental education instructors do not teach other courses within the various academic departments. A developmental education instructor will only teach developmental courses. This is not a requirement from any standing policy, but it appears to be a choice at WCC and CCC.

Key Internal Organizational Influences

The history of the developmental studies program at WCC is the primary internal organizational influence that was observed during this study. It is in powerful contrast to ECC, and in many ways it is quite different from CCC, even though the schools share a more common program design. The developmental education program at WCC began around 1994, about the time of the NC legislative mandate to establish remedial education programs to improve access and success in community college programs. I can make no direct correlation from the research, but it is a timely connection. WCC began

its program as part of a special needs grant, termed a TRIO grant, to serve students that were not part of traditional academic or vocational programs. The grants provided funding for tutors and materials.

The department chair explained that the location and administration of the early developmental studies program under the grant created a sense of illegitimacy for the program as an unequal part of the college. He attributed part of the current success of the program to the dean of curriculum programs, who is an advocate for developmental studies. The current developmental studies department was formed 8 years ago. The chair expressed that the program at WCC has been part of an evolution in the college and recognition of the need and importance of developmental studies as a primary path to academic success for many underprepared freshman and returning students. The philosophy and experience of the department chair, as a former high school math teacher, influences the interpretive process of the department. He expressed a belief that the gap between the high school curriculum and freshman academic competencies is a primary challenge for higher education. During the discussion of external influences on the developmental studies program, the chair explained that, "The block schedule in high school causes students not to take math for years prior to going to college." He followed up by explaining that due in large part to a failure in the design of K-12 education, students need remediation in math at double the rate of reading and English. The department members have set up the developmental courses to be a natural refresher for students that were not prepared for the transition from high school to college. It was also discussed that there are challenges in working with non-traditional freshman in that they

may have good arithmetic skills but they lack the knowledge of algebra that is required for college level math. This presents its own unique challenges, although the chair stated that, “older students ask for help, they ask questions, they are more responsible for their education than the younger high school graduates.”

Key Local and Institutional Influences

WCC serves counties that have some of the lowest literacy rates in the state of North Carolina. This accounts for part of the great need for remediation by recent high school graduates. There have been drastic changes in the local labor market. The counties that WCC serves have seen manufacturing jobs leave with little else to replace them. It was discussed that the depressed local economy has little to offer the students with only a high school education. They try to get a degree in a field that may allow them to move to one of the larger cities and get a higher paying job.

The role of the NCCCS in supporting WCC with the growth and expansion in developmental studies has been limited according to the department chair. The primary institutional influence of the NCCCS has been in mandating placement testing standards and core competencies. This standardization has forced local college presidents to recognize their responsibility in serving under prepared colleges students. WCC is an example of a college that had a marginalized developmental studies program for many years. The original TRIO grant through the U.S. Department of Education had allowed WCC to provide tutoring services to under-prepared colleges students until the year 2000. The chair explained that developmental studies had been combined with the TRIO special needs grant and that policy changes required the college to separate developmental

studies from the intended and legitimate expenditures for providing tutorial services. The chair pointed out that the line between developmental studies and the special needs grant was blurred due to the fact the same instructors that served the grant also taught developmental courses. The year 2000 was a pivotal year for developmental studies at WCC; the separation of developmental studies from the TRIO grant and its placement as part of the curriculum studies department was a key step on the path to legitimacy. The chair stated that the developmental studies department has had to adapt its policies in a variety of areas to become more in line with other colleges in the area concerning the organizational structure of the program, placement testing procedures, faculty assignments, and NCCCS policy requirements. Through the mandates and policy updates from the NCCCS the senior college administration had to reinterpret the college's role in providing developmental studies. In this sense the policy itself was sufficient motivation for the college president and other senior level administration. The component in this process that appears to be missing in the view of the department chair is NCCCS support for the implementation of the policy. The chair repeatedly stated that he always initiates the contact with the NCCCS and rarely receives a response to his questions related to: waivers for students placing out of developmental courses, how often to administer the placement exam, how long should placement exams be valid, is it possible to fast track students out of more than one level during a semester, can alternate exams be applied. He stated that there is no training that he is aware of or follow up discussions on the impact of developmental education policy. The process requires attention so that individual college faculty and staff will know what is most effective to serve students by sharing

information, updating best practices, and clarifying doubts. These issues according to the department chair are overlooked. The chair cited occasions when he would send questions to the NCCCS and would never receive a response. He would then look for another colleague at a community college or get a friend to contact the system office.

There is a loosely coupled relationship between the system office and the developmental studies program at WCC. The chair stated that in general the only contact that he has with the NCCCS is through memoranda passed down from the senior administration. He summarized his view on the relationship between the state directors and local college administration by stating, “No state support, unless it involves a new mandate”. The chair expressed his feeling of isolation and rejection concerning his contact with the system office. In this case, WCC is part of a larger organization of 58 community colleges that balance local autonomy with state policies and legislative mandates. In this case, the local college receives the policies that are required for action through the president of the local college and they are passed down through the internal organizational structure. In the case of developmental education at the local college there are two considerations when examining the level of coupling between the developmental studies department and the state higher education authority. First, there is the relationship internally between the department chair and the senior level administration; the level of involvement and interaction, which may be an established collaborative working relationship, or an isolated independent relationship. At WCC the current program shares a strong level of internal coupling among the chair, the deans, and the president. This was part of the program evolution described by the chair that brought the program from

obscurity as part of a TRIO grant from the U.S. Department of Education to an established part of the curriculum studies program. The second consideration is the level of interaction between the NCCCS and the developmental studies program at WCC. This relationship has remained loosely coupled between the NCCCS and the developmental studies program at WCC. There is no contact, support, or oversight between the NCCCS representative and the local college leadership. This fact is consistent amongst all three of the colleges in this study. Each of the deans, program heads, and department chairs in this study expressed that there has been no contact with a member of the system office, other than the computer-generated annual statistical reports related to developmental education policy or its implementation. This fact is consistent with the literature on the gap between policy creation and implementation, as noted in Perin (2006), Martinez and Nilson (2006), and Weick (1976).

Foundations of Developmental Education at WCC

The developmental studies department originated as a part of a TRIO grant; according to the U.S. Department of Education, TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to provide educational assistance from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs. The department chair explained that developmental studies at WCC was seen as a special project rather than part of the mainstream college program. As he describes it, “The developmental studies program has always been seen as the red-headed step child of the college.” During the beginning of the developmental studies program, remediation was provided as part of a skills lab and did not integrate students

into the individual departments. The name of the program was previously called “college prep,” which the chair of the department thought was a punitive title for those that need remediation. The name of the program was changed to developmental studies as way to more accurately reflect the mission of the program and standardize with other colleges in the state.

Around the year 2000, the developmental studies program was separated from the other services provided under the grant, so as not to risk problems with future grant renewal. According to the chair, not all students were eligible for grant money or help. Three instructors provided services among the various populations participating in the grant. Two other instructors were not associated with the grant. Eventually all developmental education instructors moved off the grant. The chair explained that the nature of the grant caused this change. It is rewritten on a cycle of 4 years, and new ideas on how to serve students led to revisions that separated the developmental studies program from the grant’s specifications. In addition, the department had grown in terms of numbers of students, course offerings, instructors, and the like. There was an obvious organizational change at WCC that was brought about by external influences from the parameters of the TRIO grant, but there was recognition on the part of the leadership that the role of developmental education had changed. It was no longer a peripheral program outside the mainstream, as more students applied for admission to the college and as state standards demanded. The college had to react in a way that would satisfy all of the competing interests. The department chair and the dean recognized that developmental education services had to change in order to be part of the NCCCS. The senior level

administration may not have been aware of the internal process used to serve developmental education students but there was an internal mandate to comply with state standards. The faculty and staff at WCC involved in developmental studies interpreted their role in making the changes to the department that would bring about the desired result.

Current Developmental Studies Program

The current developmental studies program at WCC serves approximately 60% to 70% of all the students that enter WCC. Remediation in math accounts for twice the number of sections as English or Reading courses.

Over the past five years the developmental studies program has seen numerous changes. With the creation of a completely separate developmental studies program approximately five years ago, developmental education has become more of a legitimate part of the college. The faculty and staff at WCC developed the current program by reviewing policies, processes and course offerings at other colleges and from an internal assessment of the progress of students through a variety of instructional strategies. In essence, they learned from the best practices of other locales and adapted the program to meet the needs of the students. The department chair was able to recall that prior to the new state placement testing policy update in August of 2006, there was a regional forum that he attended that was moderated by a state community college official and partnering local college administrators that were advocating for a reduction in the level of the cut-off scores needed to be admitted as “college level” for the NCCCS. The chair recalls this forum as a particularly contentious event as many of the college faculty and staff

represented did not want the placement scores reduced due to the fear that students would be unsuccessful in subsequent courses if developmental standards were made less stringent. The meeting appeared to turn negative, as there was a divide amongst the schools represented at the forum. During the spring of 2006, the chair of developmental studies at WCC was approached by the vice president of instruction and asked to make a recommendation regarding a pending vote by all college presidents regarding the proposed changes to placement scores for developmental education. The chair of the department voted to keep the standards as they were and not drop them or make it easier to place out of developmental education. The developmental studies program at WCC has continued to maintain the standards for developmental education as established by the state in 2006. The chair expressed that his sense from the forum to discuss placement-testing standards was that the NCCCS wanted to lower the standards for students to place out of developmental courses. This may be part of the pressure that is placed on the NCCCS to satisfy accountability standards set by the state legislature. The department chair at WCC recalled a comment made by the NCCCS representative at a forum to discuss lower the standards for placing out of developmental courses. The chair stated, "The NCCCS representative said that developmental education costs too much money and it is an unnecessary expense." This recollection of the 2005 NCCCS developmental education policy forum attended by the chair supports his supposition that the NCCCS wanted to lower the developmental studies placement scores to move students into degree credit program more quickly. One reason cited by the chair is that, "students that fail do not come back." The demand of accountability is clearly reflected in the changes

proposed by the NCCCS to provide more access to students and at the same time improve the success of students. It is also clear from the review of documents for this study that legislators had an interest in reducing the need for remediation (see Appendixes K, L, and O).

The department chair expressed that the primary change in the developmental studies program is that it now has an identity within the college as a result of the administrative changes, as well as the name change. Second, the courses are taught by professional developmental studies instructors, and not a lab facilitator as part of a skills center. The courses are taught as part of the students' declared academic and vocational departments, but under the supervision of the developmental studies department chair.

In the 2007-2008 college catalogs, developmental education courses are defined at WCC as follows: "Developmental classes offer students an opportunity to improve reading, writing and math skills prior to taking general education classes. All developmental classes begin with a zero: for example MAT 070". This definition reflects the current policies at WCC and the development and transition of the program to comply with the 2006 developmental policy updates (Lancaster, 2006). At WCC a student must complete a developmental course with a grade of 77 and a successfully pass an exit exam. This policy is an additional policy that is not part of the state-mandated placement policy; it is a local interpretation of state policy used to ensure that the student is prepared to move on to the next level. The department chair expressed his concern that the students entering the college are in need of preparation on the basics of how to study and how to make a plan to complete assignments in a timely manner. The chair feels that for the

faculty there is a competing need to have students prepared to move on to a degree program, while the NCCCS is trying to limit the time that a student remains in developmental courses so that the college does not lose the student entirely.

Placement Testing Policy

WCC uses the Compass and Asset assessment tools, which are part of the NCCCS approved list of assessments, to place entering students. The student services department is responsible for the initial placement and testing. If a student does not achieve the desired score on the placement exam and requires more than one remedial course, they are referred to the developmental studies program and registered for the appropriate course. According to the college catalog, a student is allowed to retake the college placement test one time. If the student places into developmental courses for a second time, then the student must complete the prescribed sequence of courses. The department chair explained that the program at WCC had accepted placement test scores as valid for five years. The department felt that this was too long to validate a score. The chair and the department dean sought the advice of other colleges to establish a more appropriate placement test policy, which currently accepts placement tests scores for three years. This is an example of how colleges scan their environment to determine what is appropriate to be successful. In this case there is no state policy that validates placement-testing scores for a given period of time. It is up to the individual college to establish local policies, even if they conflict with standards at other schools that are part of the NCCCS.

WCC has no alternative assessment beyond the current standardized assessments prescribed under the 2006 placement testing policy update (Lancaster, 2006). By

comparison, ECC is beginning to use an alternative assessment in 2008 to determine if it will help move students out of developmental studies sooner. CCC has a classroom diagnostic test that is used to help identify areas of concern, but it is not used to place students in developmental courses. There appears to be a common problem of students getting lost in the long and arduous process of completing more than one level of developmental education. All of the schools participating in the study expressed that one single level of developmental studies is not a problem. The challenge is that many of the students require two or more levels; moreover, most students require remediation in reading and math. Without adequate proficiency in these two areas, progress through the general curriculum is not possible given the students' abilities. I asked the chair at WCC why the college decided not to use an alternative assessment. The chair explained that as a former high school math teacher, he is aware of the gap that exists between high school math and college math. The Compass/Asset assessment, which is state approved, highlights the gap that exists between high school graduates and a freshman college curriculum. Therefore, in his view, it is not necessary to provide an alternate assessment. While the chair states that the current assessment is not perfect because it is too heavy on arithmetic and not enough on Algebra, he does feel that it is reflective of a true gap in academic skills.

Local Implementation

The chair of developmental studies at WCC approaches the day-to-day operations of the department with a clear understanding of the mission of developmental studies as his department now counts with the necessary full-time instructors and the results of the

end of year reporting reflect successful achievement of the NCCCS performance measures. He outlined the content of the curriculum that is taught in developmental studies at WCC: Math 050 is seventh grade math; Math 060 is eighth grade math; Math 070 is ninth grade math; and, Math 080 is tenth grade math. The chair explained that what students are doing in the classes that are provided at WCC is exactly what they should have done in classes at the public secondary school. The fact that the students did not obtain what they needed concerns the chair, but at the same time he expresses that the community college has taken on the role of serving the students, no matter what their academic level at the time of admission. It was discussed that some students are simply too far behind to participate in developmental studies and for the most part they drop from the program or they simply do not return.

For the students that do participate in the program and complete the courses required as pre-requisites to a degree program, the chair feels that the program is very solid and is meeting the needs of the students. The chair explains that the goal of the developmental studies program at WCC is to get the students to commit to the idea that they need the additional help out of high school. The college provides a counselor to explain the results of the placement test, and the students are told what they need to do in order to take courses in their chosen field of study. The chair explained that older non-traditional students seem to adapt in a more appropriate manner to the idea that they need help. Younger students resist asking for help or asking questions in class, but the non-traditional students usually ask for help openly and express their need to refresh their knowledge. The chair explained that the implementation of developmental studies at

WCC is based on the idea of bringing dignity to the department so that students do not feel inferior to their peers because they need additional help in preparing for college level work. The eventual name change of the program from college prep to developmental studies was a key change according to the department chair. He expressed that “College prep sounds punitive”. The chair stated that the college president put together a committee during the 2002 program year with the purpose of updating the local practices of the college to be in line with other colleges in the area. In part, this was based on the level of success that the other schools were having related to the end-of-year reporting data. The chair stated that one of the key reasons that motivated changes in the department was that “our department had outgrown what it used to be—in numbers, course offerings, instructors, etc.” The changing economy, the evolution of accountability by the NCCCS, the growing demand for higher education, and the policy changes for serving under-prepared colleges students are all contributing factors for the current implementation of developmental studies at WCC.

Institutional Challenges for Developmental Studies

One of the primary challenges to the successful transition of students from high school to college is the identifiable gap in the very design of high school courses. The chair asserted that the design of the schedule and plan of study in high school inhibits a student from receiving the appropriate instruction in math. He highlighted the large time gap that students have under a block schedule in high school that does not provide math instruction for over a year prior to attending college. For many students that gap in instruction promotes the need for a refresher course, and that is the role of the

developmental studies program at WCC. The dean at CCC expressed the same concern about under-prepared high school graduates. Furthermore, CCC's dean also believes that there is a larger social problem with a lack of discipline and accountability by secondary schools that pass the problem on to higher education. While ECC also deals with the phenomenon of under-prepared recent high school graduates, it serves two military bases and expressed that there were particular challenges in serving that population additionally.

He expressed that there is a powerful combination of circumstances that challenge community colleges as they serve under-prepared high school graduates. First, community colleges must accept all students that wish to apply for admission to a college program if they meet two basic criteria; they must be a high school graduate or its state equivalency, and they must be a legal resident of the United States. When this is combined with a system of secondary education that does not match the reality of the skills needed to be successful in a college level setting, the results are obvious in the number of students that require remediation. The chair at WCC clearly expressed that the primary challenge for community colleges in serving under-prepared high school graduates is meeting the demand of students that leave high school without the necessary skills to enter college.

There is a third challenge cited by the chair at WCC that adds an extra dimension to the study of developmental education policy. Performance measures create an environment where faculty and staff must determine if a student is going to be able to complete the class successfully. If successful course completion is not a reasonable

outcome, a student is removed from the course. The chair explained that the department was not meeting the goals of performance that other colleges were, and the reason for not meeting the goals puzzled them. After seeking advice from other schools, the department chair learned that there is a grading policy that allows schools to withdraw a student from the class if they do not attend regularly or if it is determined that they will fail. WCC has adapted a separate grading policy for developmental students, which follows the practices at the other two colleges in the study. Referring the WCC general college catalog (p. 40), the administration allows the following grading system for developmental studies: A- 93-100, B-85-92, C-77-84, F-below 77, and FW- Faculty Withdrawal. The practice of withdrawing students permits colleges to meet the performance standard at the state level by not counting students that were unable or unwilling to perform appropriately in the class, rather than simply failing the student, which would have resulted in a negative performance measure. WCC has an additional course developmental education requirement that the other two schools in the study do not use. They require an end-of-course competency test before permitting a student to move on to the next level.

The restructuring of the developmental studies program at WCC five years ago appears to have helped solve many of the internal organizational challenges that faced the faculty and staff for many years. The key external challenge cited by the chair at WCC is the growing demand for post secondary education by students that -- due to economic and social changes -- now require additional education. The chair explained that the combination of greater numbers of less prepared students and NCCCS performance measures are the greatest challenge for the program.

State Policy Versus Local Implementation

The chair of developmental studies at WCC explained that he has had no direct contact with the NCCCS regarding developmental education during his ten years of service. He reflected on his experiences that he never receives a reply when directly contacting the system office. He actually uses an intermediary that has an acquaintance at the system office and filters the request. The chair asserted that the primary way that the college determines if they are in compliance with the state policy is by reading the numbered memorandums sent to the president and other senior level administrators, and by asking other colleges what they are doing. He explained that in many cases the implementation of new local policies and strategies are based on inquiries made to other colleges that have successfully met their state performance measures, or they are internal decisions based on the experience and intuition of the administration and staff. He went on to emphasize that in many ways the college administration and faculty make decisions based on the needs of the students, and they try to find ways to successfully meet the state standards without compromising the students they serve.

It became clear from the initial interview and follow up e-mail contacts that the developmental studies program faculty and staff at WCC have had very little interaction ,if any, with the NCCCS related to developmental education. This reflects a very loosely coupled system of management of the state developmental studies program. There appears to be more peer interaction both internally and with other colleges to solve issues or to establish new policies for the department. The only clear example of local college and state interaction for developmental education was the placement standards forum in

2005 that discussed upcoming changes in the placement testing standards for the NCCCS. From the perspective of WCC the involvement with the state is through reporting student outcomes via annual reporting data forwarded to Raleigh. I asked how the new state placement testing standards (Lancaster, 2006) had affected the local implementation. The chair stated that there was no change for WCC; the local policy already had the same standards. The chair expressed that the policy was simply a written confirmation of an already existing local standard. The result of the standard is that WCC must manage the enrollment of students in order to comply with the state policies on placement and standards.

Summary

Scanning

The developmental studies program at WCC was founded based on a local need to serve students that could not perform at the college level even though they were classified as college students through NCCCS open admissions policy. The faculty and administration at the college found a way to serve the students through a TRIO grant to help students that are disadvantaged. The grant provided funding and a location to serve students that had no true place or identity within the college. The faculty and staff realized that 60-70% of the entering freshman and returning students were unable to perform in the college level classes but there was no formal system-wide program in place, that they were aware of, to serve students in this situation. The students did not fit any of the standard categories because they were high school graduates but were not prepared for college. The college administration did not look outside of its internal

organization to determine what other schools were doing in this case, or WCC simply did not want other schools to know about the challenges that their students were facing. The college looked for an internal solution to an internal problem without considering the larger statewide issue of under-prepared students. At the same time the NCCCS offered no solution to community colleges that served under-prepared college students until the late 1990s and the formation of a developmental education task force at the state level.

The faculty and staff at WCC eventually reached out to other schools in the system as the need arose to demonstrate performance in serving under-prepared students. The faculty and staff, through the administration, began to ask questions about placement testing policies, the title of the department, and how students should be managed through the process. Issues that began as internal college matters became issues as part of a larger system and a growing challenge for community colleges to serve growing numbers of under-prepared high school graduates.

Interpretation

As more and more high school graduates began to choose the community college as first stop after high school, WCC interpreted its role in serving the students as one that required a change in internal organizational structure and a change in the practices to serve the students. The faculty and staff that served under-prepared college students also had the experience of having taught in local high schools. The faculty members were aware of the disparities in the curriculum between high school and college. The faculty and staff interpreted their role in serving students that needed a refresher course or needed additional assistance as one that is natural and legitimate in the community

college. The name “developmental studies” at WCC replaced the name “college prep” as the title of the program that serves under-prepared curriculum students. The department chair and the dean felt that the term “college prep” unfairly stigmatized the students as not being part of the college. They chose to change the name to the more standard program identification that is used in other colleges. This is an example of an internal organizational decision that employs the strategies of scanning the internal and external environment to interpret what is best for the constituents. In this case the faculty and administration in developmental studies wanted to legitimize the new separate department as an equal partner at the college.

Learning

Through the scanning and interpretation process described, the developmental studies department at WCC was created as a separate department with a name that reflects the goals of the department to serve under-prepared curriculum students. The department reached out to other colleges to determine the most appropriate options that would be in line with an unidentifiable state standard. WCC has a loosely coupled relationship with the state regarding developmental education. The administration and staff examined the local policies at other colleges to establish a new department with the following local policies: all entering freshman and returning students for curriculum programs must take a placement test or demonstrate eligibility for a waiver; there is a three year limit for valid placement testing scores; students must pass the state pre-requisites and local pre-requisites before moving on to curriculum programs, a passing score of 77 on developmental courses, and students are withdrawn from the course if they

fail to attend regularly or if they are in danger of failing the class. The administration gained experience from their interaction and sharing of ideas with other colleges' faculty and staff members. One key policy that was highlighted was the need for colleges to withdraw students who are failing or not attending regularly, in order to satisfy the state standards. The administration and staff at WCC reached out to other community colleges as part of the NCCCS; the local college administration had to reach out to other schools to find out how they manage the challenges of serving under-prepared curriculum students. The developmental studies faculty and staff discovered that the autonomy they have also means that they are responsible to establish their own programs: no one is going to come to the campus and ask you how you are providing services. They learned that they are responsible to respond to the local demands of the community, the internal organizational demands, and the institutional requirements to the state as a member of the NCCCS. The administration and staff in the developmental studies program at WCC began to identify their internal organizational challenges in the context of a larger state system. The changes that have been made over the past ten years documented in this study came about in part from a stronger outreach to other schools that had similar challenges. However, it could be stated that the motivation for change came of out of need for survival as the standards at the state level changed. The administration at WCC was required to interpret their local policies in light of state standards that included accountability measures with penalties for failure to perform at a certain level.

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of the Study

This cross-case analysis highlights key factors that provide context and reasoning for the design, interpretation, and implementation of developmental education programs at the three community colleges participating in this study. The research questions and conceptual framework served to guide the interviews, document analysis, and process review at each of the three colleges. In particular, this study used the model by Daft and Weick (1984) to examine the internal and external influences that were specific to the local college, rather than examining the colleges as static organizations interpreting developmental education policy. The study sought to expose the dynamics of the interpretation processes within the local colleges as organizations, as well as institutions that are part of a larger state higher education system. In order to have a more complete understanding of the level of interaction between the NCCCS and the local colleges, I began the data collection process with an interview with a representative of NCCCS to establish a baseline of what is expected of each college related to developmental education policy. I also wanted to understand how the NCCCS representative viewed the role of the state in relation to the local colleges' implementation of developmental education policy. This phase of the study was accompanied by a review of past and present developmental education policy memoranda and legislative records. During the initial interviews and document reviews at the NCCCS level, the study remained flexible enough to allow for the discovery of new phenomena outside the prescribed list of focus questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After selecting and receiving approval to conduct interviews at three colleges in the NCCCS, I used the focus questions in the interview protocol to promote an in-depth discussion of the interpretive processes of implementing NCCCS developmental education at the three schools in the study. The study reveals the internal processes that individuals at local community colleges utilize in order to comply with the NCCCS policy for developmental education. The information about the internal processes each local college was compared to other colleges in the study with the added elements of internal and external influences that were particular to each college. In this manner, the deeper less obvious processes that might affect the interpretation of developmental education policy are examined in their true context. The study reveals the key players at each college, the primary factors that influence the interpretive processes, the level and nature of interaction among the college administration and staff, and the degree of coupling between the state system and the local college developmental studies administration. The following analysis provides explanations and observations from the developmental studies departments at three community colleges, and highlights local policies and practices, the NCCCS perspective on developmental education policy, and a detailed comparison of the factors that influence policy interpretations at each community college.

Data Analysis Process

Following the initial interview with the NCCCS representative, I created a transcript of the interview (see Appendix F), and I asked the NCCCS representative to review the transcript and clarify any inaccuracies from the interview. I used the

information from the NCCCS interview to establish key areas of inquiry to compare the three colleges' interpretation of state developmental education policy. The comparison of the three colleges included semi-structured interviews with the senior department administration for developmental studies at three community colleges in the NCCCS, and document reviews at the state and local level. The interviews at ECC and CCC were recorded; the interviews with the NCCCS representative and WCC were transcribed due to the comfort level of the interviewees. Prior to conducting the interviews at each college, I reviewed the college catalogs online to have a clearer understanding of the stated process for admission to the college. The interviews focused on the key influences and factors that affected the interpretive process of state developmental education policy at the local level. After each interview, I wrote a summary of the information gathered by using an outline of the key points stated from the research questions, interview protocol, and the conceptual framework. I organized the information from each college into a common template that included background information, the site dynamics, key internal and external influences, foundations of developmental studies, current implementation, challenges to developmental education, state vs. local policy, and a summary of scanning, interpretation, and learning. By using a template for each of the three cases I was able to identify missing information from each of the schools and follow up with e-mail and phone calls when necessary.

The focus of the data analysis was the stated research questions in the context of current developmental education policy for the NCCCS. The initial data analysis sought to assess the internal organizational structure at each college and to establish identifiable

characteristics that would help assess the interpretive processes at each college. Table 1 reflects the initial criteria used to analyze the developmental studies program at each college.

Site Dynamics

Program Design and Organization

Prior to my initial visit to each college, I tried to gather information about the design of the developmental studies program from the colleges' catalogs. Placement of the developmental studies program is seen as a critical decision for the individual college (Perin, 2002). The NCCCS representative was particularly concerned about the physical placement of developmental studies programs. NCCCS recommends that colleges have a separate department for developmental studies, but using a separate building for the classes is not recommended due to the possible stigma associated with taking developmental classes. Centralized programs are defined as those that have a separate department, traditionally with a centralized learning center or an identifiable facility for developmental studies classes. Decentralized programs (Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997) are defined as those that are integrated into the various academic departments. Using the standard as defined in the literature and by the NCCCS representative, I was able to categorize the programs participating in the study.

ECC has a centralized program. It has a separate department and a separate building for developmental studies. This program is unique as compared to the other two colleges in the study in that the program started out in its current form with the faculty

Table 1

Cross Case Analysis of the Site Dynamics

	ECC	CCC	WCC
Does your college have a separate developmental studies department?	Yes	No	No
Do you have separate faculty to teach developmental courses?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who is the senior developmental education administrator?	Dean of Arts and Sciences	Dean of Arts and Sciences	Dean of Curriculum Programs
What percentage of your students in 2005-2006 required remediation?	22%	70%	60-70%
What state approved placement test is used at your college?	Compass	Compass	Compass
Do you provide a local alternate placement test beyond the state approved test?	Yes	No	No
Does your college have a written placement testing policy?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have you ever attended NCCCS sponsored training on developmental education?	Yes	No	No

taking the lead in establishing the program. ECC had a shift in the organizational structure for the department; approximately eight years ago, the Basic Skills department was combined with the Arts and Sciences division and developmental studies was placed under that department. Therefore, while it is a centralized program in the sense that it is a separate and identifiable facility where all developmental courses are taught, it is not a separate department in the sense of its organizational structure within the college. The developmental studies program at ECC has a policy that was cited by Perin (2002) as being unusual in higher education. ECC does not allow students to take credit and developmental courses at the same time. This policy was considered to be more common in colleges that have centralized developmental studies programs.

CCC is a decentralized program in that it is part of the general studies curriculum. There is no identifiable skills center, and the classes are taught within the various academic departments. However, there is one consideration that Perin (2002) highlights as part of the definition of a decentralized program, the faculty members should not be identifiable as only teaching developmental studies. At CCC the faculty members within the individual departments do not teach the developmental courses. Instead, developmental courses are actually taught by separate faculty members. The level of interaction between the faculty members that teach developmental studies and those that teach credit courses was unclear from the study. While the level of faculty interaction is unclear, the department consciously integrates the students into the various academic programs while they complete their developmental courses. This latter consideration is

more consistent with a decentralized program. In total, from the definitions used in this study, CCC qualifies as a decentralized program.

WCC is a decentralized program that is under the direction of the Dean of Curriculum Studies. All of the courses are taught within the various academic departments by faculty specifically assigned to teach developmental courses. The organizational structure of WCC is very similar to CCC in that the program is part of the general studies department and students are allowed to take additional credit courses while they are completing developmental courses. It should be considered that both WCC and CCC serve a majority of freshman students that require developmental courses. The number of students taking developmental courses makes those courses de facto college level because they have become the standard for those community colleges. The colleges have blended the students into the standard curriculum programs and they are free to take degree credit program area courses while taking developmental courses. ECC does not allow students to move to college level until they are at college level in all skills areas.

The three colleges participating in the study had similar department hierarchies; however, similarity of structure notwithstanding, there were significant differences in the manner in which each college's faculty and administration worked together to implement developmental education. This fact harkens to Weick's (1991) explanation of understanding processes. In order to have a good understanding, one must look at what happens in the middle between the design and the outcome in order to understand the process. The colleges have different organizational strategies for managing the administration of the programs.

ECC has a Dean of Arts and Sciences, Basic Skills, and Developmental Studies. ECC also has a Chair of Developmental Studies that supervises the instructors on a daily basis. Her familiarity with the program provides a level of stability and consistency in the response of the department to external influences. The dean had a very confident response to the questions when asked about the need for training, oversight, or support from the NCCCS or senior administrators she stated, "Community colleges are autonomous, the state does not interfere, and that is a good thing." In this case, it was almost as if the state mandates were irrelevant in that ECC was already responding to the needs in a way that satisfied the NCCCS expectations from the 2006 developmental studies policy update. There was complete disconnect with the state regarding site visits, policy changes, or best practices; there was a level of independence from any issues with state policy related to developmental education. This organization is loosely coupled with the state developmental education program; there is little contact between the developmental studies department at ECC and the NCCCS. The performance measures and annual reporting data satisfy the need for communication and feedback and provide ECC with continued satisfactory performance as part of the North Carolina system.

CCC has a very similar organizational structure to ECC in that there is a dean and a department chair. CCC uses the title of Program Head for its department, but it is a very similar role to that of a department chair. One of the internal organizational differences between the two colleges appears to be in the level of involvement by the Dean of Arts and Sciences at each college. The dean at ECC has served directly in the department for many years and is aware of the evolution of the program to its current implementation. At

CCC the program head appeared to have a much stronger grasp of the day-to-day operations of the program and appeared to be the main facilitator for the program. The program head expressed more concerns about meeting the need at the college and providing enough qualified instructors to meet the demand. The dean seemed to be more concerned with outcomes as may be natural considering his multiple interests within the department. This was reflected in a follow up question to the dean that asked for his main concerns for the developmental education program; he responded retention and successful completion. This is further evidence of the differing interests between senior level administrators and mid-level managers who are responsible for the implementation. All of the daily factors that are part of the successful implementation of developmental education policy should be considered in the context of resources, support, and program review. The dean at CCC was very knowledgeable of the circumstances that promote the need for developmental education and the responsibility of the program; however, the program head was assigned the responsibility of teaching a full load and managing all the instructors at the various sites. The design of the program at CCC may be influenced in part by the numbers of students that require developmental studies, or it may be due to the philosophy of the previous administrations. There was a clear and marked difference between the program at ECC and CCC. The primary difference is that the program at CCC is decentralized among various academic departments throughout the college, but it was more than the organizational structure. There was a sense at CCC that the decentralization of the program was due to the overwhelming number of students that required the courses. At ECC the dean expressed that the students should feel as if they

are taking a step up by moving out of developmental studies. At CCC, the developmental studies program seemed to be a very natural part of the curriculum course of study, but it is a very large program to manage.

The organizational structure at WCC is similar to ECC in that there is a dean that supervises the developmental studies program, but the dean is removed from the day-to-day operations at WCC. The department chair supervises the daily operations and is an instructor in the program with at least ten years of experience. The chair has been part of the transition of the program from a special services grant program to a formal department under the direction of curriculum programs.

One key difference between ECC, CCC, and WCC is that the Basic Skills program is completely separate from the developmental studies program at CCC and WCC. It should be noted that the current college catalogs for both CCC and WCC discuss the role of Basic Skills courses in serving developmental level students. The administrators at both colleges were unaware of any relationship between developmental studies and Basic Skills. The Dean of Arts and Sciences at ECC incorporates Basic Skills as part of the developmental studies program, which provides another level of support for the students. There have been recent studies by Boylan and Bonham (2007) that discuss the benefits of collaboration of developmental programs with Basic Skills. However, one of the primary arguments against blending Basic Skills with developmental courses is the stigma that is associated with basic skills programs such as G.E.D. preparation classes. WCC's organizational structure is very similar to CCC in that the program is part of curriculum studies and is seen as part of the standard college curriculum. It is also true

that both WCC and CCC have very high percentages of students that require remediation that may account for the standardization of the programs at each school. It is not out of the ordinary at both schools for a majority of students to require at least one remedial course.

Placement Testing

During the interviews and subsequent catalog reviews, it was revealed that each of the schools in the study uses the Compass and Asset exams. Compass is the computerized version of the Asset exam; therefore, schools that use Asset normally use Compass as well to provide an additional version of the test for those students that do not test well using Asset. I did find it interesting that all three of the schools used the same assessments with two other possibilities available; it is an area for review to determine the specific characteristics of the test selected and how that affects the successful placement of out developmental programs. The placement testing policy update of August 24, 2006 (Lancaster, 2006) served as the guiding policy reference for this study as it is the most recent policy in force. During the interviews at each school, I tried to determine what impact the most recent policy update had on the schools in the study. This policy mandates placement testing, local policies for waivers, and standardized test scores to place students in developmental courses. The purpose for the policy update was explained by a NCCCS representative. It was needed to standardize the practices of placement testing across the state so that schools would not ignore placement standards. Second, under the new policy students could transfer to other schools and receive consideration for admission under a common standard.

The 2006 policy update authorizes four assessments across the state: CCL, ASSET, COMPASS, and ACCUPLACER. Each school can select the assessment that best suits its needs. The NCCCS representative explained that every college had the opportunity to attend regional forums to discuss the new placement testing standards to determine whether the placement scores should be raised, lowered, or remain the same. Of the three schools participating in the study, only one school sent a representative from developmental studies to a discussion forum on placement testing policy. The WCC department chair attended a forum and explained that the NCCCS representative advocated for lowering the scores to allow more students to place out of developmental courses. As expressed in chapter 6, the event was described as contentious, and reflected the division among the schools regarding how best to serve the interest of developmental students, while protecting the academic standards at each school. The WCC chair explained that there was a subsequent vote for all presidents sponsored by the NCCCS. The outcome of the vote to change the placement standards for all 58 colleges in the system had little impact on the three schools in the study. The significance of the updated standards appeared to be more of an organizational standard that confirmed that all schools should comply with the policy to enforce placement standards. However, there is a larger issue involved when one considers the influence of the state through legislation that affected the policy of the NCCCS to request a reduction in the standards for admission to community colleges. It was a stated purpose in the legislation of 2001 and 2003 (see Appendixes J and O) to reduce the need for remediation in higher education. There were a variety of measures proposed, but the community college system

representatives discussed the unnecessary cost to continue with the level of remediation required for admission, and it was a goal to reduce the restrictions on admission.

Each college in the NCCCS has the right and the responsibility to determine its admissions standards within the policy of placement testing standards; beyond the prescribed state assessments, colleges can choose to offer options for students on an individual basis. The use of alternative assessments to place students out of developmental courses is a practice that was brought to my attention by a college representative from a school not participating in this study. I asked each of the college deans and chairs in the study if their college uses an alternative assessment. ECC is the only school of the three that uses an alternative assessment. They are beginning the practice this year and will review its usefulness.

For the dean at ECC, assisting students to complete developmental courses as soon as possible is a positive action for the students and the college as they struggle with dismal graduation rates. It was discussed that when students have more than one level of developmental studies or require remediation in more than one subject area, it reduces the success rate for the students as they are stuck in the program. This appeared to be a common issue at all three colleges in that there is a natural gap in the success of students that require multiple levels of developmental studies. In many cases the numbers may not be known because of the practice of withdrawing students that do not perform. The developmental studies administrators at CCC and WCC asserted that there should be a minimum level for admission to the developmental studies program so that students who are not prepared to perform at a college level for reasons such as learning disabilities may

be served through alternate programs. Both CCC and WCC withdraw students each semester that have limited chances of completing the developmental studies program. According to the dean at CCC, if students have learning disabilities that may hinder their achievement in a college level program then the college should be able to refer students for the appropriate services outside the college.

Key Influences

Key Internal Influences

For the three colleges participating in the study there were common internal organizational influences, as well as local external influences that were unique to each organization. The common internal influences were: the level of support from the administration in the foundation of the developmental studies program, the percentage of students that require developmental courses, and the access to qualified faculty to teach the courses. These issues were cited by all the community colleges in the study. Their impact on the interpretive processes was reflected in the adaptations that were made at each college such as, choosing a centralized or decentralized program, allowing students to take degree credit classes while taking developmental classes, and the frequency of follow-up placement testing.

ECC's program began thirty years ago and was proposed by the faculty as a way to meet the needs of students. The program is institutionalized; it is a separate program that is easily identifiable on the campus. It is a program that was developed based on educational research that has been consistently implemented over the years. The dean and the instructors in the program are long-term participants and they have seen the evolution

of the program at the state level. They are independent from the state and have developed their internal strategies to manage the changing demographics of students, while maintaining state standards and performance measures. They assert a level of autonomy that insulates them from the pressures of state policies due to their internal strength as an organization. As pointed out in chapter 4, ECC scans its external environment by considering the needs of local industries, by examining the placement levels of incoming freshmen, by adapting to the needs of the military personnel they serve, and by recognizing that all the students who apply are not necessarily ready for college level work. This manner of scanning the external environment allows the college faculty and staff to adapt to the needs of their community and promotes the success of the college. The developmental studies program at ECC may be atypical in the sense that the administration and the staff have had 30 years to refine the practices such that the NCCCS standards for placement testing and developmental studies are of no consequence to the program.

CCC's program origin is less clear, but the internal influences on the program can be documented over the past ten years. Among other unidentified factors, the changes in the economic condition of the counties served by CCC prompted an increase in students returning to college or entering college for the first time. The curriculum studies department recognized that without additional assistance for recent high school graduates, and in particular non-traditional college students returning from the workforce, the college would not be able to successfully serve the population. The curriculum studies program added a remediation program to the existing curriculum studies department.

There was no consideration of using the Basic Skills department in the continuing education division because the students that needed remediation were already high school graduates and the program had felt that the two areas should remain separate. This is a debate that is being played out in many states, as cited by Boylan (2004). Boylan explains that the inconsistencies in the ways colleges identify students as developmental has led to a blurring of the standards in determining the actual level of need of a given student. A student may be considered a college student even though he or she reads at a ninth grade level. The 2006 updated placement-testing standards for the NCCCS were meant in part to remove some of the doubt as to the level of need of students. In practice, there are clearly students at each of the three colleges in this study that may be able to benefit from a pre-developmental level of study through an adult basic education program. However, CCC's program head for developmental studies feels that high school graduates and those seeking a high school equivalency should remain separate, and they have always been separate over the past ten years.

The program head assumes the majority of the responsibility for the day-to-day operations but has a dean of curriculum programs available for issues that may arise. The president at CCC appears to be very engaged in the process, and that may be a result of the need for 70% of the students to take at least one developmental course. The developmental studies program is a very prominent part of the campus, even though it is not seen as a separate department like ECC. The program head has stated that the primary internal influences for developmental studies are funding and qualified instructors. It is true in all of the schools in the study that there are specific instructors to teach the

developmental education courses. This is accomplished by full-time and adjunct instructors. If the department is unable to find qualified instructors for the programs, the program suffers due to larger numbers of students per class, which means less attention per student. In addition, the lack of qualified instructors may mean that the instructor is not completely confident about the subject matter and may not provide a comprehensive lesson. General college instructors do not teach developmental courses. The issue of using separate faculty to teach developmental studies may cloud the definitions of centralized and decentralized as presented in the review of literature. This should be an additional consideration when defining a school as centralized and decentralized solely based on the physical location of the classes.

Developmental studies at WCC began as a special grant program. There is not the same long tradition of developmental studies as is the case at the other two schools. The chair explained that the program at WCC has evolved through the efforts of the Dean of Curriculum Studies and the chair. Over time, the program has gained legitimacy as an equal part of the college. The developmental studies department is managed as part of the standard course offerings at WCC, with students taking courses within their chosen program of study. WCC uses full-time developmental studies faculty, and the chair also serves as an instructor. WCC also has a large percentage of students that require remediation between (60% and 70% of the freshman or returning nontraditional students for 2005-2006).

Key Local External Influences

Local external influences refer to those factors that affect the interpretation and implementation of developmental studies due to the role of the community college as primary provider of educational services in the community. The local external influences surprisingly were very similar across the three schools, and the NCCCS representative also shared a similar view as to the possible local influences at each school. The primary local external influence that all schools shared was the lack of adequate preparation of the students by the local K-12 school system. While this may be seen as a problem outside the area of responsibility of higher education, in reality the community college has historically served as a bridge between secondary and higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). There are clearly many factors involved in the educational gap for high school graduates seeking higher education. The administrators at the colleges participating in this study cited issues such as the economic development in the communities, teacher-to-student ratio, a lack of seriousness about education, a lack of accountability for not preparing for college. In this study there was one single factor from the secondary education system that each of the college administrators cited as being a primary deficiency in the public secondary schools: the lack of math and grammar instruction during the last years of high school. CCC and WCC administrators in particular demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the gap between K-12 education and the first year of college. At both schools, the administrators emphasized that it is a flaw in the curriculum that systemically limits the potential of students by not reinforcing core skills during the last two years of high school. There were other factors cited by the

developmental studies administrators at the community colleges, but lack of adequate K-12 preparation was included in each of the interviews, including the one with the NCCCS representative. Over the past thirty years, colleges have seen a steady increase in enrollments due to greater access to community colleges, changes in the economic demands for post secondary education and training. There has been a 23% increase in post secondary education from 1995 to 2005, and community colleges serve 6.2 million undergraduates of the 17.2 million higher education students (NCES, 2006). There is a key difference in student populations between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Community colleges serve 40% of their undergraduates that begin at age 20 or older, and community colleges serve greater percentages of language and ethnic minorities that may not have the same educational preparation as the more traditional college students attending four-year institutions (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). Due to the overall increases in post secondary enrollments coupled with the expanded role of the community college in serving greater numbers of students under-prepared for the academic rigors of college level work, the community college administration and faculty find themselves managing various competing influences to maintain a balance between access and standards. The participants in this study cited the change in the economy in North Carolina as a powerful influence on the growth in student populations at community colleges. Many non-traditional students that may not have considered college an option now find themselves forced to seek opportunities through post-secondary education.

Informants at ECC discussed local external factors that are particular to their school due to its proximity to military bases in the area. The dean stated that working with transient military service members is a challenge to help the service members achieve their educational goals. Due to the varying schedules and unique duties of the service members, the college adapts to their needs to make sure that they are served in a manner that protects the standards for the college and protects the open door policy. The dean also cited the change in employment in the community with the loss of many of the manufacturing jobs; the workers have been forced to return to community colleges for retraining. For the students returning after many years of working in the private sector, there are definite academic challenges that developmental education programs must support.

The administration at CCC highlighted K-12 education as the primary external influence on developmental studies. The dean of the program strongly expressed his view that the public secondary schools have relinquished their authority to the students, and the students have no responsibility for their own education. The result is that 70% of the students that enter CCC require remediation. The program head highlighted just how powerful the need is in the local community for the types of services provided by CCC. The program head described that a lack of qualified teachers in the community requires long-term substitutes that in many case may not have a college degree, and clearly are not credentialed in the field of study for which they are substituting. The program head was very clear not to place total blame on any single factor, but she was able to provide some sense of the overall challenges facing students as stemming from the K-12 system.

The local external influences that affect each college in the study may appear to be similar for the most part, but there are economic and social circumstances and characteristics that should be considered when analyzing the interpretive processes at the local colleges. ECC and CCC share many of the same issues regarding the external influences on developmental education related to K-12 education, changes in the economy, and the growth in enrollment, but the communities are very different in how they create opportunities for their residents. ECC has a vibrant economic environment, albeit different than it was twenty years ago; it provides opportunities for students that are willing to study. In contrast, the community around CCC is more economically depressed, and the percentage of students that need remediation is only part of the picture. The lack of economic opportunities contributes to the local dependence on the community college.

The community that surrounds WCC is another example of a population that has been affected by economic downturns and changes in the economy that have left them with few local opportunities in the traditional manufacturing sector. When one considers the lack of local economic opportunities combined with low literacy rates and failing school systems, the community college becomes the focus of educational and economic opportunities for new high school graduates and returning displaced workers. For all three of the colleges participating in the study, economic issues and the gap between the local secondary education and college standards are highlighted as the most powerful influences on local developmental education policy. At WCC and CCC in particular, there is a clear sense from the department administration that the gap between high

school and college is growing as expectations for students to pursue post-secondary education increase. Both schools cited the change in the local economy as a key motivation for students to attend college, yet the perception is that the level of preparation needed in the high schools has not increased for college bound students. The dean at CCC indicated that the open door policy in the NCCCS takes away any motivation for students to prepare for college, even as universities partner with local community colleges and move away from providing remediation. For ECC, the circumstances are different from the other two schools due to its extended mission in serving the local military bases. In addition, the local economy surrounding ECC provides additional opportunities for employment that the other two schools in the study do not share. At the same time, the lack of preparation among recent high school graduates is a common influence for all three colleges as they struggle to provide remediation to help students meet college level standards.

Key Institutional External Influences

Influences that impact a local community college due to its participation in a larger state system are balanced against the local community needs and internal organizational characteristics of the local college. In this study, while the institutional requirements are the same for each college, the process that the local college uses to interpret that policy is affected by the local influences.

For all three of the colleges in the study there was a level of separation from the state developmental education program that was expressed during the interviews with the college personnel, as well as the interview with the NCCCS representative. There was

one key word that was used to describe the relationship between the local college and the system office: “autonomous”. This was the description provided by both the NCCCS representative and the college representatives when describing the level of involvement that the state has in the implementation of developmental studies. The involvement of the state in the institutional practices of the local college regarding developmental education is limited to policy mandates that are passed through the President of the NCCCS and directed to the chief academic officer and other senior level administrators at the local colleges. The variation in the practices of local colleges can be attributed in part to the lack of centralized/state direction regarding implementation. The local influences, both internal at the local college and external from the community as discussed, affect the colleges as they are attempting to satisfy the state institutional requirements, while meeting the local needs under the constraints of local resources and personnel. The colleges react to developmental education policy from the NCCCS in a way that reflects the balance of local circumstances while adhering to state guidelines. Local external influences appeared to have a strong impact on the interpretive processes from the perspective of the college administrators participating in the study. The structure of the programs and the changes that have been made over the years as documented in the studies have been prompted in large measure by the social and economic demands of the surrounding community. ECC is the only college of the three in the study that traces its founding to the observations and suggestions of the faculty, prior to state intervention. The faculty in the curriculum program areas recognized that their students needed additional support to be successful in college level courses. They took action and reached

out to the senior administration to devise a plan to serve the students. The faculty took the lead in this case and the program at ECC reflects the commitment of those closest to the problem working on a solution. It should also be noted that the senior administration at ECC took an active role in working with the faculty to develop a solid developmental studies program before the NCCCS actually identified developmental studies as a formal program.

Of the three community colleges examined in this study, ECC was the school that has the most loosely coupled relationship with the NCCCS. This can be attributed to the fact that ECC had a developmental education program many years before the state began to identify formally developmental education in its current form. ECC has had consistent leadership over many years, it has based its program on solid educational research, and it has internally guided instructional strategies and department practices. While neither of the other two schools has a strong relationship with the NCCCS developmental studies program administration, the department staff at WCC appears to have the most contact with the NCCCS, albeit through personal relationships rather than formal institutional collaboration. The department administration at the three colleges in the study dismissed the role of the NCCCS as a support system for issues related to developmental education. Each of them cited other community colleges in the area as a more reliable source of information to more appropriately interpret NCCCS developmental education policy. In particular, WCC revised its program in large part through recommendations from other schools and by patterning policies from other colleges in their region.

External institutional influences common to each of the colleges can be summarized as the North Carolina Community College System open door policy, NCCCS performance measures for developmental education, and Full-Time Equivalency (F.T.E). Each of these factors affects the interpretive process for developmental education in varying degrees at each college depending on the level of pressure present to comply with each policy, the level of involvement by the senior level administration, and the level of preparation to meet the demands of NCCCS mandates. Following the guidelines from (Admission to Colleges, 2006), the NCCCS open door policy was discussed with the developmental studies department administrators at each college. The interpretation of the policy in its current form means that there is no distinction between a student that is learning disabled and a student that may need a refresher course for College Algebra. The policy means that any student that is a high school graduate or its state equivalent may be admitted to the college and must be served under the admissions policies of the state, regardless of their ability to perform at a college level. CCC administrators in particular cited this inefficiency in the policy as an example of the need for more interaction between the NCCCS and the local community colleges regarding the impact of implementing NCCCS policies.

The loosely coupled relationship between the NCCCS and local community colleges in relation to developmental studies impacts the second key point: colleges are accountable to state performance measures no matter how much remediation students may require. State performance measures are vitally important to the individual college president both in additional financial support and in college prestige. Each of the

developmental studies administrators interviewed explained that to fail to meet the performance measures is harmful to their careers. It is a topic of discussion among college presidents and deans, and it is a state level discussion between NCCCS administration and their legislative funding base. In 1999, the General Assembly authorized the NCCCS to establish twelve performance based funding measures (NC Gen. Stat. §115D-31.3). While only six were established for funding incentives, the colleges were judged based on the 12 measures. Two of the 12 measures were related directly to developmental education. These 12 measures replaced the previously established critical success factors from 1994. In 2007, the NCCCS performance measures were reduced from 12 to 8. Nevertheless, developmental education measures continue to be part of the performance standards representing 2 of the 8 measures as described in Table 2. By representing 25% of the total performance standards, their significance to policy makers, college presidents, and department administrators should not be underestimated.

Full-time equivalency (F.T.E.) is the funding formula used to reimburse colleges for the number of students they serve and the number of credit hours that they attempt. Every full-time and part-time student in curriculum programs at a community college in the NCCCS has a certain monetary value based on the number of credit hours that they register for and remain on the class roster until the 10% point of attendance in the class. In North Carolina, as is the case in most states, developmental studies students provide the same level of reimbursement for the college as any student registered for degree-credit classes. The funding from student attendance allows colleges to provide a broad

range of services and programs. Some courses of study produce substantial return for the college while other programs are offered because of the need in the community. The decision on what to offer is determined by the senior level administration at the college and the boards of trustees that provide oversight and recommendations for the administration.

In the case of developmental studies, colleges are required to offer the classes, and they must comply with the performance standards of students taking courses. If students are unable to meet the standards for college level courses then they must be offered the opportunity to complete a prescribed program of study that includes courses in math, reading, and English, all with course numbers that are pre-100 level, which identifies them as pre-college level courses. Local variations are adapted through the use of learning labs, accelerated courses, and waivers. How colleges provide that service is a local decision, but under the 2006 developmental studies policy update (Lancaster, 2006) there is a prescribed path for students to reach the goal of college level status.

This is what makes developmental studies unique. It is a pre-college level program that includes courses in math, reading, and English. The courses are assigned based on the students' placement scores, and they are correlated to the level of course that is appropriate. There is no college credit awarded for the classes completed, but it is mandated by the state for students that do not place into college level courses.

The colleges in this study varied in the ways that they applied the policy. ECC offered the prescribed curriculum, but it offered a centralized skills lab as part of the program and did not allow students to take college level courses until they completed

Table 2

Performance Measures and Standards North Carolina Community College System

Measure	Standard	Special Notes
Progress of Basic Skills Students	75% demonstrating progress	
Passing Rates on Licensure/Certification Exams	80% aggregate institutional passing rate for first time test takers	<p><i>To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, no exam for which the college has control over who sits for the exam can have a passing rate of less than 70%</i></p> <p>(Note: Any exam with less than 10 students will not be subject to the 70% rule)</p>
Performance of College Transfer Students	83% of students who transfer to a 4-year institution will have a GPA of 2.0 or higher after two semesters	<p>Students who transfer with less than 24 semester hours of transfer credit will not be included in the analysis.</p> <p>Community colleges can submit data gathered from private 4-year colleges and universities to be included with the UNC System data.</p> <p><i>To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, the performance of the community college transfer students must equal or exceed the performance of the native UNC System sophomores and juniors for that time period.</i></p>

Table 2

*Performance Measures and Standards North Carolina Community College System**(continued)*

Measure	Standard	Special Notes
Passing Rates in Developmental Courses	75% of students who take a developmental English, mathematics, and/or reading course will pass the course with a grade of “C” or better	Students who withdraw from the course during the year will not be included in the analysis. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.
Success Rate of Developmental Students in Subsequent College-Level Courses	80% of students who took developmental courses will pass the “gatekeeper” English and/or mathematics course for which the developmental course serves as a prerequisite	To be included in the analysis, a student must take the “gatekeeper” course within one academic year of completing the developmental course that served as the pre-requisite. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.

Table 2

*Performance Measures and Standards North Carolina Community College System**(continued)*

Measure	Standard	Special Notes
Student Satisfaction of Completers and Non-completers	90% of survey respondents satisfied with college programs and services	<p><i>To be considered for performance funding, the following conditions must be met:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completer Survey: A 50% return rate or a statistically valid sample size 2. Non-Completer Survey: For colleges with fewer than 250 non-returning students, a minimum of 25 valid surveys must be obtained. For colleges with more than 250 non-returning students, a response rate equal to 10% of the total non-returning students or a statistically valid sample size must be obtained.
Curriculum Student Retention, Transfer and Graduation	65% of fall degree seeking students will either re-enroll, transfer or graduate by the subsequent fall.	The National Student Clearinghouse database will be used to determine student transfer.
Business/Industry Satisfaction with Services Provided	90% or respondents will rate services provided as “Very Good” or “Excellent”	

their developmental courses. CCC and WCC offered the prescribed state curriculum and offered the courses within the various program areas of the college. They allowed students to take developmental courses, as well as college credit level courses.

It is recognized by the NCCCS that there are numbers of students that are high school graduates that are under-prepared for a college curriculum, and the current policy reflects the evolution of legislation and policies to manage the situation. Local colleges are caught in the middle between the right to open door access for the students and the NCCCS standards for college level placement. The position of the local college administration and faculty is what requires local creativity in the implementation of developmental education policy. In addition to serving under-prepared students, the college administration is accountable to meet the performance measures as set by the North Carolina Legislature.

In the case of the three colleges in this study, the high percentages of students that take developmental courses affect the overall financial well-being of the colleges. In the case of ECC, 22% of the students in 2005-2006 needed at least one remedial course. At WCC and CCC, the numbers ranged from 60% to 70% of students. Developmental education clearly has a financial impact on the colleges and affects the interpretive processes related to how college administrators implement state developmental education policy. When the majority of students need developmental education at a pre-college level then the developmental program becomes a necessity for the college and it may influence the decisions of the senior administration regarding placement practices. For a

college to choose not to serve 70% of its students with at least one remedial course would have a devastating impact as expressed by the program head at CCC.

Foundations of Developmental Studies

The foundations of the developmental studies programs at each of the colleges are important for the cross case analysis given that they reflect on the overall culture of the internal organizations by demonstrating how the administration and staff interpreted their role in the community and as part of a larger state institution. It allows us to examine the organizational structures in a way that explains why the college chose the path that it currently follows. In the conceptual model by Daft and Weick (1984) it is expressed that decisions on how an organization will move is led by the senior level administration. In this case, change is actually driven by the people closest to the problem. The more overt and public expression of the change is revealed when the larger public face of the organization is challenged to perform by a higher authority, but the actual plan of implementation lies with the mid to upper-level management at the individual college. The role of the senior level administrators is to provide motivation and supervision in determining that the institutional goals are met. In this case, North Carolina Community Colleges were mandated by the NC State Legislature to report to the state board of community colleges annually beginning in 1994 on the critical success factors for established accountability measures. This was part of a public shift in examining the success and outcomes of the investment made in the education of its citizens, as well as a concern over the level of completion by students at the community college level. It appears that this legislation was a public recognition of what was already an internal issue

for community colleges. Each of the colleges in the study took a different path to arrive at the program they currently offer. In each case there was a key person within the organization that understood the need and managed to convince the senior administration that it was important to provide the service.

Of the three colleges in the study, ECC has the longest documented existing formal program, beginning in the 1970s. This program was conceived and promoted by the faculty with the cooperation of the senior level college administration. This is an example of the people closest to the problem taking actions that influence the senior level administration to recognize that it was in their best interest to cooperate. There was no state mandate at the time; it was a need that had to be addressed, and it was managed internally. For CCC and WCC in particular, the path to establishing a formal developmental studies program is less clear, but there are some similarities among the three programs. Each of the programs has a dean that is intimately involved in the developmental studies program. Even though WCC and CCC are decentralized, they have a strong administrative structure, with a program head at CCC and a department chair at WCC that coordinate with the deans. The dean at ECC is clearly the most experienced and engaged of the three deans in the study due to her long relationship with developmental studies as an instructor and a program director.

One important difference noted in the study is that the program at ECC began as a developmental studies program. It was identified through educational research, and its foundations are based on learning theory relevant for serving under-prepared students. The program at CCC appears to be more of a pure remediation program, meaning that the

courses are designed to cover concepts that students did not successfully comprehend or did not receive as part of a secondary education. In addition, the program at CCC serves a large number of non-traditional students that have been out of school for an extended period and need a refresher. The program at CCC is decentralized and does not have additional tutorial services and counseling in a central location as the program at ECC provides. WCC, by comparison, is a program that has evolved over time after its foundation as a special projects grant and then finally as a department under curriculum programs. The department chair at WCC described the evolution of the acceptance of developmental studies as a legitimate program for the college. The interview data revealed that the three schools that ECC began with more of a legitimate role in the college, while the other two schools had to work hard over the years to gain their current status. It is possible that the foundation of the program at ECC coming out of a request from the curriculum faculty may have fostered an inherent legitimacy for the developmental studies program within the college. The other two programs appear to have benefited from the recognition by the state legislature in 1993 and subsequent NCCCS policy updates to formally establish their developmental studies programs. In addition, CCC and WCC appear to have reached out to nearby community colleges for guidance on the procedures and standards in forming a legitimate developmental studies program.

Data Analysis Summary

The conceptual model for this study outlines the interpretive processes that administrators and staff may follow to adapt to the perceived and real needs within their

organization. In this study, each of the three colleges interpreted its role in serving under-prepared students based on local internal and external influences. Over the past 15 years the state has increasingly played a larger role in defining standards for serving under-prepared community college students through developmental education policies and through related placement testing standards. Individual schools have had to interpret their role in providing this service in a variety of ways based in part on their internal organizational structure and local demands in light of the increasing NCCCS standardization. What has become clear from the interviews at the colleges as well as the NCCCS representative is that there is an established and accepted autonomy at community colleges that explains in part the variation in practice and implementation of NCCCS educational policy. Through the data collected from college catalogs, web sites, face-to-face interviews, e-mails, and phone calls, the process of implementing developmental education policy has revealed the loosely coupled relationship between the NCCCS administration and the local community college leadership as related to the oversight and support services for the implementation of state educational policy. To document the individual college processes for the implementation of NCCCS developmental education policy, the following summary uses the conceptual framework from this study to highlight the similarities and difference among the community colleges participating in the study (see Table 3).

Table 3

Process Comparison: The Interpretive Processes of Developmental Education Policy

College	Scanning	Interpretation	Learning
ECC	The faculty recognized the need for developmental studies in the 1970s.	The faculty felt the responsibility to approach the college leadership to establish a developmental studies program.	The faculty and the administration collaborated to form a learning center based on current educational research of the time.
CCC	The college recognized that their students were unable to pass college level courses and maintain academic standards.	The college faculty and administration identified that the majority of the students attending needed at least one developmental course.	The college faculty and administration created a decentralized program to allow students to take developmental courses while studying within their individual departments.
WCC	Under-prepared freshman and returning students were identified under a special projects grant from the U.S. Department of Education.	In the beginning, the students were considered to be special needs students that did not fit into a standard academic program. Over the past eight years, the program has evolved due to policy updates from the state and leadership within the department.	The college administration created a developmental studies department that serves 60%-70% of freshman and returning students through a decentralized developmental studies program.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The interpretive processes at each of the three colleges participating in the study reflect the needs of administrators and staff at local community colleges in the North Carolina system to maintain local organizational structure while satisfying the requirements of state mandated policy. The administrators and staff must survive within the context of local organizational influences and state mandated policies. Previous studies on the interpretive processes of implementing developmental education policy in community colleges (Mason, 2005) have focused on Rational Choice Theory and the decisions that faculty, staff, and administrators make, influenced by culture and ideology. It is my contention that interpretive processes are more systemic in that they are not decisions but interpretations of policies that must be implemented while considering internal and external influences. Levin (2000) explains that the mission of the community college in the last part of the 20th century has been transformed by multiple external influences outside the realm of local control. He asserts, “Organizational behaviors were responses to a global economy promoted by the state, and guided by local institutional managers” (para. 4). The interpretation of policy within an organization begins with scanning for information from the external environment to help make sense of the internal environment. In the cases presented the local economy, the academic level of the incoming freshmen, the accountability mandated by the state are all considerations for the individual colleges. They interpret their environment by applying what they learn to organizational policies. In addition, the internal performance of the organization is a

consideration that also affects the interpretive process (Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993). The colleges in the study all noted that their enrollments and continued funding were affected by their internal practices in managing the demand for developmental studies, balanced against the performance measures set by the state. The administrators and staff apply the information that they have in a manner that will best serve the competing interests within the college. The variations in application of the same state policy in different institutions can be attributed in part to specific influences and needs at each of the colleges that are particular to the individuals and groups at each college. The leadership of the senior administration at each college also plays an important role as Daft and Weick (1984) describe, most decisions are made at the top, and the lower level staff must implement the policy based on the criterion set by senior management. The level of influence of the senior administration varied at each of the colleges. I was unable to include the presidents from each of the colleges in the interviews due to a level of resistance to the interviews. The presidents may have served to provide more insight into the internal processes of the organization by describing the influences that they deem most relevant to the subject. They may have also provided more information about the relationship between the NCCCS as system with the local college administration. This may have served the study more in examining the interpretive processes from the perspective of the senior leadership. I chose to work with the developmental education deans and department chairs so that I could get as true an interpretation as possible from the administrators and staff closest to the implementation of developmental education. In this case, it was important to know whether the president and other senior level

administrators at the colleges collaborated with the staff and in what manner, or whether the staff members were able to take the written policy and implement it by interpreting the state level mandate directly. It was also important to the study to understand the reasons for the interpretation of the policy in its active form as a current program.

Systemic Influence

There was an interesting dilemma that administrators and staff faced at the community colleges participating in the study. It was related to the role of performance based funding. From the study it is clear that the influence of the North Carolina Legislature and the North Carolina Community College System performance measures is powerful in the minds of the local college administration, staff, and, to some degree, the faculty. Each college is required to report student data at the end of each semester, which reflects the number of students that were served and key percentages of success based on the critical success factors (see Appendix O.). With two of the eight critical success factors in developmental education, it is also clear that the state higher education authority feels that it is a significant program for the community college system. First, there is a measure of the percentage of students' successful completion of a course with a grade of C or higher in developmental classes. Second, there is a measure of the future success of developmental students taking subsequent degree-credit courses. This system of performance measures creates an external influence on an internal organizational process. If the incoming freshman class of a given year report to class and do not perform at a mandated level of success in developmental programs, then the college will suffer by not achieving the performance measure for funding. This system creates a process of

interpretation in the mind of a president, a dean, and a staff member, all with a common goal of satisfying the stated performance measure in order to continue the desired level of funding. The fact that the student may or may not be ready to move on or may have a legitimate reason for not completing the course with a grade of C or better is not factored in to the final analysis by the state. It is not a question of ideology or beliefs. It is a matter of continuing the college programs while satisfying the state mandated policy. This is what Daft and Weick (1984) referred to as the need for the organization to survive, and its members will act in a manner that will promote the survival of the organization as they interpret the process under the guidance of senior leadership. The internal processes at the college are influenced in a systematic way that requires interpretation not based on the sum of all the factors involved, but rather with a pre-determined outcome and goal hanging in the balance. Levin (1998) describes that the very organizational nature of community colleges as institutions of open access expose them to the influences of shifting policy trends of government. In this vein, there are close similarities to the performance accountability measures in the more popularly known federal program of No Child Left Behind (2002, Public Law 107-110). The act requires that all children be measured by the same standard and that accountability measures be in place to report on the achievement of the set standards. For the NCCCS, performance measures are in place at the state level, and there are common standards for the placement of students. The students need to achieve a certain level of performance or there are consequences for the local colleges. One common problem among the programs cited is the issue of program

review to determine if the policy actually matches the reality for the individual school as part of a larger institution.

There was a second systemic influence that was revealed during the study.

Community colleges have a system of open admissions that is mandated by the state. All students 18 years of age or older with a high school diploma or a G.E.D. equivalent are eligible for admission. Under the North Carolina system placement testing is mandatory (Lancaster, 2006) unless the student can be exempted by an SAT or ACT test scores. For those students requiring a placement test, the scores are applied to a course equivalent as outlined in Appendix A. Students failing to meet the threshold for college-level work in math, reading, or writing are referred to a locally offered course that corresponds to the competency level of the placement test score. This is a change for the NCCCS. Prior to the 2006 policy update, colleges may or may not have applied the placement-testing standard and the level of inconsistency across the state caused problems for students moving or transferring to other schools. For the individual college administrators, staff, and faculty members, the impact of the policy may have been viewed as a positive or negative addition depending upon the perspective of the individual within the organization. For the faculty it may have been seen as positive, as the higher academic standards were imposed to better serve students who needed remediation. For the college president or department chair, the new standards may have presented more challenges to reach performance outcomes due to the reduced student success in placing out of developmental courses. The challenge for the individual college is to balance all of the competing interests as one single unit.

According to Daft and Weick (1984), it is the entire organization that acts as the interpretive system for a new policy or change of course, which includes top management as well as those that must implement the policy at the mid level or lower level. Thomas et al. (1993) discuss a very significant aspect of the interpretive process that is missing from the framework by Daft and Weick (1984). It is the nature of the change to be seen as adding to the organization or a drain on the organization. Thomas et al. use the term “label” to describe the internal influence that is associated with the scanning, interpretation, and action of an organizational change. If the members of the internal organization perceive that the change in the organization is positive then they may act in a manner that embraces the change. If the college faculty and staff perceive NCCCS developmental education policy as a positive change then their interpretive processes would reflect that by following the policies in a like manner. In the case of the three colleges reviewed, ECC did not perceive the updated 2006 policy on developmental education as having any real impact on the internal operations of the college because the local internal policy was already in line with what the updated state policy prescribed. For CCC and WCC, there was a slight change as a result of the new placement testing policy; it meant that there would be more sections of the courses as the enrollment increased.

However, there are other influences that are part of the interpretive process even if they are not directly associated with the standard practices of the mid-level or low-level implementation. The success of the organization, through NCCCS performance measures in this case, refers to the top-level organizational influence that underlies the interpretive

processes by influencing the staff to achieve a certain level of outcome. This motivates faculty and staff to embrace a policy, even if they do not agree with it or see it as positive; they adapt out of necessity. For the college president there are two basic pieces of information that are relevant to influence the process of implementing developmental education policy: The numbered memorandums from a supervising state official that outline the prescribed college placement standards, and the performance funding measures that are associated with the delivery of service provided to each of the developmental education students. How the successful implementation of the prescribed developmental studies program is achieved appears from the study to be a separate issue for the state as well as the college presidents, as long as the outcome is achieved and in the appropriate legal manner. Both the state and the local college presidents are more interested in outcome rather than process. From the cases presented, CCC appeared to have the most engagement in the process by the president. He was aware of the staff that serves the program and was involved in reviewing the process of developmental education. From the other case studies, it appears that the lack of engagement on the process of developmental education is due to an overwhelming number of competing interests that consume the focus of the presidents and the state administrators.

Developmental education is one of many areas of attention. It appears to be part of a larger issue of understaffing and under funding at the state level, not only for developmental studies, but also in a general sense. The role of the community college as a first stop for high school graduates has grown exponentially over the past 20 years, but the staffing at the state level has not kept pace. The presidents are involved in the initial

scanning process, and they project on the deans and directors the importance of being successful in the implementation of the updated policy. However, the interpretive process of taking that information provided from the state and translating it into action appears to be a process that is managed by mid-level managers. The conceptual framework by Daft and Weick (1984) discussed the role of the senior level managers as having the responsibility of establishing the initial context for the implementation of the policy. From the case studies, I would add that the process of scanning begins with an assessment of the nature of the information as adding to or draining the organization. This valuation of policy pre-implementation highlights the issue of organizational performance as being the key trigger for beginning the interpretation process. The actions that are taken by mid level and lower level players are the result of interpreting the desired outcome as set by the state and expressed by the president. The faculty and staff that provide developmental studies programs do not make decisions based on what is best for the students only, but must consider how the implementation of developmental education policy affects the organizational performance as set by the state and articulated by the college president. This is a key point related back to the framework by Daft and Weick. The issue of organizational survival causes members of an organization to interpret their environment in a way that will satisfy the institutional goals of the larger system while managing the internal issues that affect the process of implementing a change or new policy. In this case, the NCCCS as a system has responded to the will of the people for more access to higher education for reasons that are external to the local community college as an organizational unit. The local community college, as part of a

larger system, is obligated to satisfy the demands of the NCCCS while balancing local internal and external needs. There is an overriding system interest that displaces any personal decision by the local president or dean; there are institutional influences that supersede individual beliefs and culture. The interpretive process is not an improvised adaptation to a policy change; it is more guided and systematic due to outcome-based performance standards from the NCCCS that influence the process for the individual college administrator, faculty member, and staff. There may be differing levels of awareness of the overriding goal by the various college staff members, but all the members are influenced in some measure by the desired system outcome. The influence may be reflected in the choices that are made in serving students at the individual colleges. In the cases presented all the schools expressed the obligation to adapt to the changing standards of the student populations. This obligation is not only an internal choice at the local college; it is a requirement as part of the larger institutional standards of the NCCCS.

A Review of the Interpretive Process

The interpretation process of current developmental policy in the NCCCS focused on three primary tasks as outlined by Daft and Weick (1984). First, college administrators, staff, and faculty scan their environment to determine if they are in line with what is expected of them by the larger NCCCS organization, while they consider local influences. Second, college administrators, along with their staff and faculty, try to determine the impact of the information gathered and they make an assessment of the positive or negative influences that are associated with the proposed changes. Third,

college administrators delegate the implementation of the policy update to the staff and faculty that must take action based on the interpretations of the senior level administration.

Scanning

According to the model presented by Daft and Weick (1984), top-level managers are responsible for scanning the environment they manage, as well as the external environment in order to promote the continued successful survival of the organization. There is a need for organizations to be in touch with the internal and external influences that impact the continued successful performance of the organization. In the case of the three colleges that participated in this case study, the college presidents all received information via numbered memorandum from the North Carolina Community College System. It is their responsibility to take that information and disseminate it in a way that will first determine the impact of proposed policy changes on current practices and procedures; second, how it will impact the functions and responsibilities of the staff and faculty providing the service; and third, how it will impact the performance of the organization through the success of the students that are affected by the state mandated policy update. One of the key issues in the scanning process is to be able to determine how significant the impact of the policy change will be on the organization (Milliken, 1990). In the case of the NCCCS developmental education policy update (Lancaster, 2006), the three colleges represented were all schools that had presidents with at least two years of service at the college so that they were informed of the current policies and performance related to developmental education. ECC had a different perspective on the

scanning process than CCC and WCC due to the fact that ECC established its program internally under the guidance of the faculty, prior to any external influence from the state. CCC recognized that the overwhelming majority of its students required additional help. WCC developed its program more gradually and required more external support from other schools to interpret the most appropriate model for implementation. Each of the three schools cited economic changes in the labor market as being a primary external influence on the college's role in providing developmental studies.

The uncertainty about the impact of NCCCS policy change on the individual colleges reflected back to the internal organizational structure of the individual college and the level of dependency on senior level administrators within the developmental studies program. The college presidents had to complete a mini interpretation process of their own prior to delegating the implementation of the policy update to the appropriate administrator, staff member, or faculty. The mid level administration and staff did not make a determination as to whether the policy was significant or not. That decision was made by senior level managers or, in this case, by state level managers and college presidents. The interpretive process began when the college president assigned a task to implement a change based on an updated policy. The president had determined that the policy change was significant or not, but for the mid level manager or staff member, there was no choice. It was a matter of making sense of the policy in light of current practices, current needs, and the student body that was affected by the policy change. The scanning process for the mid level managers and staff was different than that of the president, in that the mid level administration scans for information under the context of the policy as

a certainty; they were not making a judgment as to whether it was a change that was possible or not. They were not making decisions as to what level of participation they would provide; those decisions had been made by the state and the president of the college. The scanning process for the mid-level administrators involved gathering sufficient information from the senior level administration to maintain two key influences under consideration. First, the department chairs, program heads, and deans must comply with state policy for open admissions and also maintain the required level of performance as mandated by NCCCS performance measures. Second, the administrators closest to the students in their day-to-day operations were concerned with how to serve the students in a way that would provide them the best opportunity to be successful. When these two issues are at odds, the mid-level administrators and staff are required to compensate in one direction or the other depending upon the interpretation of what is most critical in that moment.

Interpretation

While the process of scanning can be characterized as a developing awareness of the internal and external influences that impact the programs and services offered at a community college, the interpretation phase may be described as making sense of the competing influences in light of the internal organization personnel and resources. The process of interpreting developmental education policy did not end with the presidents of the colleges that participated in the study. Rather, the level of knowledge and involvement of the presidents regarding developmental education policy simply affected the parameters of how the process was implemented with the key players at each college

involved in the ultimate interpretation and implementation. One area of significance of the 2006 developmental education placement testing policy update was its standardizing affect on the community college system. For a system that is characterized as 58 autonomous institutions, the challenge of creating a standard program for developmental studies required a shift in philosophy and practice by individual colleges. The interpretation of the policy was considered by the mid-level administrators and staff based on the current local influences at each college. As demonstrated in the study, each college had particular needs that required variation in the implementation of developmental education policy. In some cases the variation was based on the original interpretation of developmental education during the beginning of the program, prior to state standards. Other influences included economic changes in the community, college resources, access to qualified faculty, and in the case of CCC and WCC, and the overwhelming number of students that required developmental education impacted the decisions on how to offer the service. At CCC and WCC, developmental education was interpreted as a normal and necessary part of the academic experience because the majority of students required at least one developmental course.

Learning

The variation in practices that was present among the three colleges is in part a product of the interpretive process in assessing at a given moment what influence is most critical to achieve the desired outcome. Decision-making implies an “either or” process; interpretation implies that change is inevitable and how it will happen must take into consideration all of the competing interests and influences. For the local community

college administrators the decision making process is negated by a higher authority that has determined that all high school graduates will be accepted to the community college. The administrators at a community college act based upon an interpretation of the impact, positive or negative, with the knowledge that the outcome is inevitable. It is the sum of the scanning process and the interpretation process that influences the actions taken by the college administration. Daft and Weick (1984) referred to this process as acting on the basis of survival.

ECC implemented developmental education in a different manner than CCC and WCC. There are two reasons that I discovered during the study that explain why the difference is present. First, ECC has a long tradition of providing developmental education as a formal program. ECC uses a centralized skills lab to help students pass on to college level courses. Second, the percentage of students taking developmental courses at ECC is one-third the percentages at CCC and WCC. As pointed out in the interview with the administration at CCC, if students were not allowed to take developmental courses as part of their departments, then there would be no departments due to the large number of students requiring developmental studies. The implementation in this case is a direct result of the administration, staff, and faculty, recognizing that for the college to survive and be successful, developmental studies must be a standard part of the curriculum studies program. In addition, both CCC and WCC administer developmental studies as part of their curriculum studies program. By contrast, ECC places developmental education with Basic Skills and Arts and Sciences.

In examining the different implementations of developmental education at the three colleges in the study, I discovered that none of the three schools participate in any state level training on developmental education. There appears to be very little discussion about the implementation of developmental studies outside of the individual colleges. This appears to be an area that requires more coordination at the state level to actively promote training and best practices for those most responsible for the delivery of services, as well the administrators closest to the program. While each of the deans and department heads appeared very dedicated and serious about the mission of providing developmental studies, from the interviews and follow up questions I gathered that there is very little external learning and sharing of ideas. This point was supported from my first interview with an NCCCS representative that stated there was no ongoing formal training in the area of developmental studies. There are workshops that are part of conferences, but they are not state sponsored training for best practices. This fact reaffirms the autonomous position of the 58 community colleges, which is supported at each of the schools visited, as well as by the NCCCS representative. During the study, I discovered that the lack of a culture of research and investigation in the participating colleges is a limiting factor for self-motivated instructional development. However, the systems that are in place at the NCCCS level do not promote nor do they provide funding for colleges to pursue such activities. ECC was the only college of the three in the study that mentioned the terms “research” or “training.” It appears that the outcome of the statistical reporting data at the state level is the most important consideration in setting

priorities for the senior administration. They do not consider the practices or the impact of the programs at the local colleges.

This study sought to identify the primary participants and influences on developmental education policy in the North Carolina system. I began the study with a sense that there were particular NCCCS officials that viewed the big picture of managing policy implementation and oversight for local colleges. I assumed that the NCCCS was attempting to create a system that would meet the needs of students at each individual college based on a common standard. What I learned from this study is that the institutional influence of the NCCCS is only part of a broader and more complex set of influences that include external and organizational influences that must be balanced by the local college faculty and staff. The role of the NCCCS appears very limited based on the limited contact that is present among the various local developmental educational coordinators and the state leadership. In this case, the NCCCS asserted its authority through policy updates for serving under-prepared college students, but is disconnected from the actual implementation. It is also apparent that the NCCCS could use the same authority to support colleges as they manage the competing influences at local and state levels. I refer back to Weick (1976) to assess the limited interaction between local community colleges and the larger state system. All 58 colleges are part of the same system, yet their separateness is obvious in the ways that they applied developmental education policy; the foundations of their programs, and the ways in which the college administrators interpreted what was appropriate to comply with state policy. The college

administration and the NCCCS interact sufficiently to maintain the system in place, but their separateness is reflected in the different interpretations of the same phenomenon.

As society's needs changed and post secondary education became more of a necessity for future workers and displaced workers, the need to improve access to higher education conflicted with the outcomes of students unable to perform at a college level. Bladh (2007) describes that as higher education became more of demand for the masses rather than the elite beginning after World War II, one result of that shift is the increased external influence of the public as reflected through legislation and calls for more access. The failure of the public schools to prepare students for higher education becomes magnified in its impact due to a call from society for wider access to higher education and the increased demand for academic and professional degrees. In 1993, the North Carolina Legislature determined that it was necessary to focus on performance measures as a tool for accountability. This was one step towards the beginning of a change for the NCCCS and its autonomy as a system. As funding became tied in part to the performance of the member institutions, college administrators had to balance their internal organizational interests with the larger institutional goals of the state, as well as the will of the public for more access. The legislature became an external influence rather than a passive supporter. It reflected the public's need to be part of the higher education system and they represented the will of the public by influencing access to higher education.

The NCCCS developed a series of policies that mandated college presidents to assess the outcomes of their curriculum degree programs and to provide additional screening and support services for those students that entered below a college level. The

open door policy in higher education that came out of federal and state reforms of the 1970s took on a different role for the community college president as performance measures required annual reporting data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the college's instruction and support services for the students of the community colleges. The role of the NCCCS throughout this evolution of performance measures and accountability has been one of intermediary for the will of the legislature. The NCCCS has periodically updated the policies as required and as documented in the records provided in the appendices. Through my research, document reviews, interviews, and analysis, I can find no concentrated effort on the part of the NCCCS to provide anything other than oversight in the event that a school is unable to meet the performance standards or if there is a policy issue that requires intervention at the state level. There is no record of any centralized effort to address the issues of developmental education and its implications. In fact, the NCCCS representative directly expressed to me that the local colleges are on their own as autonomous organizations, and they can ask for help if they need it. As I discovered in my interviews with the three colleges in the study, none of the three have any contact with the NCCCS regarding developmental education. In fact, at WCC the developmental studies chair told me that he never gets a response when he does request help. Therefore, I can say with confidence that the role of the NCCCS is one of passive enabler as a state higher education authority within a loosely coupled relationship with the local colleges related to developmental education. The college administrators in the study are more likely to contact a neighboring college for information rather than the NCCCS.

The local college presidents contacted for this study, who I believed would be most anxious to participate in this study as they are on the front lines in dealing with the issues of developmental education and its impact through NCCCS performance measures, appeared to be removed from the daily operations of developmental studies. Their roles in managing multiple interests and obligations may have contributed to their lack of interest in this study to examine the challenges of serving under-prepared college students. One college in particular that was contacted to participate provided a written response through e-mail stating that their college administration chose not to participate. While college presidents may have multiple areas that demand their attention, addressing the needs of under-prepared college students certainly would be one of the more pressing issues facing community colleges, as well as four-year institutions. I believe that the culture of autonomy and separateness that is present in the NCCCS is a contributing factor to the lack of research-based analysis of educational and organizational practices. There was one notable exception at CCC, and his efforts provided me with valuable insight into the relationship between a community college president and the developmental studies administration. Local college presidents and to some degree vice presidents are responsible for the student outcomes reported to the NCCCS at the end of each semester. Their interest in the outcomes should serve as a motivation to become involved in assessing the processes for serving developmental education students.

Impact of the Study

The impact of this study on community college developmental education policy should be assessed while considering a triangular relationship that exists between the

knowledge required to function in society today, higher education and the role it plays, and the need for people to be part of the larger society through employment and other activities (Barnett, 1993). Barnett (2004) goes on to describe that 21st century higher education has become a value exchange for society, with fluctuating standards of what constitutes “excellence” in higher education. In order to appreciate the role of developmental education in maintaining a healthy balance between access to higher education and the standards that are necessary for people to be successful, it is important to be conscious of the influences that challenge higher education institutions to adapt to the changing needs of society. In this study, I focused on the key players that take part in the interpretive process for developmental education at community colleges in the NCCCS. I also focused on the dynamics of the relationship between the state higher education authority and the local community college by examining internal organizational influences, external local influences, and external institutional influences in light of NCCCS developmental education policy. The impact of the study can be seen through the detailed experiences of the developmental studies administration and staff at three community colleges. They interpret developmental education policy as it evolves and adapts to the changing needs of society. This study explains the processes at individual colleges that could be repeated at any community college in the system. It highlights the influences, the challenges, and the circumstances that impact the interpretive process. The impact of this study can also be felt by exposing the loosely coupled relationship between the NCCCS and the lack of involvement in the implementation of developmental education policy. It is possible that the NCCCS may

need to review its internal organizational structure in general by bringing attention to the needs of community colleges to deal with issues of staffing, funding, and local considerations that are not part of the NCCCS policy review. There is also the need for review and oversight to determine the effectiveness of state policies in the context of the local community college. This study is a first attempt to shed light on the internal processes that are part of the interpretation and implementation of state higher education policy in general. This study clearly helped to bring down barriers related to questions of motive and impact of state higher education policy decisions at the local level. The significance of this study may be measured in what was asked, rather than how many times it was asked. Developmental education policy in this case served as the vehicle to bring attention to the opportunities, processes, and challenges that are part of state higher education policy. It also provided a clear example of the need for more review and analysis of the implementation of state higher education policy. The significance of the interpretive processes are highlighted by the individual experiences of local colleges as they attempted to balance the multiple competing interests without the benefit of the state authority considering those conditions that impact the process.

In order to better serve the growing demands for access to higher education, there are two key recommendations that I present to improve the way in which the NCCCS and the local college administrators implement policy updates in a general sense.

The first key element missing from the implementation of policy at the local colleges is the idea of ownership. Community college developmental education administrators expressed concerns over a lack of power and ownership related to

developmental education policy. The policy was passed down from the NCCCS to the president of the local college. At that point the president is a messenger of information and the developmental education administrator is faced with a mandate rather than a proposal to be discussed. The NCCCS created a state mandate but does not have a system in place to support the implementation of the mandate. Developmental education policy should have a systematic approach to the process. The presidents at each college could provide a detailed summary of their current organizational chart that will reflect the current staffing and personnel needs in areas related to the proposed policy changes. This could be part of an impact study that includes those that are most likely to be involved in the implementation. The impact study could be an NCCCS document for consistency that allows department chairs, deans, and program heads an opportunity to discuss current challenges in the programs, potential impact of any proposed future changes on the local college, and current experiences in serving the target population. I discovered during the study that isolation, separation, and individual interpretation contribute to the confusion about what is appropriate and most effective in the management of developmental education. There are local influences that may greatly affect the delivery of services and they are part of the interpretive process for local colleges. By insisting on the impact study, the local college administration has ownership in the process and they scan the environment prior to the proposed policy update. The administrators most affected by the proposed policy update are able to share their views with the NCCCS on the impact of the proposed policy change. For the community college system, they are also forced to

scan the environment prior to the policy change; they get a sense of the impact from the perspective of the college administration.

The second recommendation that I propose is a follow up report from local college to the NCCCS as a means of oversight and policy review during the first six months of the policy update. The departmental leadership from the NCCC that is responsible for the program area subject to the policy update should be required to provide follow up reports from the local colleges. During this study I found that there was no oversight, no updates on the local impact of the policy update, and no contact with the local college administration in the area of developmental studies. The outcomes of the performance measures is currently the only measure of success that is considered by the NCCCS related to student achievement in the prescribed area of consideration, developmental education in this case. While the statistical data is useful as a system-wide measure, the means of achieving the goals are not considered. The NCCCS could ask the local colleges directly to provide updates on any issues that require consideration related to the program area. The NCCCS could assume the responsibility of gathering information from local colleges that may be useful when considering the minimum standards for colleges related to personnel, facilities, and resources needed to adequately serve the population in question. The NCCCS could provide valuable sharing of information and data on best practices, areas of concern and could provide senior leadership with information that may benefit the internal operations at the local college.

Finally, it became clear during the study that the NCCCS and local community college administrators should develop a culture of internal assessment and review of their

practices. Community colleges have ignored the benefits of research and analysis in improving the delivery of services and the organizational environment. I feel that this is due in part to open admissions, colleges serving large groups of students with a minimum of infrastructure and personnel, large bureaucratic reporting systems, and a weak state higher education authority to oversee the implementation of processes that are not local decisions but that are mandated services. By establishing a more systematic approach to the delivery of services the local colleges' autonomy will not be challenged, but rather there will be a system in place that will free the creativity of those that serve students locally by providing them access to research and best practices that can provide them a point of reference for their own program. Research related to developmental education policy at community colleges over the past 30 years describes the implications for community colleges in serving larger number of under-prepared college students without a standardized model to offer the services to the students. Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) describe that the state higher education authorities look at the institutional level organizational practices through legislation and mandates but the local implementations of the state mandates are largely overlooked. The NCCCS may need to reexamine their role as a state higher authority in driving the next generation of policy management and implementation. Perin (2005) explains that community college policies regarding under-prepared college students are so diverse that it inhibits the identification and implementation of the most effective practices in serving developmental students. Perin asserts, "Whichever model turns out to be the most effective, the lack of uniformity across community colleges suggests that the organization of developmental education is

an ongoing institutional concern” (p. 30). She also points out that while community colleges struggle to manage larger enrollments with under-prepared students requiring additional considerations due to economic, social, and linguistic challenges, the lack of research regarding the best practices in serving them continues to limit progress. Only one of the community colleges in this study referred to educational research as the basis for the implementation of developmental education.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study served to highlight the internal organizational processes at community colleges in the NCCCS as part of a larger institutional body. The interpretive processes for implementing developmental education at local colleges were examined and documented through qualitative case study research. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and follow up communication via e-mail and telephone, I was able to collaborate with developmental education administrators at three community colleges, as well as a representative from the NCCCS, to highlight the impact of state developmental education policy on local community colleges.

The area that I believe needs to be addressed in future studies is to examine NCCCS policy from the perspective of the senior level administration at the NCCCS and document their process from the legislature to the final policy draft that is sent out to local college presidents. An additional research area that should have been a part of this study but was not is the role the college president plays in managing the competing interests of state higher education policy and administrative code with local organizational and community interests. This is an area that has received little attention in

the research on community college administration, and reflects a shift from the community college as second choice for undergraduate education to a more primary role as first choice for college students. One example addressed on a limited basis in this study is the relationship of four-year colleges and universities and community colleges. Four-year colleges have relinquished much of their role in serving under-prepared students and have shifted that responsibility to community colleges. As a result, the role of the community college president has changed as they manage the competing interests between the state and the local college. This is an area that requires much more attention; as a result of my attempts in this study to incorporate the community college presidents, it became clear that they are not accustomed to being part of educational research.

An additional area of future research suggested by this study is the relationship between the K-12 system and the community college. Both systems clearly recognize that they are in a quandary when it comes to serving the needs of future and recent high school graduates. It is a case of the eight hundred pound gorilla in the room that no one wants to recognize. Through the use of case study research, a researcher examining one state system could highlight the path of students from high school to community college. This may offer a clearer analysis of the specific issues that hinder K-12 to college transition. There are peripheral issues as part of this topic that may be of interest for future study. The cost to state higher education to provide K-12 level education to high school graduates may also be a topic for research in higher education. It was a topic that emerged in the study, but will require a much deeper analysis of the impact on the total cost of higher education.

Summary

This study used qualitative case study research to analyze the interpretive processes at local community colleges as the administration and staff members serve under-prepared college students via state mandates of NCCCS developmental education policy. The study used the conceptual framework from Daft and Weick (1984) to guide the data collection and data analysis by focusing on the organizational and institutional processes of scanning, interpretation, and learning at each institution. A variety of investigative strategies, semi-structured interviews, document reviews, email, and telephone conversations were used to gather as much data as possible about the internal processes for the implementation of developmental studies programs at three community colleges in the North Carolina system. The research questions guiding this study focused on the key players at each college that are responsible for developmental studies and serving under-prepared students; the study also focused on the role of the NCCCS in providing support and oversight for developmental education policy at local colleges. In particular the study examined the impact of the most recent developmental education policy update on the three community colleges in the study (Lancaster, 2006).

This study revealed that the NCCCS serves primarily as an intermediary for policy implementation between the North Carolina State Legislature, the North Carolina Community College State Board, and the local colleges that are required to adhere to the policies as established by the state governing bodies. The NCCCS responded to the demands of the state for performance measures beginning in the early 1990s. The community college system established a series of policies related to developmental

education as a result of the growing demands to serve all students through the NCCCS open door policy (Admission to Colleges, 2006). The role of the NCCCS in providing support for the local colleges in the implementation of developmental education policy has been revealed to be limited.

There were key influences identified at each school both internal and external, some local and some coming from the state. The key internal influence at each college was the foundation of the developmental studies program and how it was viewed by the college administration. The variations that exist among the colleges in the implementation of developmental education policy appeared to be primarily affected by the internal organizational approach to developmental studies.

There were local external factors that were also highlighted in the study. The gap between K-12 education and the standard college freshman curriculum was cited as a key influence on developmental education. This factor was cited by the NCCCS representative as well as all the administrators at each of college. The changing economy and the need for students to attend school beyond a secondary education were also cited as a key local external influence. For CCC and WCC the changing economy and the loss of jobs was a particularly strong influence on local developmental studies policy.

The external institutional influences discussed in this study were determined to be the overriding influence on developmental education policy at the local colleges. These influences created a predetermined outcome for colleges by establishing standards that directly affect the survival of the local colleges. College administrators must balance all

of the other local influences in light of the three primary institutional influences cited in this study if they wish continue as part of the NCCCS.

In the analysis of the level of interaction and collaboration between the NCCCS and the local community college developmental studies program, it is clear from the study that there is a loosely coupled relationship. The local community college and the NCCCS are attached through funding, oversight, and public policies; however, the NCCCS and the individual college also retain a separation of identity, as well as organizational autonomy. The lack of collaboration between the NCCCS and the respective academic departments, in this case developmental studies, is a critical factor in the lack of solid research and adequate public policy on how to manage the challenges in dealing with under-prepared college students. Each side is managing the impact of developmental policy in isolation without providing a system of continuous improvement and best practices to adapt to the changing needs of student populations and the economic and labor demands of society.

It is clear from the current research on higher education policy and developmental education policy in particular that community colleges are pressed between the need to satisfy state performance and accountability measures while at the same time they are required to serve a growing number of under-prepared students. In the NCCCS, the loosely coupled relationship between the system office and the local college allows for local college administrators to maintain an autonomous relationship with their state system. As colleges are required to implement placement standards for admission the interpretive processes at local colleges are affected by the internal and external influences

that are part of the implementation of developmental education policy. The variation in the delivery of services among the colleges in the study can be attributed in large part to the need of the local institution to adapt to the demands that are presented, both internal and external. The need for college administrators to comply with state standards and maintain enrollments impacts the way in which they implement developmental education policy. For the state system to be part of the solution, they may need to balance the need for local autonomy with the expectation of state standards through a more engaged approach to review and oversight that considers the local needs of community colleges as part of a larger system.

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APPENDIX A: MEMORANDUM FROM MARTIN LANCASTER

NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
H. Martin Lancaster, President

August 24, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Presidents
Student Development Administrators

FROM: Martin H. Lancaster

SUBJECT: Placement Testing Policy

I am pleased to inform you that on August 18, 2006, the State Board of Community Colleges adopted a revised Placement Testing Policy, which included placement test cut scores to establish proficiency levels for students entering college level courses.

This policy becomes effective fall semester 2007 for all students enrolling in curriculum level courses with a developmental prerequisite. All colleges in the North Carolina Community College System will use the validated test scores in the attached table to demonstrate student proficiency and college readiness in reading, writing, and mathematics.

If you have specific questions regarding the attached Placement Test Policy, please contact Wanda White, Director of Student Development Services at 919-807-7104 or by email at whitew@nccommunitycolleges.edu.

cc: Dr. Delores A. Parker
Mr. Ken Whitehurst
Dr. Edith Lang
Ms. Wanda White

**Validation of Placement Test Scores Recommendation
North Carolina Community College System**

Effective July 1, 1993, the NC General Assembly enacted a special provision entitled "Remediation Measures" in SL 1993-321, Section 108 that reads:

REMEDICATION MEASURES

- Sect. 108 (a) The State Board of Community Colleges shall study the different tests By colleges to place students in developmental courses. This study shall determine appropriate tests and proficiency levels to be used in selecting and placing students in developmental courses.
- (b) The State Board shall report its finds to the General Assembly by May 1, 1994.

The State Board of Community Colleges adopted policies in 1994 and 1999 to carry out this special provision.

Pursuant to item #6 of the Placement Testing Guidelines adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges on October 15, 1999, all colleges within the NC Community College System provided to the College Board and/or the American College Testing Services information for the validation of ASSET, COMPASS and Accuplacer (including CPT and COMPANION) placement tests scores. Such information included but was not limited to student identification number, local score tables, grades of courses, grade point averages and all data that was deemed essential to the validation of placement test scores. All data was transmitted in electronic formats as agreed to by the Statewide Placement Testing Committee and the tests publishers. The data collected was from a two-year period that included Fall 2001 through 2003

The Placement Testing committee met on several occasions to review the validation data and made the final recommendations for the placement test cut scores. This information was shared on the NCCCS website, in various focus group meetings, Instructional Administrators' conference, Student Development Administrators' conference and the Presidents' Association meetings. Final recommendations were submitted to the Presidents' Association for review and voting. The attached Placement Test Scores are the result of a review of the Placement Testing committee recommendations by Community College presidents. Community Colleges using ASSET and COMPASS voted overwhelmingly to continue to use the same Placement Test scores as used in 1999. While colleges using Accuplacer made changes in the cut score in the area of mathematics.

The State Board is requested to adopt the placement testing policy, including placement test scores to establish proficiency levels for students entering college level courses.

Placement Testing Policy

1. Mandatory Testing and Placement

Placement testing shall be mandatory for all students taking curriculum level courses with a developmental prerequisite. All colleges should have written policies governing placement- testing practices.

2. Approved Placement Tests

Colleges must use one or more of the following approved placement tests: ASSET, COMPASS, CPT, and/or Accuplacer. Other tests proposed for use in placement testing must be approved by the Placement Testing Committee prior to use.

3. Use of Placement Tests

Placement tests are not admissions tests and should be used only in the manner for which the publisher intended them, to place students in appropriate courses. The Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education states, "Avoid using tests for purposes not specifically recommended by the test developer unless evidence is obtained to support the intended use."

4. Placement Test Waivers

Colleges may waive the requirement for a placement test when students demonstrate proficiency in prerequisite skills using ACT scores, SAT scores, appropriate college transfer courses or courses including developmental studies. All colleges should include policies on placement test waivers in their written policies governing placement testing practices.

5. Re-testing for Placement

Colleges should allow re-testing of students and include re-testing guidelines in the written policies governing placement testing practices.

6. Required Placement Test Scores

Effective fall semester 2007, all colleges in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) shall use the validated tests scores in the attached table to demonstrate student proficiency and college readiness in reading, writing and mathematics. These scores shall be transferable among the 58 community colleges.

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

April 23, 2008

Dear Community College President:

In association with East Carolina University's College of Education in Greenville North Carolina, we are conducting a case study on developmental education policy in the North Carolina Community College System. More specifically, we are investigating factors influencing local policy decisions, practices, and processes, related to developmental education, and its impact on your institution. As a part of this multiple site case study we would like to include your college as one of the sites for study.

The site study will involve a one-hour interview with you or another senior administrator of your selection, additional interviews with the dean of arts and sciences, the director or coordinator of developmental education, and the dean of student services. The entire process will take no longer than one day and a half. In advance of the visit, the study will require a review of relevant documentation including: local college policies regarding developmental education, placement testing procedures, alternate assessments used, and statistical information related to the number of students attempting and completing developmental education. Attached you will find a site visit outline with the list of proposed interviewees. **All interviews will be confidential; the name of the college or any of the employee's names will not be used in the study.**

We believe that this study will improve the understanding of the impact of state community college developmental education policy on local institutions. This information may serve to address issues of state higher education governance in regard to support, follow up, and analysis in the development of future policies. We hope that you will agree to participate in this study and contribute to the development of this new knowledge.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Siegel
Professor, Educational Leadership

John Paul Black
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership

Site Visit Plan

Each site visit will last approximately one day and a half and will involve conducting interviews with the dean of arts and sciences, the dean of student services, the coordinator of developmental education, and collecting archival documents. The site visit will roughly follow the schedule below:

Day One

- Interview with college President

Day Two

- Interview with the Coordinator of Developmental Education
- Follow up interviews and data collection
- Retrieval of additional documents

APPENDIX C: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

(ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEWS)

I, _____, agree to be interviewed by Mr. John Paul Black for the purpose of gathering data for his dissertation project. The interview questions have to do with the developmental education policies of the North Carolina Community College System and its individual colleges. Specifically, the interview will cover the interpretive processes and implementation of state policy at the local college.

As an interviewee, I acknowledge and/or agree to the following terms:

- The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed into text.
- Any portion of the interview text may be printed in the body of Mr. Black's dissertation
- The interview will be conducted individually with the researcher.
- To protect confidentiality pseudonyms will be assigned to both colleges and interviewees.
- Within the text of the study, interviewees will be referred to by the group in which they belong – administrator, staff, or faculty.
- The interviewee may decide to discontinue the interview at any point, or may choose not to answer any particular question(s).
- After the dissertation has been completed, all taped interview sessions will be erased.

You may address any questions concerning the study by contacting Mr. John Paul Black at (252) 258-8487 Email jpb0408@mail.ecu.edu or Dr. David Siegel, dissertation advisor at East Carolina University, Educational Leadership Department (252)-328-2828 Email: siegeld@ecu.edu

After having read and understood the above-mentioned terms, I willingly give my consent to participate in the study to be conducted by Mr. Black. I have been offered a copy of this consent form.

Signature_____

Date_____

I have explained this research to the best of my ability.

Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview protocol. The interview stage of data collection is two tiered, beginning with an interview at the system level with a representative from the North Carolina Community College System. During this interview, I am seeking to define as clearly as possible the established state policy regarding developmental education assessment, placement, and prescribed service. The goal is to determine whether the state is an active participant in the policies that are mandated to local community colleges. The following questions are proposed for the representative of the North Carolina Community College System: What prompted the NCCCS to create a developmental education policy as a state mandate? What do you think was envisioned?

- 1) Where does the responsibility for the direction and evaluation of developmental education lie?
 - a) What role does the NCCCS Developmental Education administration play in working with the local colleges regarding developmental education policies and procedures?
 - b) How were state legislators involved in the developmental education policy process to the August 2006 policy update on placement testing in the NCCCS?
 - c) What role did the state board of community college play in reviewing the potential impact of the August 2006 developmental education policy update?
 - d) How did the NCCCS President assess the impact of the August 2006 developmental education policy update with community college presidents? If so, describe the process.
 - e) How did local community colleges participate in the design of the developmental education policy? If so, how many?

- 2) How is information about developmental education policy passed on to the local colleges?
- 3) What type of system of training is in place for colleges that offer developmental education?
- 4) As a representative of the NCCCS for developmental education, how do you believe that under-prepared community college freshman have impacted local colleges?
- 5) Do local colleges vary in the implementation of state developmental education policy? Is variation acceptable?
 - a) Do colleges have the right to offer alternate placement tests?
 - b) Do colleges have the right to waive the requirements of the August 2006 developmental education policy update?
- 6) What system is in place at the state level to review the impact of developmental education on local colleges?
 - a) How does the NCCCS determine if local developmental education policy is valid prior to approval?
 - b) Is there an annual system-wide review of developmental education student data?
 - c) Is there a system of oversight to determine if colleges are complying with state-mandated developmental education policies?
- 7) What role does the NCCCS play in providing supervision and local support for developmental education programs?

- 8) It appears from NC State General Assembly records that the issue of developmental education was first discussed in formal session in 1993. Is there a published record of developmental education policy from the beginning of the system to present? Am I missing any documentation?
- 9) Is there anything else you think I need to know about the role of the NCCCS regarding developmental education policy?

Interview protocol individual colleges

- 1) What does the term developmental education mean to you?
- 2) What is the purpose of developmental education?
- 3) What is your role in serving students in developmental education courses?
- 4) If you have a question about developmental education policy, who would be the first person you would ask for assistance?
- 5) How does developmental education impact your institution?
- 6) What changes have you had to make in the curriculum programs at your college due to developmental education programs?
- 7) How does the state developmental education policy impact your local policy?
- 8) How do the state critical success factors for performance funding affect your local developmental education policy?
- 9) What type of training have you had that prepares you to serve developmental education students?

- 10) What do you believe would be the impact on your college if you did not offer developmental education programs?
- 11) When a student has tested below the minimum requirements for college level courses as mandated by the NCCCS, what is the process for placing the student in the appropriate program of study?
- 12) Please describe any alternate path, other than the established state policy, in assessing placement of a student at your college.
- 13) What happens to a student that is unable to complete the assigned developmental education program of study?
- 14) How do you interact with the community college system office related to issues of offering developmental classes? Do you believe that the system office provides you the necessary support to offer developmental education? If yes, please explain.
- 15) How do you know that what you are doing in serving under-prepared college students is working to fulfill the developmental education policy of your college?

APPENDIX E: SENATE BILL 27

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1993 SESSION
RATIFIED BILL

CHAPTER 321
SENATE BILL 27

AN ACT TO MAKE CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT OPERATIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENTS, INSTITUTIONS, AND AGENCIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

PART 16. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Requested by: Senator Ward, Representatives Black, Rogers

COURSE REPETITION POLICY

Sec. 102. (a) No full-time equivalent students (FTE) shall be generated for occupational extension students after the first repetition of an occupational extension class. Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, if students take an occupational extension class more than twice, they shall pay the full amount of the per student cost for the class and the community college shall earn no budget FTE for these students.

(b) Community colleges may permit a student to repeat a course more than once if that student demonstrates that the course repetition is required by standards governing the certificate or licensing program in which the student is enrolled. Colleges permitting this course repetition shall earn budget FTE for the student and shall report on a regular basis to the State Board on the students they have permitted this course repetition and on the certification or licensure requirements that necessitated it.

(c) The State Board of Community Colleges shall conduct a review of all occupational extension courses, including their content, length, definition, and common course title. It shall ensure that these courses are classified appropriately as occupational extension and are not actually community services courses.

Requested by: Senator Ward, Representatives Black, Rogers

REMEDATION MEASURES

Sec. 108. (a) The State Board of Community Colleges shall study the different tests used by colleges to place students in developmental courses. This study shall determine appropriate tests and proficiency levels to be used in selecting and placing students in developmental courses.

(b) The State Board shall report its findings to the General Assembly by May 1, 1994.

Requested by: Senator Ward, Representatives Black, Rogers

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Sec. 109. (a) The State Board of Community Colleges shall establish standards for levels of institutional performance on those critical success factors that can be appropriately measured to indicate how individual colleges are performing in meeting the goals of the North Carolina Community College System. Each community college shall report its performance on these measures to the State Board. Colleges that fail to attain any of the standards in any year shall report to the State Board the reasons why performance fell below standards and the steps being taken to meet the standards.

(b) The State Board of Community Colleges shall study models for measuring institutional effectiveness, such as the Desktop Audit used by Coastal Carolina Community College, and shall direct community colleges to utilize similar models in providing accountability information to the State Board for the General Assembly. Colleges shall provide information on graduate placement rates and employer, graduate, and early leavers satisfaction with college programs to the State Board. In addition, the State Board shall direct colleges to follow up on early leavers from their programs to determine, to the extent possible, the reasons for their withdrawal from college programs.

(c) The State Board of Community Colleges shall report on its implementation of subsections (a) and (b) of this section to the General Assembly by May 1, 1994.

APPENDIX F: NCCCS REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEW

NCCCS Interview May 5th, 2008 with a representative from the North Carolina Community College System Office; referred to in the dissertation as “NCCCS Representative”

Overarching Question: Where does the responsibility for the direction and evaluation of developmental education lie?

What role does the NCCCS play in working with the local colleges regarding developmental education policies and procedures?

Answer- College staff members will call with specific questions about the appropriate procedures for implementing developmental education. It is more difficult for the new staff; as long-term administrators retire the new staff has a more difficult time understanding exactly what they need to. Colleges ask for a consolidated list of policies to follow. Most of the information about developmental education policy can be found in the numbered memos.

Follow up- What about training for college staff regarding developmental education?

Answer- There are 58 community colleges and it is not possible to visit each of the colleges on a regular basis. Most of the training is offered through regional workshops and system conferences. My role is not to mandate practices but to support each of the colleges with issues related to developmental education. The individual college has a great deal of autonomy in the implementation of developmental education. The scores set by the state in the 2006 policy update from Martin Lancaster are firm but the interpretation of the policy at each college may vary in the practices to achieve the goal.

Follow-up- Do colleges have the right to set there own testing policies?

Answer- ACT and the College Board provided preliminary validation studies for the Placement Testing Committee in 2004; the committee then developed recommendations regarding cut scores. The Community College System hosted several focus group meetings in 2005 to discuss the recommendations, and the official cut scores were published in 2006 (with an effective date of fall 2007). As mandated by the State Board of Community Colleges, the Placement Testing Committee will work with the 58 community colleges and test publishers to conduct validation of test scores every **three** years. Hence, timetables are now being developed for the second validation study. The school must follow the cut off scores as set, but the system office does not tell each school how often to test and the schools may apply for waivers as outlined in the placement testing policy. Each school should establish there own placement testing policy based on the standards set at the state level.

Question- What role did the state board of community college play in reviewing the potential impact of the August 2006 developmental education policy update?

Answer- The Placement Testing Committee is an example of one committee that reviews developmental education policy. The North Carolina Association of Developmental Education is a professional organization that has significant influence (and is represented on the Placement Testing Committee), but that body is **not** an official entity of the System Office or the State Board. Hence, it was **not** charged with developing and reviewing course competencies. (That process, led by Edith Lang, formerly of the System Office, involved meetings across the state and a formal vote by all 58 community colleges on the developmental competencies.) Many other professional

organizations (e.g., NCMATYC, a professional organization of math instructors) have an interest in developmental policies. At different times, a number of committees and professional organizations have had an impact on state policies that affect developmental education. For example, System Office procedures for implementing changes to an individual course description (as well as to prerequisites and co requisites) are initiated at the local level--that is, by an individual college. Hence, a college that wishes to initiate a change may document the need by obtaining endorsement of a professional organization related to the discipline in question. That information is shared with other colleges offering the course in the form of an official vote letter generated by the System Office. Votes are tallied, and the results are shared with the Curriculum Review Committee, which approves or disapproves the requested changes. You might find it helpful to peruse section 15 of the *Curriculum Procedures Reference Manual*, which is available on the System Office web site at the following address:

http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Programs/reference_manual2.htm

The current course competencies were reviewed in 1999. The committee that reviews course competencies is the North Carolina Association of Developmental Education. From this committee recommendation are made to the system office for further consideration. The course competencies are fixed but colleges have the right to implement the appropriate instructional strategies as they choose.

Follow up- Is there local oversight of the implementation of course competencies and if so, how is the managed?

Answer- Developmental courses are standardized for all 58 community colleges.

Colleges must choose how best to manage the implementation of the courses and subsequent placement testing results. Colleges have the autonomy to manage the courses but they must comply with the target standards, and the corresponding performance measures.

Question- How do you define Developmental Education?

Answer: It is a combination of placement testing standards with course competencies as implemented through the local college.

Follow up- What are the state recommendations for placement testing for developmental education students.

Answer- My personal position is that placement testing should occur **prior to the semester**, not after. (I am not referring to pre-testing and post-testing practices here-- those have a different function.) When testing is intended for placement, it should be completed before the beginning of the course in question. That is not to say that retesting is inappropriate. Many high school students do not appreciate the importance of a placement test and do not bother to review before hand. This casual approach is particularly prone to affect math placement scores because many such students have not had a math course within the previous year, and their skills are rusty. While they cannot master new math skills by "cramming for the placement test," thoughtful review can be beneficial. When students realize how much time and money they will need to invest in developmental courses, they are often motivated to do their best when they retest. I fully support retesting in such scenarios. Colleges in some cases are testing too

often. In some cases a student may receive the placement test during admissions, receive another test during the first days of the class, receive another test in the middle of the semester, and then again at the end of the semester. I feel it diminishes the validity of the test as an instrument to measure the level of preparedness of the students for subsequent courses at a college level. Colleges can make arrangements for anomalies in test scores if they see a student that is able to do very well in the course work but didn't test well they can retest. To give the test just to advance students out of the program is not a good practice.

Follow up- What is the motivation for the colleges to retest so much?

Answer- The colleges need to be concerned with the number of students that pass the developmental education courses each semester.

However, the real problem comes from the increasing numbers of high school students that are coming into the system that are underprepared, especially in Math. There are issues of financial aid that are of concern if students must take more than two semesters of developmental courses.

Question- Where does the responsibility lie for this issue?

Answer- There is an ongoing debate between the legislature and the department of public instruction about the issue of underprepared college students. The legislature actually receives an annual report on the number of college students that take developmental education and successfully complete the courses. The problem is the number of students that need the service, which creates a burden on local colleges to successfully serve the students. In addition, there are more workers that have lost their jobs and are in need of

retraining. As a result, the local colleges continue to serve more students that need additional help to be successful in a college level program.

Question- What would you say is the biggest issue that you see facing developmental education programs in the North Carolina System?

Answer- I would say that providing the resources for continued growth in developmental education is a big issue. Second, I would say overcoming the stigma attached to taking developmental education. I have worked on two college campuses and I am aware of students that would hide their textbooks from their peers so that they would not know that they are taking developmental courses. Local colleges must do a better job at integrating the developmental programs as a natural part of the college. It is especially difficult at schools that have separate buildings for developmental education.

APPENDIX G: MEMORANDUM FROM KEITH BROWN

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 15, 2007

TO: Presidents

Chief Academic Officers

Chief Continuing Education Officers

Planners

FROM: J. Keith Brown

Associate VP, Planning, Accountability, Research & Evaluation

SUBJECT: Performance Measures and Standards

In the 2007 Session, the North Carolina General Assembly approved modifications to the North Carolina Performances Measures and Standards as adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges on March 16, 2007. Attached you will find a chart that lists the performance measures, standards and special notes where appropriate. This chart shows the measures and standards that will be used in developing the 2007-08 performance measures report.

Over the next two weeks, several documents related to performance measures and performance funding will be posted on the System website. You will be notified when these documents have been posted.

Attachments
CC07-284

Email

§ 115D-31.3. Institutional Performance budgeting Accountability.

(a) Creation of Accountability Measures and Performance Standards. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall create new accountability measures and performance standards to be used for performance budgeting for the Community College System. Survey results shall be used as a performance standard only if the survey is statistically valid. The State Board of Community Colleges shall review annually the accountability measures and performance standards to ensure that they are appropriate for use in performance budgeting recognition of successful institutional performance.

(b) through (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2000-67, s. 9.7, effective July 1, 2000.

(e) Mandatory Performance Measures. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on the following 8 performance standards:

- (1) Progress of basic skills students,
- (2) Passing rate for licensure and certification examinations,
- (3) The proportion of those who complete their goal,
- (4) Employment status of graduates,
- (5) (3) Performance of students who transfer to the university system a four year institution,
- (6) (4) Passing rates in developmental courses,
- (7) (5) Success rates of developmental students in subsequent college-level courses,
- (8) (6) The level of satisfaction of students who complete programs and those who do not complete programs,
- (9) (7) Curriculum student retention and graduation, and
- (10) Employer satisfaction with graduates,
- (11)(8) Client satisfaction with customized training.
- (12) Program enrollment.

The State Board may add measures to those identified in section (e), but may not decrease the number.

(f) Publication of Performance Ratings. – Each college shall publish its performance on the 12 (8) measures set out in subsection (e) of this section (i) annually in its electronic catalog or on the Internet and (ii) in its printed catalog each time the catalog is reprinted.

The Community Colleges System Office shall publish the performance of all colleges on all 12 (8) measures in its annual Critical Success Factors Report.

(g) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Successful Institutional Performance. – For the purpose of performance budgeting recognition for successful institutional performance, the State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on six performance measures. These six shall be the five set out in subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (e) of this section and one selected by the college from the remainder set out in subdivisions (6) through (11) the 8 performance measures. For each of these six eight performance measures on which a college performs successfully or attains the standard of significant improvement, the college may retain and carry forward into the next fiscal year one-third one-fourth of one percent ($\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations. If a college demonstrates significant improvement on a measure that has been in use for three years or less, then the college would be eligible to carry-forward one-fourth of one percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations for that measure.

(h) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Superior Exceptional Institutional Performance. – Funds not allocated to colleges in accordance with subsection (g) of this section shall be used to reward superior exceptional institutional performance. After all State aid budget obligations have been met, the State Board of Community Colleges shall distribute the remainder of these funds equally to colleges that perform successfully on at least five of the six eight performance measures and meet the following criteria:

(1) The passing rate on all reported licensure /certification exams for which the colleges have authority over who sits for the exam must meet or exceed 70% for first-time test taker, and.

(2) The percent of college transfer students with a 2.0 GPA after two semesters at a four-year institution must equal or exceed the performance of students who began at the four-year institution (native students).

The State Board may withhold the portion of funds for which a college may qualify as an exceptional institution while the college is under investigation by a federal or state agency, or if its performance does not meet the standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, State Auditor's Office, or State Board of

Community Colleges. At such time as the investigations are complete and the issues resolved, the State Board may release the exceptional performance funds to the college.

(i) Permissible Uses of Funds. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section shall be used for the purchase of equipment, initial program start-up costs including faculty salaries for the first year of a program, and one-time faculty and staff bonuses. These funds shall not be used for continuing salary increases or for other obligations beyond the fiscal year into which they were carried forward. These funds shall be encumbered within 12 months of the fiscal year into which they were carried forward.

(j) Use of funds in low-wealth counties. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section may be used to supplement local funding for maintenance of plant if the college does not receive maintenance of plant funds pursuant to G.S. 115D-31.2, and if the county in which the main campus of the community college is located:

(1) Is designated as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county in accordance with G.S. 105-129.3;

(2) Had an unemployment rate of at least two percent (2%) above the State average or greater than seven percent (7%), whichever is higher, in the prior calendar year; and

(3) Is a county whose wealth, as calculated under the formula for distributing supplemental funding for schools in low-wealth counties, is eighty percent (80%) or less of the State average.

Funds may be used for this purpose only after all local funds appropriated for maintenance of plant have been expended. (1999-237, s. 9.2(a); 2000-67, s. 9.7; 2001-186, s. 1; 2006-66, s. 8.9(a).)

Performance Measures and Standards

North Carolina Community College System

Measure, Standard, Special Notes

Progress of Basic
Skills Students

75% demonstrating progress

Passing Rates on Licensure/Certification Exams

80% aggregate institutional passing rate for first time test takers

To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, no exam for which the college has control over who sits for the exam can have a passing rate of less than 70%
(Note: Any exam with less than 10 students will not be subject to the 70% rule)

Performance of College Transfer Students

83% of students who transfer to a 4-year institution will have a GPA of 2.0 or higher after two semesters. Students who transfer with less than 24 semester hours of transfer credit will not be included in the analysis. Community colleges can submit data gathered from private 4-year colleges and universities to be included with the UNC System data. To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, the performance of the community college transfer students must equal or exceed the performance of the native UNC System sophomores and juniors for that time period.

Passing Rates in Developmental Courses

75% of students who take a developmental English, mathematics, and/or reading course will pass the course with a grade of “C” or better

Students who withdraw from the course during the year will not be included in the analysis. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.

Success Rate of Developmental Students in Subsequent College-Level Courses

80% of students who took developmental courses will pass the “gatekeeper” English and/or mathematics course for which the developmental course serves as a prerequisite

To be included in the analysis, a student must take the “gatekeeper” course within one academic year of completing the developmental course that served as the pre-requisite. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.

Student Satisfaction of Completers and Non-completers

90% of survey respondents satisfied with college programs and services. To be considered for performance funding, the following conditions must be met:

1. Completer Survey: A 50% return rate or a statistically valid sample size
2. Non-Completer Survey: For colleges with fewer than 250 non-returning students, a minimum of 25 valid surveys must be obtained. For colleges with more than 250 non-returning students, response rate equal to 10% of the total non-returning students or a statistically valid sample size must be obtained.

Curriculum Student Retention, Transfer and Graduation 65% of fall degree seeking students will either re-enroll, transfer or graduate by the subsequent fall. The National Student Clearinghouse database will be used to determine student transfer.

Business/Industry Satisfaction with Services Provided 90% or respondents will rate services provided as "Very Good" or "Excellent"

APPENDIX H: PATTERNS OF STATES

Patterns of State Coordination and Governance of Community Colleges and Other Two-year Institutions

* Numbers in parentheses refer to footnotes at the end of the table.

State	State Board of Education Coordinates and Regulates Community Colleges	Consolidated Governing Board for Both Two- and Four-year Institutions Governs Community Colleges	Coordinating Board for All Higher Education Coordinates Locally Governed Community Colleges	Independent State Board Coordinates Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions	Independent State Board Governs Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions	Four-year Institutions Have Two-year Branches
Alabama	√ (1)					
Alaska		√ (2)				√ (2)
Arizona				√		
Arkansas			√			√
California				√		
Colorado				√ (3)	√ (3)	
Connecticut					√	
Delaware					√	
Florida	√ (4)			√ (4)		
Georgia		√			√ (5)	
Hawaii		√				√
Idaho	√ (6)	√ (6)				
Illinois				√		
Indiana			√		√ (7)	
Iowa	√					
Kansas			√			
Kentucky					√	
Louisiana		√ (8)				√
Maine		√ (9)			√ (9)	
Maryland			√			
Massachusetts			√			
Michigan	√					
Minnesota		√				
Mississippi				√		
Missouri			√			

State	State Board of Education Coordinates and Regulates Community Colleges	Consolidated Governing Board for Both Two- and Four-year Institutions Governs Community Colleges	Coordinating Board for All Higher Education Coordinates Locally Governed Community Colleges	Independent State Board Coordinates Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions	Independent State Board Governs Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions	Four-year Institutions Have Two-year Branches
Montana		√ (10)				
Nebraska			√ (11)			
Nevada		√				
New Hampshire					√	
New Jersey			√			
New Mexico			√			√
New York		√ (12)				
North Carolina					√	
North Dakota		√				
Ohio			√			√
Oklahoma			√			√
Oregon	√					
Pennsylvania			√			√
Rhode Island		√				
South Carolina					√ (13)	√
South Dakota						
Tennessee		√				
Texas			√			√
Utah		√				
Vermont		√				
Virginia					√	
Washington				√		
West Virginia		√				
Wisconsin					√	√
Wyoming				√		
Puerto Rico		√				

- (1) Community Colleges and technical institutions are both under jurisdiction of State Board of Education, but organized separately.
- (2) Only one campus functions as a community college, other former community colleges have been integrated with regional UA institutions.
- (3) Colorado board is a governing board for state-operated community colleges and coordinating board for local governed colleges.
- (4) State Board of Education's jurisdiction includes both the coordinating board for community colleges and the administrative entity for technical institutions, but these units function separately.
- (5) State Board for Adult and Technical Education.
- (6) Idaho State Board is responsible for all levels of education, including coordinating two local governed community colleges, governing universities that have community colleges mission, and the technical colleges.

- (7) Indiana Commission on Vocational Technical Education.
- (8) Louisiana institutions formally identified as community colleges are governed by Management Board of the University of Louisiana System. Other associate-degree level campuses are branches.
- (9) Community College of Maine is a statewide institution organized within the University of Maine System. Technical institutions are organized under an independent governing board.
- (10) Board of Regents has a coordinating responsibility for local community colleges. Former vocational/technical centers are now linked to one of the two universities.
- (11) In addition to the formal role of the coordinating board, the state association performs a voluntary coordinating role for the locally governed community colleges.
- (12) SUNY includes both community colleges that are partially financed at the county level, as well as five state-funded colleges of technology. CUNY includes several community colleges.
- (13) State Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education.

Education Commission of the States (1997). *State Postsecondary Education Structures Sourcebook: State Coordinating and Governing Boards*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States

APPENDIX I: SENATE BILL 656

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2003
SESSION LAW 2003-277
SENATE BILL 656**

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE INNOVATIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVES ACT. The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts: **SECTION 1.** Chapter 116C of the General Statutes is amended by adding the following new section to read: "**§ 116C-4. First in America Innovative Education Initiatives Act.**

(a) The General Assembly strongly endorses the Governor's goal of making North Carolina's system of education first in America by 2010. With that as the goal, the Education Cabinet shall set as a priority cooperative effort between secondary schools and institutions of higher education so as to reduce the high school dropout rate, increase high school and college graduation rates, decrease the need for remediation in institutions of higher education, and raise certificate, associate, and bachelor degree completion rates. The Cabinet shall identify and support efforts that achieve the following purposes:

- (1) Support cooperative innovative high school programs developed under Part 9 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- (2) Improve high school completion rates and reduce high school dropout rates.
- (3) Close the achievement gap.
- (4) Create redesigned middle schools or high schools.
- (5) Provide flexible, customized programs of learning for high school students who would benefit from accelerated, higher level coursework or early graduation.
- (6) Establish high quality alternative learning programs.
- (7) Establish a virtual high school.
- (8) Implement other innovative education initiatives designed to advance the State's system of education.

(b) The Education Cabinet shall identify federal, State, and local funds that may be used to support these initiatives. In addition, the Cabinet is strongly encouraged to pursue private funds that could be used to support these initiatives.

(c) The Cabinet shall report by January 15, 2004, and annually thereafter, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on its activities under this section. The annual reports may include recommendations for statutory changes needed to support cooperative innovative initiatives, including programs approved under Part 9 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes."

APPENDIX J: NCCCS CURRICULUM PROCEDURES REVIEW

Purpose

The Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) is committed to maintaining and sustaining the viability of the Common Course Library (CCL). The CRC recognizes a responsibility for ensuring that colleges maximize use of the CCL and limit the proliferation of courses throughout the system. The CRC has the authority for approving changes, additions, and deletions to the CCL.

Objectives

The CRC discusses issues associated with college requests for changes, deletions, and/or additions to the CCL before taking action. As a decision-making body, committee members strive to achieve consensus, rather than simple majority vote. If a clear division among committee members occurs during a vote, discussion continues until a decision is reached that all members can accept and understand. The committee strives to identify existing alternative solutions when requests are denied. CRC members are dedicated to increasing the degree of flexibility available to individual colleges, i.e., use of local prerequisites in lieu of system-imposed prerequisites.

Procedures

Curriculum Review Committee

A Curriculum Review Committee will be established to oversee the maintenance and revision of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Common Course Library.

The committee will normally be composed of ten community college administrators and two presidents. The chairperson of the North Carolina Association of Community College Instructional Administrators (NCACCIA) will submit nominations to the Vice President for Academic and Student Services, who will appoint ten college administrators to the committee. The Presidents Association will appoint two members to the committee.

- (1) The committee members will be selected to represent system demographics based on the college's size, location and service area (rural/urban).
- (2) The committee members will serve three-year terms with four of the

members rotating off each year, effective January 1, 2005. The current CRC members are listed in Attachment 1.

- (3) The Associate Vice President for Instructional Development and Technology at the System Office will also serve on the committee, as a non-voting member.

If committee members are unable to fulfill their obligations/terms, then the chairperson of the NCACCIA or the president of the Presidents Association will submit nominations to the Vice President for Academic and Student Services, who will appoint new members to the committee. The duration of this interim appointment is based on the original committee member's term.

The committee normally meets twice a year. Meeting and submission dates are identified in Attachment 2.

Role of System Office Staff

College requests are submitted through the office of the Vice President for Academic and Student Services.

System Office Staff has the following responsibilities prior to the CRC meeting:

- (1) Consult with the requesting college to assist in preparation of the request (before and/or after the formal submission of the request).
- (2) Send the request to applicable colleges for a formal vote.
- (3) Prepare an analysis of the request to be transmitted to the CRC.
- (4) Present the requests at the CRC meeting, answering CRC members' questions and providing additional information, as needed.
- (5) Notify colleges of the results of the CRC meeting.
- (6) Coordinate curriculum standard revision by the State Board of Community Colleges or the Vice President for Academic and Student Services, as appropriate.
- (7) Give course (and curriculum standard) information to the Research Assistant to enter into appropriate electronic databases and post the information to the NCCCS website.

System Office staff may submit requests for consideration by the CRC. These requests may include, but are not limited to, compliance issues and editorial revisions that do not require decision by the colleges offering the course.

APPENDIX K: SECOND MEMORANDUM FROM KEITH BROWN

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 19, 1999

TO: Presidents
Planners

FROM: J. Keith Brown

Associate Vice President, Planning & Research

SUBJECT: Changes in Accountability Requirements

A number of changes have occurred over the past year relative to accountability reporting requirements for community colleges. At the System Office, one of our objectives has been to examine the accountability and reporting requirements to reduce redundancy and to align the accountability requirements with the mission and goals of the System. I believe we have made a lot of progress in improving our accountability system. The purpose of this memorandum is to review and clarify the requirements for 1999-2000. Specifically, this memorandum will address the college institutional effectiveness plan (IEP), the Critical Success Factors (CSF) report, the Annual Program Review (APR), and the performance measures and standards.

Institutional Effectiveness Plan

The North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges took action in September 1998 to change the reporting requirements for the college institutional effectiveness plan. While maintaining the requirement for compliance with the legislative mandate that each college develop an annual IEP, the State Board took the position that the IEP should be designed to meet the needs of the college and should not be a state compliance document. Noting the success of community colleges in developing ongoing, effective planning processes, the State Board agreed with staff recommendations that colleges be granted greater flexibility in the development of the IEP and that colleges no longer be required to submit a copy of the IEP to the System Office. In so doing, the State Board recognizes that the college has the responsibility for ensuring their IEP processes are in compliance with SACS requirements.

Effective July 1, 1999, community colleges are no longer required to submit an IEP to the System Office. In addition, colleges have been granted greater flexibility in the design and content of the IEP. The System Office will monitor compliance with the legislative mandate that colleges have an ongoing planning process that results in an annual IEP through the educational program audit process.

Critical Success Factors

The System Planning Council took action at its June 17 meeting to adopt a new Critical Success Factors matrix (Attachment 1). The new matrix and report will serve two purposes, reporting on the performance measures and standards and evaluating the System Strategic Plan. The first factor in the matrix is the list of the 12 performance measures and standards that have been approved by the legislature. These data will be presented by college with an indication of which colleges meet the prescribed standard. The remaining four factors are designed to measure the System's progress in achieving

the objectives in the 1999-2001 Strategic Plan. Each measure listed under these four factors is cross-referenced to objectives in the strategic plan. Data will be presented at the System level and, where appropriate, the institutional level. The first CSF report on the new matrix will be issued in April 2000.

Annual Program Review/Performance Measures and Standards

The State Board and the legislature have approved the 12 Performance Measures and Standards as our primary measure of accountability. A summary of the measures and standards was mailed to all college presidents on June 29. As was stated in the accompanying memorandum from Dr. Brenda Rogers, the performance measures will replace the CSF standards and the Annual Program Review. Colleges are no longer required to submit an APR report in October to the System Office. In developing the measures and standards, it was understood that data collection methodologies would be refined as the measures were more closely studied. At this point the methodologies for several measures have been modified/clarified and will be addressed here.

Before addressing the modified methodologies, however; I would like to clarify some information on surveys. Under the new performance measures, the following surveys are required: goal completion of program completers, satisfaction of program completers with the college, goal completion for non-completers, satisfaction of non-completers with the college, employer satisfaction with graduates, and client satisfaction with customized training. At this point we are exploring the feasibility of conducting the employer satisfaction survey at the state level; all other surveys are the responsibility of the colleges.

A committee is currently developing the survey questions that all colleges will be required to use. Quite naturally, colleges can ask additional questions to meet their local needs; however, each college will be required to use the standard questions developed by the survey committee. These questions will be available by the end of August. In addition it should be noted that, since performance funding will be attached to some survey results, the surveys will be subject to audit by the education program auditors. Colleges will be expected to maintain a file of returned surveys for purposes of the audit. Additional specifics on the surveys will be presented later in this memorandum.

Performance of College Transfer Students: This measure will be based on the new Transfer

Student Performance (TSP) report being developed by UNC-General Administration. Under this new reporting, performance of transfer students who enroll in an UNC institution within two years of leaving a community college will be assessed. A schematic of this first year's analysis is presented in Attachment 2.

Passing rates of Students in Developmental Courses: Dr. Edith Lang at the System Office is chairing a committee that has been working on the reporting of these data. Information on the new reporting was presented at the IIPS conference. Using the IIPS software, the number of students completing developmental courses in English, reading and mathematics with a "C" or better grade will be determined and a passing rate will be calculated based on the total number of students who complete a developmental course in English, reading or mathematics. Students who withdraw during the semester will not be

included in the analysis. If your college uses a scale other than an A,B,C type of scale, then you will be asked to convert your grades to an A,B,C scale for purposes of this reporting. For more information on this, please contact Dr. Lang.

Plans are to do a test run for all colleges in September 1999. The actual implementation of this measure will occur in September 2000 and will be reported in the 2001 CSF report. Colleges not using the IIPS software will need to work with the System Office Information Services section to develop the appropriate programs for conducting the analysis.

Success Rate of Developmental Students in Subsequent College-Level Courses: The methodology used for this measure has been changed as a result of input from many of you. This measure will look at the success of developmental students in the courses for which the developmental course was the prerequisite. Developmental English will be paired with ENG 111, developmental math will be paired with college-level math and developmental reading will be paired with the student's first subsequent social science course or humanities course other than ENG 111. The performance of students in those college level courses who completed the developmental course will be compared with the performance of students who did not take the developmental course. For more information on this measure, please contact Dr. Lang

Curriculum Student Progress: The methodology for this measure has changed significantly since it was first proposed. In explaining the new methodology, I will describe what is required for this year. Before describing the new methodology, however; I want to elaborate a little more on the required surveying. Attachment 3 presents a schematic on the new required surveys. For this year you will identify students who were enrolled in a curriculum program in fall 1998. This means you will exclude students who were classified as "transition" (program codes beginning with a "T") and only look at students in specific curriculum programs. In addition, inmates will be excluded since they represent a special population. If, at any time between Fall 1998 and Fall 1999, the student completed a certificate, diploma or degree they will be classified as a program completer and will be surveyed with the Goal Completion Survey and the Satisfaction Survey. If the student did not complete the program but enrolled in either a curriculum program or extension program in fall 1999, then they will be placed in a second group. No further follow-up is needed for this group. If a student does not complete the program and does not reenroll in Fall 1999, then that student is considered a "non-completer." All non-completers are to be surveyed by the college with the Goal Completion Survey and the Satisfaction Survey. This surveying should be conducted during the fall. All survey results will be submitted to the System Office in February for inclusion in the Critical Success Factors report. Attachment 4 presents a schematic of the Curriculum Student Progress measure. For students who enrolled in Fall 1998 as described above, colleges will report: the number who completed prior to Fall 1999; the number who did not complete and re-enrolled in Fall 1999; the number who did not complete, did not re-enroll in Fall 1999 and who completed their goal as indicated by the Goal Completion survey; the number who did not complete, did not re-enroll in Fall 1999 and who did not complete their goal as indicated by the Goal Completion survey; and the number of unknowns (no survey returned). To calculate the Curriculum Student Progress

measure, the number of students in the first three categories just described will be totaled and divided by the total number of curriculum students (excluding “transition” and inmates) enrolled in fall 1998. The Information Services section of the System Office is developing a software program for selecting students based on the above criteria. This program can be run after the census date for fall 1999 and will produce the numbers for the first two categories described above and a list of “non-completers” who must be surveyed. Colleges not using the IIPS software should work with the System Office IS staff to ensure compliance with this new measure. If you have questions about any of the information contained in this memorandum or about any of the other performance measures, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be away from the office until August 2, but will be monitoring my email nightly (brownk@ncccs.cc.nc.us). In addition, it is my understanding that interest has been expressed by the planners in having presentations on this topic made at some regional planning meetings. I am more than willing to meet with any group to discuss the new measures to ensure successful implementation of our new accountability process.

Attachment

c: President H. Martin Lancaster

Dr. Barry Russell

Dr. Brenda Rogers

APPENDIX L: MEMORANDUM FROM EDITH LANG

August 16, 1999

MEMORANDUM

TO: Developmental Studies Tracking Team

FROM: Edith T. Lang
Program Coordinator for Developmental Education

SUBJECT: Developmental Studies Tracking System

In response to Senate Bill 1366 the North Carolina Community Colleges System developed twelve accountability measures for the 1999-2001 biennium. Two of the twelve measures are developmental education performance measures. There being no prior accountability process for developmental education, a task force was named to delineate parameters and devise a plan to track the success of students in developmental education courses. The task force included faculty representatives from the three major areas of developmental education – reading, English, and mathematics. The task force has worked diligently to design a database system to prepare a fair accounting of developmental education courses in the System. Your chief instructional officer has informed us that you are a member of the team at your college that will be responsible for the accuracy of your college's reporting or accountable for the statistical outcomes. You are invited to attend a meeting to discuss the preliminary results from the first trial run (five colleges) and to plan for the full-scale trial in late September or early October. Meetings are scheduled as follows: September 10, 1999 Main Building, Room 125 Lenoir Community College September 16, 1999 Auditorium Catawba Valley Community College September 17, 1999 Technology Center, Room 911 Durham Technical Community College.

All meetings are scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. and are anticipated to be two hours in length. To facilitate our planning of the meetings, please indicate on the enclosed form your choice of meeting site and return it by mail or fax by September 3, 1999. I look forward to meeting with you in September.

c: Chief Instructional Officer

Dr. Brenda Rogers

Dr. Elizabeth Johns

Elizabeth Jones

Mailing Address: 5020 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-5020

**NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGES SYSTEM
DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES TRACKING SYSTEM
UPDATE SESSION**

I plan to attend the session indicated below.

_____ September 10, 1999

Lenoir Community College

Main Building, Room 125

_____ September 16, 1999

Catawba Valley Community College

Auditorium

_____ September 17, 1999

Durham Technical Community College

Technology Center, Room 911

Participant: _____

College: _____

Return by September 3, 1999 to:

Edith T. Lang

North Carolina Community Colleges System

5020 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-5020

Fax: 919-

APPENDIX M: THIRD MEMORANDUM FROM KEITH BROWN

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 15, 2007

TO: Presidents

Chief Academic Officers

Chief Continuing Education Officers

Planners

FROM: J. Keith Brown

Associate VP, Planning, Accountability, Research & Evaluation

SUBJECT: Performance Measures and Standards

In the 2007 Session, the North Carolina General Assembly approved modifications to the North Carolina Performances Measures and Standards as adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges on March 16, 2007. Attached you will find a chart that lists the performance measures, standards and special notes where appropriate. This chart shows the measures and standards that will be used in developing the 2007-08 performance measures report.

Over the next two weeks, several documents related to performance measures and performance funding will be posted on the System website. You will be notified when these documents have been posted.

Attachments
CC07-284

Email

§ 115D-31.3. Institutional Performance budgeting Accountability.

(a) Creation of Accountability Measures and Performance Standards. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall create new accountability measures and performance standards to be used for performance budgeting for the Community College System. Survey results shall be used as a performance standard only if the survey is statistically valid. The State Board of Community Colleges shall review annually the accountability measures and performance standards to ensure that they are appropriate for use in performance budgeting recognition of successful institutional performance.

(b) through (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2000-67, s. 9.7, effective July 1, 2000.

(e) Mandatory Performance Measures. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on the following 8 performance standards:

- (1) Progress of basic skills students,
- (2) Passing rate for licensure and certification examinations,
- (3) The proportion of those who complete their goal,
- (4) Employment status of graduates,
- (5) (3) Performance of students who transfer to the university system a four year institution,
- (6) (4) Passing rates in developmental courses,
- (7) (5) Success rates of developmental students in subsequent college-level courses,
- (8) (6) The level of satisfaction of students who complete programs and those who do not complete programs,
- (9) (7) Curriculum student retention and graduation, and
- (10) Employer satisfaction with graduates,
- (11)(8) Client satisfaction with customized training.
- (12) Program enrollment.

The State Board may add measures to those identified in section (e), but may not decrease the number.

(f) Publication of Performance Ratings. – Each college shall publish its performance on the 12 (8) measures set out in subsection (e) of this section (i) annually in its electronic catalog or on the Internet and (ii) in its printed catalog each time the catalog is reprinted.

The Community Colleges System Office shall publish the performance of all colleges on all 12 (8) measures in its annual Critical Success Factors Report.

(g) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Successful Institutional Performance. – For the purpose of performance budgeting recognition for successful institutional performance, the State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on six performance measures. These six shall be the five set out in subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (e) of this section and one selected by the college from the remainder set out in subdivisions (6) through (11) the 8 performance measures. For each of these six eight performance measures on which a college performs successfully or attains the standard of significant improvement, the college may retain and carry forward into the next fiscal year one-third one-fourth of one percent ($\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations. If a college demonstrates significant improvement on a measure that has been in use for three years or less, then the college would be eligible to carry-forward one-fourth of one percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations for that measure.

(h) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Superior Exceptional Institutional Performance. – Funds not allocated to colleges in accordance with subsection (g) of this section shall be used to reward superior exceptional institutional performance. After all State aid budget obligations have been met, the State Board of Community Colleges shall distribute the remainder of these funds equally to colleges that perform successfully on at least five of the six eight performance measures and meet the following criteria:

(1) The passing rate on all reported licensure /certification exams for which the colleges have authority over who sits for the exam must meet or exceed 70% for first-time test taker, and.

(2) The percent of college transfer students with a 2.0 GPA after two semesters at a four-year institution must equal or exceed the performance of students who began at the four-year institution (native students).

The State Board may withhold the portion of funds for which a college may qualify as an exceptional institution while the college is under investigation by a federal or state agency, or if its performance does not meet the standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, State Auditor's Office, or State Board of

Community Colleges. At such time as the investigations are complete and the issues resolved, the State Board may release the exceptional performance funds to the college.

(i) Permissible Uses of Funds. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section shall be used for the purchase of equipment, initial program start-up costs including faculty salaries for the first year of a program, and one-time faculty and staff bonuses. These funds shall not be used for continuing salary increases or for other obligations beyond the fiscal year into which they were carried forward. These funds shall be encumbered within 12 months of the fiscal year into which they were carried forward.

(j) Use of funds in low-wealth counties. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section may be used to supplement local funding for maintenance of plant if the college does not receive maintenance of plant funds pursuant to G.S. 115D-31.2, and if the county in which the main campus of the community college is located:

(1) Is designated as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county in accordance with G.S. 105-129.3;

(2) Had an unemployment rate of at least two percent (2%) above the State average or greater than seven percent (7%), whichever is higher, in the prior calendar year; and

(3) Is a county whose wealth, as calculated under the formula for distributing supplemental funding for schools in low-wealth counties, is eighty percent (80%) or less of the State average.

Funds may be used for this purpose only after all local funds appropriated for maintenance of plant have been expended. (1999-237, s. 9.2(a); 2000-67, s. 9.7; 2001-186, s. 1; 2006-66, s. 8.9(a).)

Performance Measures and Standards

North Carolina Community College System

Measure, Standard, Special Notes

Progress of Basic Skills Students

75% demonstrating progress

Passing Rates on Licensure/Certification Exams

80% aggregate institutional passing rate for first time test takers

To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, no exam for which the college has control over who sits for the exam can have a passing rate of less than 70%
(Note: Any exam with less than 10 students will not be subject to the 70% rule)

Performance of College Transfer Students

83% of students who transfer to a 4-year institution will have a GPA of 2.0 or higher after two semesters. Students who transfer with less than 24 semester hours of transfer credit will not be included in the analysis. Community colleges can submit data gathered from private 4-year colleges and universities to be included with the UNC System data. To qualify for Exceptional Institutional Performance, the performance of the community college transfer students must equal or exceed the performance of the native UNC System sophomores and juniors for that time period.

Passing Rates in Developmental Courses

75% of students who take a developmental English, mathematics, and/or reading course will pass the course with a grade of “C” or better

Students who withdraw from the course during the year will not be included in the analysis. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.

Success Rate of Developmental Students in Subsequent College-Level Courses

80% of students who took developmental courses will pass the “gatekeeper” English and/or mathematics course for which the developmental course serves as a prerequisite

To be included in the analysis, a student must take the “gatekeeper” course within one academic year of completing the developmental course that served as the pre-requisite. Course record data submitted by the college to the data warehouse as part of the CRPFAR collection will be used to calculate this measure.

Student Satisfaction of Completers and Non-completers

90% of survey respondents satisfied with college programs and services. To be considered for performance funding, the following conditions must be met:

1. Completer Survey: A 50% return rate or a statistically valid sample size
2. Non-Completer Survey: For colleges with fewer than 250 non-returning students, a minimum of 25 valid surveys must be obtained. For colleges with more than 250 non-returning students, response rate equal to 10% of the total non-returning students or a statistically valid sample size must be obtained.

Curriculum Student Retention, Transfer and Graduation 65% of fall degree seeking students will either re-enroll, transfer or graduate by the subsequent fall. The National Student Clearinghouse database will be used to determine student transfer.

Business/Industry Satisfaction with Services Provided 90% of respondents will rate services provided as “Very Good” or “Excellent”

APPENDIX N: HOUSE BILL 1246

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2001
SESSION LAW 2001-312
HOUSE BILL 1246**

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, IN COOPERATION WITH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES, TO STUDY THE MEASURES USED FOR ADMISSIONS, PLACEMENT, AND ADVANCED PLACEMENT DECISIONS BY THE CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF THE STATE'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, TO ALLOW INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED YOUTHS TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGES, AND TO ALLOW CERTAIN YOUTHS TO BE EMPLOYED BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, in cooperation with the State Board of Education and the State Board of Community Colleges, shall study the measures used by the constituent institutions to make admissions, placement, and advanced placement decisions regarding incoming freshmen and shall assess the various uses made of those measures and the validity of those measures with regard to a student's academic performance and as predictors of a student's future academic performance. They shall also assess whether other alternative measures may be equally valid or more accurate as indicators of a student's academic performance. In the study, particular consideration should be given to whether or not to eliminate, continue, or change the emphasis placed on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and ACT Assessment for North Carolina students as a mandatory university admissions measure. The study should review incorporating the State's testing program into admissions, placement, and advanced placement decisions. Based on its findings, the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, in cooperation with the State Board of Education and the State Board of Community Colleges, may develop recommendations to improve the measures used to assess a student's academic performance, to adopt alternative measures, or to use various combinations of both to determine more accurately a student's academic knowledge and performance.

SECTION 1.(b) The study required by subsection 1(a) of this act may address all of the following:

(1) Admissions. – The Board of Governors may examine the key elements used for making admissions decisions in the State's University System. Included in the factors to be studied are grade point average, class rank, and the SAT and ACT Assessment. Each element may be studied for reliability and validity independently and as used together. The Board of Governors may also compare the State's end-of-course testing with the SAT and ACT Assessment, assess how each reflects a student's academic performance, and consider shifting the emphasis currently placed on the SAT and ACT Assessment as an admissions measure to the State's end-of-course tests or other available tests as an admissions measure. In its study, the Board of Governors may consider eliminating, continuing, or changing the emphasis placed on the SAT and ACT Assessment as an admissions measure for North Carolina students applying to the State's constituent institutions. The Page 2 Session Law 2001-312 House Bill 1246 Board of Governors may also consider methods for accurately comparing the academic performance of applicants who do not have the benefit of the State's end-of-course testing program with applicants who do have the State's testing program.

Recommendations should be made to improve the consistency and fairness of each measure independently and as used together for admissions decisions. These recommendations may include the use of North Carolina end-of-course tests as an element in admissions decisions alone or in combination with a change of the weight of emphasis on the SAT and ACT Assessment. The recommendations may also include maintaining the current process. The Board of Governors may review with the State Board of Education recommendations that incorporate end-of-course testing as part of the admissions process. The State Board of Education may develop recommendations to improve the alignment of end-of-course tests and secondary coursework with the expectations of the constituent institutions and the State Board of Community Colleges.

(2) Placement. – The Board of Governors may consider reviewing the assessment methods currently used by constituent institutions for remediation placement decisions. Recommendations may be developed to provide greater consistency, reliability, and validity for remediation decisions. North Carolina end-of-course tests may be considered for use in these decisions.

(3) Advanced placement testing. – The Board of Governors may review the use of test scores in granting college-level course credit by constituent institutions.

(4) Other relevant issues. – The Board of Governors may study any other issues relevant to college and university admissions, placement, and advanced placement measures.

SECTION 1.(c) The Board of Governors may make an interim report regarding its studies and plans to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no

later than March 1, 2002, and shall submit a final report to that Committee by December 1, 2003. It is recommended that the study continue beyond the final report date. Interim and final reports of the Committee may include recommended legislation.

SECTION 2. Article 1 of Chapter 115D of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115D-1.1. Discretion in admissions.

(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 115D-1, a student under the age of 16 may enroll in a community college if the following conditions are met:

- (1) The president of the community college or the president's designee finds, based on criteria established by the State Board of Community Colleges, that the student is intellectually gifted and that the student has the maturity to justify admission to the community college; and
- (2) One of the following persons approves the student's enrollment in a community college:

- a. The local board of education, or the board's designee, for the public school administrative unit in which the student is enrolled.
- b. The administrator, or the administrator's designee, of the nonpublic school in which the student is enrolled.
- c. The person who provides the academic instruction in the home school in which the student is enrolled.
- d. The designee of the board of directors of the charter school in which the student is enrolled.

(b) The State Board of Community Colleges, in consultation with the Department House Bill 1246 Session Law 2001-312 Page 3 of Public Instruction, shall adopt rules to implement this section."

SECTION 3. G.S. 95-25.5 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(m) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, youths who are enrolled at an institution of higher education may be employed by the institution provided the employment is not hazardous. As used in this subsection, "institution of higher education" means any constituent institution of The University of North Carolina, any North Carolina community college, or any college or university that awards postsecondary degrees."

SECTION 4. Section 2 of this act is effective when it becomes law, and shall apply to the 2001-2002 academic year. Section 2 of this act expires September 1, 2004. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 18th day of July, 2001.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black
Speaker of the House of Representatives
s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor
Approved 12:21 p.m. this 28th day of July, 2001

APPENDIX O: HOUSE BILL 642

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2007

HOUSE BILL 642

Short Title: Amend Comm. Coll. Performance Measures. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Tolson; Alexander, England, Howard, Parmon, E. Warren, and Wray.

Referred to: Education, if favorable, Ways and Means.

March 15, 2007

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT AMENDING THE LAW RELATING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PERFORMANCE MEASURES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 115D-31.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ **115D-31.3. Performance—budgeting. Institutional performance accountability.**

(a) Creation of Accountability Measures and Performance Standards. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall create new accountability measures and performance standards ~~to be used for performance budgeting~~ for the Community College System. Survey results shall be used as a performance standard only if the survey is statistically valid. The State Board of Community Colleges shall review annually the accountability measures and performance standards to ensure that they are appropriate for use in ~~performance budgeting~~ recognition of successful institutional performance.

(b) through (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2000-67, s. 9.7, effective July 1, 2000.

(e) Mandatory Performance Measures. – The State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on the following ~~12~~ eight performance standards:

- (1) Progress of basic skills students,
- (2) Passing rate for licensure and certification examinations,
- (3) ~~The proportion of those who complete their goal,~~
- (4) ~~Employment status of graduates,~~

- ~~(5)~~(3) Performance of students who transfer to ~~the university system, a~~
four-year institution,
- ~~(6)~~(4) Passing rates in developmental courses,
- ~~(7)~~(5) Success rates of developmental students in subsequent
college-level courses,
- ~~(8)~~(6) The level of satisfaction of students who complete programs and
those who do not complete programs,
- ~~(9)~~(7) Curriculum student retention and graduation, and
- ~~(10)~~ Employer satisfaction with graduates,
- ~~(11)~~(8) Client satisfaction with customized ~~training, and~~training.
- ~~(12)~~ Program enrollment.

The State Board may also evaluate each college on additional performance measures.

(f) Publication of Performance Ratings. – Each college shall publish its performance on the ~~12~~ eight measures set out in subsection (e) of this section (i) annually in its electronic catalog or on the Internet and (ii) in its printed catalog each time the catalog is reprinted.

The Community Colleges System Office shall publish the performance of all colleges on all ~~12 measures in its annual Critical Success Factors Report.~~eight measures.

~~(g) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Successful Institutional Performance.~~ – For the purpose of ~~For the purpose of performance budgeting, recognition for successful institutional performance,~~ the State Board of Community Colleges shall evaluate each college on ~~six performance measures. These six shall be the five set out in subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (e) of this section and one selected by the college from the remainder set out in subdivisions (6) through (11).~~the eight performance measures. For each of these ~~six~~ eight performance measures on which a college performs successfully, ~~successfully or attains the standard of significant improvement,~~ the college may retain and carry forward into the next fiscal year ~~one-third of one percent (1/3 of 1%)~~one-fourth of one percent (1/4 of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations. If a college demonstrates significant improvement on a measure that has been in use for three years or less, the college may also carry forward one-fourth of one percent (1/4 of 1%) of its final fiscal year General Fund appropriations for that measure.

~~(h) Performance Budgeting; Recognition for Superior Exceptional Institutional Performance.~~ – Funds not allocated to colleges in accordance with subsection (g) of this section shall be used to reward ~~superior exceptional institutional~~ institutional performance. After all State aid budget obligations have been met, the State Board of Community Colleges shall distribute the remainder of these funds

equally to colleges that perform successfully on ~~at least five of the six~~eight performance ~~measures~~measures and meet the following criteria:

- (1) The passing rate on all reported licensure and certification examinations must meet or exceed seventy percent (70%) for first-time test takers; and
- (2) The percentage of college transfer students with a grade point average of at least 2.0 after two semesters at a four-year institution must equal or exceed the performance of students who began college at that four-year institution.

The State Board may withhold the portion of funds for which a college may qualify as an exceptional institution while the college is under investigation by a State or federal agency or if its performance does not meet the standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the State Auditor's Office, or the State Board of Community Colleges. The State Board may release the funds at such time as the investigations are complete and the issues are resolved.

(i) Permissible Uses of Funds. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section shall be used for the purchase of equipment, initial program start-up costs including faculty salaries for the first year of a program, and one-time faculty and staff bonuses. These funds shall not be used for continuing salary increases or for other obligations beyond the fiscal year into which they were carried forward. These funds shall be encumbered within 12 months of the fiscal year into which they were carried forward.

(j) Use of funds in low-wealth counties. – Funds retained by colleges or distributed to colleges pursuant to this section may be used to supplement local funding for maintenance of plant if the college does not receive maintenance of plant funds pursuant to G.S. 115D-31.2, and if the county in which the main campus of the community college is located:

- (1) Is designated as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county in accordance with G.S. 105-129.3;
- (2) Had an unemployment rate of at least two percent (2%) above the State average or greater than seven percent (7%), whichever is higher, in the prior calendar year; and
- (3) Is a county whose wealth, as calculated under the formula for distributing supplemental funding for schools in low-wealth counties, is eighty percent (80%) or less of the State average.

Funds may be used for this purpose only after all local funds appropriated for maintenance of plant have been expended."

SECTION 2. This act is effective when it becomes law.

APPENDIX P: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board
East Carolina University
Ed Warren Life Sciences Building • 600 Moye Boulevard • LSB 104 • Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb
Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: L. Wiley Nifong, MD
Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

TO: John Black, Dept. of Educational Leadership, ECU
FROM: UMCIRB
DATE: April 28, 2008
RE: Expedited Category Research Study
TITLE: "The Interpretive Process of North Carolina Community College Developmental Education Policy at the Local College"

UMCIRB #08-0324

This research study has undergone review and approval using expedited review on 4/23/08. This research study is eligible for review under an expedited category because it is a collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes and it is research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.). Dr. S. McCammon deemed this **unfunded** study **no more than minimal risk** requiring a continuing review in **12 months**. Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The above referenced research study has been given approval for the period of 4/23/08 to 4/22/09. The approval includes the following items:

- Dissertation Proposal
- Internal Processing Form
- Consent Document—Staff Interviews
- Consent Document—Administrator Interviews
- Cover Letter to Community College President
- Site Visit Plan
- Cover Letter to Coordinator of Developmental Education
- Interview Protocol

Dr. S. McCammon does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies under the Food and Drug Administration regulation. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.