Remedial Education Report
Prepared for Mark Nook, Senior Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs
April 2013

Introduction
In February 2013, Senior Vice President Mark Nook appointed an internal team to review current documents regarding remedial education in the UW System. The group’s main objective was to anticipate questions that may be asked by the Regents (and possibly by legislators, campuses and the public) regarding remedial education in the UW System. The group’s work was limited to remedial education within the UW System with a focus on the implications of the 2012 remedial education report. The group was not asked nor expected to develop or recommend policy. In other words, the group focused on what was and is, not on what should be, remedial education policy and practice.

The Remedial Education group was led by Terry Brown, interim Senior Special Assistant, Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. The members included Jing Chen, Research Analyst, Office of Policy and Research; Jeff Kosloske, Senior Facilities Architect, Office of Capital and Budget Planning; Lynn Paulson, Assistant Vice President, Office of Budget and Planning; Dennis Rhodes, Program and Policy Analyst; Diane Treis Rusk, Administrative Program Specialist, Academic, Faculty and Global Programs; Artanya Wesley, Senior Systems Academic Planner, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Jim Wollack, Director, Testing and Evaluation Services, UW Madison. Each member of the group brought a valuable perspective and expertise to the discussions.

The group met face to face on February 12, 19, 26 and March 11, and communicated and shared documents via the social network Yammer to discuss the 2012 remedial education report and Board of Regents policy. Discussions raised a number of questions captured in a group brainstorming exercise. This report reflects answers to the questions that were raised and includes questions that remain unanswered and issues that may need to be addressed. The body of this report addresses the following questions:

1. What is the policy that requires the preparation of this report for the Regents?
2. When did we begin preparing these reports?
3. How have placement tests, scores, policies changed at UW institutions since 1990?
4. How is tuition handled for remedial college courses? What is the cost of remedial education to institutions? What is the cost to students?
5. How does Wisconsin / UWS compare to other states on the percentage of post-baccalaureate students requiring remedial education?
Background & History of Remedial Education Policy

What is the policy that requires the preparation of this report for the Regents?

The current Board of Regents policy 4-8 was originally adopted in November 1988 and revised in November 1991. The policy appears to have been the culmination of debates regarding basic college skills that go back to the 1970s, shortly after merger, according to the minutes of Board of Regents meetings. The decades-long discussions on the issues of remedial education (at times referred to as “basic skills” or “college skills”) have echoed with repeated themes and concerns about access and equity, quality and rigor, consistency across the System versus autonomy of institutions. A summary of the Board’s discussion and relevant UWSA communications on these issues follows.

5/7/1976 Board of Regents Meeting
An informational report presented by a UW Madison Professor of English William Lenahan on the UW English Placement Exam raises a number of concerns, issues and themes that would be repeated in future discussions for the next three decades. The Regents discuss who is to “blame” for students requiring assistance in meeting college level skills, debating whether it is the responsibility of secondary schools or the Schools of Education that prepare the teachers at those schools.

Between 1976 and 1979, a task force appears to have been charge to address the issues raised in this discussion.

3/9/1979 Board of Regents Meeting
Preliminary report of the System Basic Skills Task Force chaired by Professor Lenahan identifies five recommendations that form the guiding assumptions and principles in our current remedial policy. Institutions should:

1. Offer “compensatory instruction” in order to include not exclude “disadvantaged students”;
2. Improve communication between school teachers and college faculty about college level skills;
3. Use English and math placement tests “to assess competencies and to place students accurately” according to their skill level;
4. Recognize that “compensatory instruction” is essential to each university’s mission and “additional funding should be sought” to support such instruction;
5. Emphasize importance of faculty development and curricular reform in delivering high quality and effective “compensatory instruction.”

6/8/1979 Board of Regents Meeting
Final report of the System Basic Skills Task Force with extended discussion ensuing. A UW Madison professor spoke in opposition to the report raising concerns about the “costs of implementation, the diversion of faculty from other tasks in order to teach basic skills, and whether there are not other ways to ensure that entering freshmen possess the necessary basic skills.” Another Madison professor counters by saying that “if entering students have not received the education they should have, the faculty is ready and able to teach them.”
The Regents have an impassioned discussion about the gap between a college’s expectations and the preparation of high school graduates. One Regent states that he would “not support any program that would sacrifice a current generation of students who have not been properly educated in the elementary and secondary schools and therefore are lacking in basic skills through no fault of their own.” For the first time, the issue of returning adults is raised when one Regent notes that “not all of the students who come to the University System are Wisconsin high school graduates [as] there were incoming freshman who have been out of school for some time.” One Regent states that “without question this is one of the most important reports submitted to the Regents in a long time.”

It appears that as a result of these discussions, the System creates a Basic Skills Council to address many of the issues raised by the task force report.

6/5/1980 Board of Regents Meeting
Memorandum from UWS President Robert O’Neil appointing the UW System Basic Skills Council (later called the College Skills Council) and describing its charge in detail with extensive responsibilities. The Council is composed of representatives from the UW System, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, and a private college in Wisconsin. The central responsibility of the Council is “to integrate a diverse range of statewide activities and to provide a measure of synthesis and direction” on basics skills in English and mathematics.

3/5/1982 Board of Regents Meeting
Vice President Katherine Lyall reports her intention to charge the College Skills Council to “prepare a statement of Systemwide expectations of competencies for students applying for admission and to make recommendations regarding the dissemination of such a statement.”

7/16/1982 Board of Regents Meeting
Responding to continued concerns about the gap between high school preparation of graduates and college expectations of incoming students, Vice President Lyall reports to the Board regarding a memo she sent to campuses requesting that “each institution review and assess the adequacy of its present materials and methods of communicating the competencies it expects of entering students to counselors, parents, and to high school students themselves.” The memo includes “a general statement regarding expected competencies, prepared by the System College Skills Council . . . to serve as a possible guide for more detailed consideration by individual institutions.” A very interesting discussion ensues.

Several Regents are frustrated by how general the statement is. Regent Grover “considered the document prepared by the College Skills Council clearly inadequate, in view of his understanding of the charge the Council was to be given, which was to draw up a specific list of expected competencies in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics.” He states emphatically, “It seems to me that, when we have one out of four of our entering students requiring some remedial work, we have an obligation to communicate to students and parents what is expected of an entering college freshman in the System, with some specificity and with a unified statement.”
Regent Grover states: “We have a System, and it would seem to me that we would expect young people to be brought to a level of competency in fundamental preparation, regardless of the institution they are going to in our System. In that sense, I think it ought to be a System expectation, not a campus expectation. Obviously, there ought to be campus input.” Later he says in frustration and with passion that merger is pointless if we can’t accomplish agreement on what are basic college skills. “I led the fight for merger on the Assembly floor, and it would seem to be that we could accomplish these kinds of things, that this does not in any way interfere with faculty governance or admissions standards.” In deferring to individual campuses, the College Skills Council “instead of delivering one message, at least is heading in the direction of delivering 15 different messages.”

There does not appear to be discussion of college skills or remedial education in the minutes of the Board of Regents until June 1988. However, another task force appears to have been appointed to develop a “detailed statement” on expectations for college level math and English skills.

6/10/1988 Board of Regents Meeting
Report of the Task Force on Remedial Education, chaired by UW Milwaukee dean William Halloran, presented to the Board of Regents by Vice President Trani recommends a “detailed statement of the college-level skills and competencies students are expected to have in English and mathematics.”

11/11/1988 Board of Regents Meeting
Informed by the recommendations of the Task Force and UWS President Shaw’s eloquent statement of support, the Board adopts Res. 5088 establishing UW System policy on remedial education. The policy establishes that:

- students may be placed in remedial courses based on placement test scores; remedial courses will not generate credit;
- the faculty of the institution will have control over the content, standards and methods of instruction;
- students enrolled in remedial courses cannot take more than 12 credits; institutions will provide annual reports on remedial placements; remedial courses will be offered on a fee recovery basis;
- the UW System “shall develop a detailed statement of the minimum college-level skills and competencies students are expected to have in English and mathematics”;
- UWS will work with Wisconsin DPI to develop “a plan for assessing English and mathematics skills of high school students through the state.”

The policy also states that “students who score above the UW System-established level* on the ‘ACT’ mathematics and English subtests are expected to have a high probability of success in college-level courses and may be exempted from further testing.” The asterisk indicates the following note:
“Determined by the UW System Working Group made up of faculty from UW institutions.”

The discussion of the policy raises a concern about the funding structure. UW Madison Professor Phyllip Nystrand appeared before the Board in opposition to the report. Professor Nystrand expressed concern that the fee recovery funding model in which “only money recovered through fees would be used to pay
for teaching personnel” might compel an institution to hire less than qualified instructors in order to keep the cost of instruction low. “If earmarked dollars were the only funds that could be used to hire instructional personnel, funding might not be sufficient to hire well-qualified instructors.” UW System President Shaw agreed that “the program should be monitored with this concern in mind.” Other Regents expressed their concern and restated the importance of “careful monitoring” and suggested that “information be provided” in annual reports “as to the qualifications and competence of the instructors teaching remedial courses.”

1/1989
The UW System Working Group on Basic Competencies in Mathematics and English is appointed. The group includes faculty from across the UW System, secondary school teachers, and representatives from DPI. Subcommittees on English composition and on mathematics drafted competency statements with input from secondary school and UW System faculty. The group is charged with creating “a detailed statement” defining college-readiness in English and math. The resulting documents, Basic Competencies in English Composition for College Bound and New College Students and Basic Competencies in Mathematics for College Bound and New College Students, were published in 1991.

The group is also charged with “recommending a UW System-established level on ACT mathematics and English tests which can be used as a first screening for possible exemption from further testing.” In their June 1990 report, the Committee recommends that students with an ACT score of 22 or more on the mathematics or English tests will likely place into college-level courses. Those whose scores are below 22 in the mathematics or English test should be screened further for placement in the appropriate level course. The report explains in detail the methodology for determining that 22 would be the recommended initial screening score.

The group recommends that a standing committee be appointed to periodically review both the statements on expected competencies and the recommended ACT score, arguing that “periodic review is necessary to ensure that the competencies are adjusted to reflect changes in the knowledge base and in the state of applicable technology.”

11/8/91 Board of Regents Meeting
Res. 5957 and 5958
Three years after the adoption of the policy on remedial education, the Board approves two changes to the 1988 policy (88-16). Based on data that indicated that students were more likely to graduate if they completed remedial courses early in the college career, the Board adopted Res. 5957 requiring students “to complete successfully the necessary remedial courses prior to completion of 30 credits” and gives institutions the ability to grant exceptions based on clearly documented reasons. Res. 5958 eliminated the limiting of students in remedial courses to a total of 12 credits as data indicated the policy was having a negative impact on time to degree.

9/10/1992 Memo from Stephen Portch, Sr VPAA to Vice Chancellors
Sr. Vice President Portch writes to Vice Chancellors (i.e., provosts) with concerns about the “considerable variation in the assessment of students for placement in remedial coursework” and concerns that institutions had not implemented the recommendations of the UWS Working Group on
Basic Competencies “that a score of 22 on both the ACT Mathematics and the ACT English tests be used in initial screening for remediation.” Portch states that if the institutions cannot account for the variation among the UW System institutions, then they would have to consider one of three approaches: 1) A System definition for remedial placement; 2) revisiting “with vigor” the ACT of 22 as a screening score; or 3) adopting “an existing model from one of the UW System institutions which use the ACT for screening and a UW test for placement based on a range of scores.”

11/5/1993 Report to the UWS Board of Regents on Remedial Education in the UW System
Discussion of the 1993 remedial education report to Board of Regents acknowledges questions raised about the variation in placement methods among institutions in the UW System:

    Although this issue and the issue of how institutions define remedial courses have been raised in the past, they have not been addressed in a systematic way. Therefore, Senior vice President Portch and the Vice Chancellors have agreed to a two-step approach to addressing these issues: 1) A working group, made up of UW English and mathematics faculty, will be appointed and charged with reviewing the remedial education policy and the current remedial placement practices and courses offered by the institutions, and recommending solutions to address the issues. 2) In the case that this group is unable to agree on viable solutions in a timely manner, outside consultants will be invited to recommend ways to address the issues.

According to the minutes of the 1993 Board of Regents meeting, the Education committee “concluded that the variation among institutions in cut-off scores identifying students for remediation is too broad, and that priority should be given to narrowing the range, particularly in view of the fact that students must pay for remedial course work.”

Portch appoints the UWS Remedial Education Placement Working Group in Mathematics and the UWS Remedial Education Placement Working Group in English and charges the groups to review and make recommendations regarding” the criteria for identifying students who need remedial work, and in particular for an appropriate range of ‘cut’ scores on various placement tests.”

12/5/1994 Board of Regents Meeting
The reports of the UWS Remedial Education Placement Working Groups in Mathematics and in English are presented to the Board of Regents. The report on mathematics concludes that “a variation in percentage of remedial students at different institutions is justified by the differing missions and the differing student bodies at System campuses. On the other hand, the Working Group believes that the lack of uniformity and System-wide rationale behind the wider variation in remedial criteria cannot be justified in this way. Hence the Working Group urges a more uniform method for determining remedial placement.” The report describes in detail an alternative, more uniform method for determining remedial placement.

Much briefer than the report on mathematics, the report on remedial placement in English points out that the distinction between remedial and entry-level courses in English are more difficult to define than in mathematics. The report proposed seven recommendations “intended to bring greater consistency
and a common rationale to remedial English placement procedures across the System, and to ensure that all students receive adequate preparation for college-level work at the institution they attend.”

2/7/97 Board of Regents Meeting
Res. 7382
Recognizing that the percent of students enrolling in remedial education has steadily declined since the implementation of the 1988 policy, the Board changes the reporting requirement from one to three years with Res. 7382.

11/2001
In November 2001, the Office of Internal Audit prepares a program review of UW Remedial Education Policies based on research conducted over two years. The 2001 report reviewed the “implementation status” of the UW System policy on remedial education. The 26-page report focused on areas relevant to the policy and made nine recommendations listed verbatim below:

1. Continue to develop plans for assessing the English and math skills of high school students throughout the state;
2. Review the use of uniform scoring methodology for the English assessment and ensure UW System institutions establish appropriate performance criteria for both math placement tests;
3. Review recommendations by the 1994 work groups on placement and determine whether a more consistent method for remedial placement can be achieved;
4. Re-examine whether other, non-English or non-math developmental courses will be considered remedial courses for funding purposes;
5. Clarify the extent to which indirect costs of remedial education may be recovered, the appropriate level of and uses for remedial reserves, and whether non-resident students’ remedial fees should be assessed at the non-resident or resident rate;
6. Develop program evaluation requirements to be incorporated into RPD 88-16 or establish administrative guidelines to provide evaluation guidance to the UW institutions;
7. Communicate performance criteria to secondary schools and disseminate and explain assessment and placement policies through a variety of media;
8. Track whether new freshman have taken placement tests, enrolled in appropriate remedial courses, and completed remedial work before earning 30 credits;
9. Examine remedial course grades, entry-level English and math grades, and other relevant information to help assess whether successful completion of remedial coursework is providing adequate preparation for entry-level coursework.

The November 2001 UW Remedial Education Policies report is not available on the UWSA Office of Internal Audit website with other program review reports. The extent to which the report was distributed and the recommendations addressed is unknown. There have not been any other reports on remedial education since 2001.
Remedial Education Reports, 1991-2009

When did UW System begin preparing these reports?

From 1991 to 1997, the UW System Administration presented its report annually to the Board of Regents, typically at the November or December meeting. In 1997, the reporting cycle changed to every three years. The organization of the report has not changed substantially over twenty years. It has reported the percentages of UW System new freshmen placing into and completing remediation, the demographic characteristics of those placing into remediation, and the retention rates of students who require (and complete) remediation versus those who do not require remediation. Throughout the years, the remedial education reports consistently underscore the message that “remediation does make a difference.” Students who complete remediation are likely to be retained at rates that are the same as those who do not need remediation, and “significantly higher” than those students who need remediation but do not complete remedial course work.

From 1991 to 2003, the remedial education report indicates a slow but steady decline and then leveling off of the numbers of students who are required to take remedial education. In 2006, however, the Regents note with concern an increase in the numbers of students requiring math remediation. Regent Salas suggests that “the board receive reports more frequently than ever three years.” In response, Senior Vice President Cora Marrett states that the report “could be provided to the board more often than at three-year intervals.” In 2009, there is more extensive discussion of the remedial report in the Regents Education Committee and full board than previous years. Noting concern about the increasing numbers of students placing into remedial math and English, Regent Evers asks for an explanation. Associate Vice President Wilhelm describes “the policy change that took place in 2000, thus accounting for a dip and then a steady rise in the numbers of students needing remediation. Senior Vice President Martin explained the periodic review of remedial cut-off scores that took place at the institutions to help ensure student success in the credit-bearing courses following remedial work.” (The next section on the background and history of placement testing in the UW System explains in detail the change in placement testing policy and practice in 2000 that AVP Wilhelm may be referring to.)

Background and History of Placement Testing

How have placement tests, scores, policies changed at UW institutions over time?

Since the data in the UW System Remedial Education report measures students who are placed by their campus into remedial math and / or English courses, it is very important to understand the placement testing policy and process in the UW System and at individual institutions. Placement testing in the UW System began in the mid-1970s with the creation of an English placement test. Created by English faculty, the test was designed to evaluate a student’s skills in usage, sentence correction, and reading comprehension. The first math placement test was administered a decade later in 1984 and was designed to evaluate a student’s pre-calculus math skills in various levels of algebra and trigonometry.

From the beginning of placement testing in the UW System, the Office of Testing and Evaluation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison played a leadership role in developing, validating and interpreting the
test and data. Currently, the Center for Placement Testing, located within the School of Education on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, oversees and administers System-wide placement tests in math, English, and in three foreign languages. The Center convenes five committees of UW System faculty to develop content and review each placement test. Funding for the Center is provided through an assessment to each campus, regardless of the extent to which they use the Center’s services. The assessment is based on the size of the campus’s incoming class as a proportion of the entire UW System incoming class. In FY14, the per-student fee will be $18.21. The director of the Center for Placement Testing reports to the provost at UW Madison, and an advisory board, chaired by the provost, oversees the center’s budget. The advisory board is comprised of six UW System provosts, a representative from the University of Wisconsin System Administration, and the chairs of the five placement test committees.

While the general content of the math and English placement tests have not changed substantially since the 1970s and 1980s, there have been a few significant changes in the administration of the tests since the implementation of the Regents policy in 1990. There have been three significant changes in the Math Placement Test (MPT). Before 2000, each campus combined sub-scores on the placement test in its own way in order to determine a student’s placement. As a result, students who transferred between institutions often had to retake the placement test. In 2000, UW System institutions adopted a uniform method of combining sub-scores in four areas (elementary algebra, intermediate algebra, college algebra, and trigonometry), although students were not required to complete every section of the test, which caused confusion. In 2002, the four sections of the test were shortened, resulting in every student being asked to complete all sections. In 2005, the intermediate algebra and college algebra subscores were combined into single algebra subscore, content across the remaining subtests was realigned, and all three sections were re-normed. The resulting test produced the sub-scores for math basic (MBSC), algebra (ALG) and trigonometry (TRIG) that continue to this day.

The English placement test has also changed somewhat over time. Until 1999, the Center for Placement Testing reported two scores for each test taker, an English Placement Test (EPT) score and a Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) score, while in practice campuses generally gave more weight to the EPT. In 2000, the Center for Placement Testing began publishing the English Composite Score (ECS), which was a combination of the English Placement Test and Reading Comprehension Test. In 2002, the test was shortened and re-normed, creating the ENGL score. A reading subscore, READ, is also provided.

While every test taker receives a sub-score in each area, there is significant variation among campuses as to which sub-scores are considered in placing a student. There are no two campuses in the UW System that use the same method for determining placement into remedial math and English. Indeed, not all institutions use the UWS math placement and English placement test scores. (Two institutions use ACT sub-scores.) Of those institutions that use the MPT and EPT, none apply the same cutoff scores. According to the Center for Placement Testing, the variation among institutions is such that if the cutoff score for one of the comprehensive institutions were used to place all the students who took the math placement test, about 4% of the UW System incoming class would be required to take remedial math. If the cutoff score for another comprehensive institution were used, over 40% would be required to take remedial math. Differences in institutional mission do not appear to explain this
variance. Given the significance of the variation, there may a system-wide interest, as there was in the 1980s and 1990s, in determining how campuses arrive at cutoff scores and which academic departments participate in their development. To the extent that remedial placement has implications for students' broader educational goals, broad input in decisions concerning placement criteria may be justified.

**Remedial Education Funding**

*How is tuition handled for remedial college courses? What is the cost of remedial education to institutions? What is the cost to students?*

Board of Regents policy directs that remedial education courses be self-supporting: “all remedial courses in the University of Wisconsin System shall be offered on a fee recovery basis.” Thus, tuition must be set at a level that fully covers the costs of the instruction and related services. Section A.9 Remedial Course Fees of Financial Administration Tuition and Fee Policies for Credit Instruction (F44) states the following:

*In accordance with Regent Policy 4-8, remedial education courses shall be offered on a fee recovery basis. Remedial education shall be operated out of Fund 136. If a student is taking both remedial and regular credits, Fund 131 and Fund 136 shall share proportionately in the fee revenue based upon the number of credits (pro rata basis). A part-time student will pay the remedial rate times the number of remedial credits plus the per credit rate times the number of regular credits. The maximum charge for a student taking both remedial and regular credits is the full-time rate up to the plateau. Segregated fees shall be assessed on a per credit basis, including remedial credits if a student is less than full-time. In accordance with Regent Policy 4-8, each institution shall determine the appropriate credit load for its remedial education students.*

The Office of Internal Audit in its November 2001 program review of UW Remedial Education policies found a variety of fee assessment policies and practices at institutions in the UW System. The report states that “the differences in the application of the policy, as well as the equity questions raised by some institutions’ assessment of remedial fees to non-residents at the resident rate, suggest that the fee policy be reviewed.: The report continues to recommend that the UW System “examine the policy on fees for remedial education and provide guidance on : 1) the extent to which indirect costs may be recovered; 2) the appropriate level of and uses for remedial fee reserves; and 3) whether non-resident students’ remedial fees should be assessed at the non-resident or resident rate.” The status of these recommendations is unknown at this time.

The 2001 audit addresses the issue of the cost of remedial education to institutions, stating that “it has been suggested that remedial education costs relatively little to maintain, unlike other programs that may require full professors and expensive technology.” The report concludes that “the UW System has minimized its costs by offering remedial education programs on a fee recovery basis.” According to policy, the cost of remedial education must be covered by the tuition that is collected from enrolled students.
What is the cost of remedial education to the students? We do not have sufficient, reliable financial information in order to answer this question. However, we know that in fall 2012, 11,013 UW System students were enrolled in remedial English or math. We could derive a “guestimate” of the cost of a three-credit course using the average per credit tuition for UW institutions. But that would only give us an estimate.

Remedial Education in the National Context

*How does the University of Wisconsin System compare to other states on the percentage of college students requiring remedial education?*

It is difficult to compare the numbers reported in the UWS report to national numbers as there are many ways of calculating and reporting the percentage of college students in remediation. For example, Complete College America measures students who enroll in remedial math only, students who enroll in remedial English only, and students who enroll in both remedial math and English in order to derive the total number of students enrolling in any remedial course. The UW System remedial education report, however, reports students requiring math remediation, students requiring English, and students requiring both English and Math. It does not provide the total proportion of students who are required to take any remedial courses in the UW system. However, at the request of this internal group, OPAR has since calculated the total number of students in the UW System (which includes four-year and two-year campuses) as ranging between 23.5% to 24.6% since 2007.

As a point of rough national comparison, the National Conference of State Legislators in its brief *Improving College Completion* (January 2011) states that “thirty-four percent of all students at public colleges and universities enroll in at least one remedial course,” citing research by the Education Commission of the States. According to Complete College America’s report on remedial education in the United States, “nearly 20 percent of those entering four-year universities are placed in remedial classes.” In line with the national average, slightly more than 21% of students entering four-year
campuses in the UW System in fall 2012 were placed in remedial classes, according to OPAR data. Given that about 25% of new students in the UW System are required to take remedial education, it might be argued that the UW System is generally in line with national estimates. Diane Tries Rusk developed a very helpful comparison of the UW System Remedial Education Report and the Complete College America’s Remedial Education: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere. The comparison is included at the end of this report.

Observations
The staff of the Office of Policy and Review has invested significant time in preparing the UW System Remedial Education Report through the years, responding to and adapting the report to the requests of the Regents. The report provides two decades of valuable data on the retention and graduation rates of students in remedial math and English. However, the group noted that the report presents aggregate data on students who are required to take remedial math and English at all UW institutions (except UW Madison which does not offer remedial courses) although institutions use different methods of placement.

For two decades the report has included the Board of Regents policy on remedial education as the first appendix. A careful reading of the current policy raised some questions. First, the policy states clearly that by October 1989, the UW System “shall develop a detailed statement of the minimum college-level skills and competencies students are expected to have in mathematics and English upon entrance to the University.” While the group was not aware of the existence of such a statement, subsequent research has located the statements which were published in 1991. Second, the policy refers to “the University of Wisconsin System established level on the ACT mathematics and English subtests.” Again, although the group was not aware of it, we have recently discovered documents indicating that an ACT subscore of 22 was recommended as indicating a student should be evaluated further through placement testing. Finally, it is unclear how campuses are enforcing the policy that students should be required to take remedial courses before completing 30 credits.

The final section of the 2012 Report on Remedial Education in the UW System summarizes “efforts to reduce remediation and promote student success at UW institutions.” It is evident that across the UW System, institutions are engaging promising practices that align with national reform efforts, such as alternative delivery of remedial courses, curricular redesign, innovative pedagogical approaches such as self-paced, computer-based instruction, and supplemental instruction and advising. Many campuses are offering free instruction at the beginning of the semester to reinforce a student’s foundational skills in math. Programs such as these run for a few weeks and end with the administration of a retest form of the math placement test. Implemented in 2009, the Early Math Placement Tool program is a System-wide, promising practice, that gives students in high school the opportunity to take a shortened version of the math placement test in their junior year for free in order to get an early gauge of their math skills and receive feedback about both their level of preparation, as well as the mathematics requirements for different fields of study. During the 2010-2011 academic year, 8,834 students participated in the program, a nearly 35% increase over the previous year. The Early Math Placement Tool aligns with the
recommendation by Complete College America to “administer college-ready anchor assessments in high school, and use them to develop targeted interventions before students fall too far behind.”

Yet in spite of innovative interventions and initiatives on individual campuses, it is difficult to conclude that the UW System Board of Regents policy has substantially changed the landscape of remedial education in the UW System over more than twenty years. In the late 1980s when the policy was adopted, one in four students entering the UW System was required to take a remedial course in math or English. There was a troubling lack of alignment between the expectations of UW institutions for students entering college and the expectations of Wisconsin high schools. There was significant variation among UW institutions in the evaluation and placement of incoming students into remedial coursework. Finally, the funding model for remedial education created a financial strain for institutions that found themselves redirecting resources from college-level instruction to remedial instruction designed to “compensate” for what students should have learned in high school. Nearly twenty-five years after the adoption of the Board of Regents remedial education policy, remedial education in the UW System has changed slightly. Today, one in four students is required to take a remedial course in math or English. Attempts by the UW System to communicate expectations for college readiness in math and English have been lost over the years. However, the Common Core Standards may provide an opportunity for the UW System to engage with our PK12 partners once again to align expectations about what a high school graduate should know and do to be college ready. There continues to be significant variation in the policy and practice of UW institutions with regard to placement testing and assigning students to remedial coursework. Finally, with regard to funding, the cost recovery financial model has shifted the financial burden for remedial education from the institution and state to the students themselves.

**Questions yet to be answered**
The following questions were raised by the group but were either beyond the scope of our work or were questions we were unable to answer.

**Policy and Practice**
The group had questions related to policy and practice that had they could not answer with existing reports.

1. Why does the level of the first credit-bearing course differ across UW System institutions?
2. What is the role of the CCSS in determining whether courses are remedial or credit-bearing?
3. What institutions within the UW System offer developmental coursework? How many institutions contract this work out to a technical college?
4. How do institutions determine what courses require completion of developmental coursework prior to enrollment in the course? What data and information is used to make these determinations?
5. What institutions within the UW System offer developmental coursework? How many institutions contract this work out to a technical college?
6. What alternatives to credit-based remedial coursework do institutions offer to students, in particular for non-traditional age students or students whose placement scores are on the threshold of requiring remedial coursework?
Data
The group raised a number of questions related to the collection and analysis of data. For example, some UW campuses participated in the EdTrust initiative to track “academic patterns, or leading indicators, of success reveal students’ probability of reaching these milestones and graduating on time.” These campuses analyzed data on completion of developmental coursework to predict student progress toward graduation. Would data from the Leading Indicators project help us understand the remedial issue better? In addition the group asked the following questions:

1. How is success in remedial coursework measured? Grade in course? Subsequent course success?
2. What evidence do we have the campus efforts to "ensure the success of students who need remediation" are working?
3. What is the mean credit load in the first and second semester of study for students who are also enrolled in developmental Math, English/Reading, or both?
4. What is the mean proportion remedial credit-load, in the first and second semester of study, for students who are also enrolled in developmental Math, English/Reading, or both?
5. BOR 4-8, Sec. IV (1) states students who are in need of remedial coursework should be required to complete that coursework within the first 30 credits of study. Do those credits include remedial credits? What are the implications for non-remedial course completion rates for students, in particular for students who must repeat remedial coursework?
6. What data exists that links math requirements for given majors to career success in those fields?
7. What high schools and school districts do students requiring remediation come from?

Teaching and Learning
Several questions raised by the internal working group were related to curriculum and student learning outcomes:

1. Are there differences between curricula and success rates among and within institutions? What data exist to explain this variance?
2. How do the learning outcomes acquired in developmental math and college-level math link to prerequisites for future coursework?
3. What impact has modularized math curricula had on time to student entry into courses that have particular math competency prerequisites?
4. How do the learning outcomes in developmental English and reading link to prerequisites for future coursework.
5. How can supplemental instruction in the areas of math, English and writing be used to scaffold student learning in other general education coursework?
6. Research indicates that stereotype threat (the promulgation of unsubstantiated beliefs about the characteristics of a particular group) can negatively impact student academic performance. What impact may stereotype threat have on students who are placed into remedial coursework, in terms of their performance in any college course?
College Preparation
Understanding how middle and high school math and English standards and variances in school district curricula is critical to understanding student placement in remedial coursework, potential gaps in competency, and the impact on student success. A number of questions were posed in this area.

1. What can the Early Math Placement Tool tell us about student preparation?
2. How do middle and high school math and English curricula align with college Math and English Composition curricula?
3. How do variances in access to high school math in middle school, and college-level Math in high school impact student placement into remedial Math or later college-level performance?
4. How will the common core standards impact Math curricula and student college readiness?

Resources

UW System reports
Since the 1970s, there have been many UW System task forces, committees and working groups that have produced reports on remedial education. The reports reflect the work of nearly one hundred faculty and staff, addressing issues and concerns that continue to be relevant today.

- Report of the University of Wisconsin System Task Force on Remedial Education, April 1988

National Reports
There are several national initiatives to address remedial or development education in American schools and colleges. Supported by funding by several major foundations, Complete College America is an initiative launched in 2009 to “work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations.” Emphasizing leadership, measurement, action and innovation, Complete College America has identified six steps for states to take to increase the number of college graduates. One of those steps is to transform remedial education through clarifying what constitutes college readiness for first year students, diverting students from “tradition remedial programs into more customized tiered approaches,” aligning requirements for entry-level college courses with requirements for high school graduation, and administering early, “college-ready anchor” assessments in high school. The following are key reports and briefings on remedial education produced by Complete College America: Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education (December 2012); and Transforming Remedial Education: Essential Steps for States (September 2011). Remedial Education: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere (2012) argues that too many students are placed into the “broken
system of remediation, too few complete remediation, too few complete credit-bearing gateway courses, and too few graduate.

Other national organizations have recently produced reports on remedial education and placement testing. Since 1959, ACT has reported on high school graduates’ academic readiness for college, which they define as “the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing courses” in college. ACT measures “college readiness benchmarks,” or “the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50% change of obtaining a B or higher” in credit-bearing first year college courses. The 2012 report on the Condition of College & Career Readiness by ACT (2012) indicates that 40%-49% of Wisconsin’s 2012 ACT-tested high school graduates Wisconsin met three or four of the college readiness benchmarks.

With support from the Lumina Foundation, the Getting Past Go initiative of the Education Commission of the States is committed to leveraging “state and system policy to increase the college success of the large percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary education who require remedial and developmental education.” The initiative is a resource for comparing state data and policies on remedial education. It has produced several relevant reports including Rebuilding the Remedial Bridge to College Success (May 2010).

While remedial education reform efforts have focused primarily on community colleges, they are nonetheless relevant to both two-year and four-year institutions in the University of Wisconsin System. Established in 2004 with funding from Lumina Foundation, Achieving the Dream is focused on “helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree” by “guiding evidence-based institutional improvement; influencing public policy; generating knowledge; and engaging the public.” Achieving the Dream institutions carefully track cohorts semester to semester, analyzing longitudinal data, disaggregated by race, ethnicity and other characteristics, in order to determine how many students complete the development (or remedial) sequence, advance to credit-bearing, gateway courses, remain enrolled, and complete certificates, degrees, or transfer. (Northeast Wisconsin Technical College is the only participating institution in Wisconsin.) Ahead of the Curve: State Success in the Developmental Education Initiative (December 2012) reports on the work of six states and fifteen community colleges that successfully reformed remedial education policy and practice through data collection, curricular redesign, alignment of expectations with PK12 partners, assessment and evaluation, and equitable funding models. In partnership with the non-profit Jobs for the Future, Achieving the Dream published an important report on the use of placement exams, Where to Begin? The Evolving Role of Placement Exams for Students Starting College (August 2012). The report asserts that “placement exams are weak predictors of success in gateway courses” and “math and English assessments provide at best a narrow picture of students’ readiness for college.”

The Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, has produced important research on remedial education that is often cited in national reports and has generated some debate in the field. A good resource is Designing Meaningful Developmental Reform (February 2013). See also Thomas Bailey, “Rethinking Remedial Education in Community College,” CCRC Brief No.
40 (February 2009); and Judith Scott-Clayton, “Do High Stakes Tests Placement Exams Predict College Success?” CCRC Working Paper No. 41 (February 2012); and Bailey et al., “Characterizing the Effectiveness of Developmental Education: A Response to Recent Criticism” (February 2013).
Appendix A. Tests and Cutoff Scores Used to Determine Math and English Remediation at UW Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Math Test(s) Used</th>
<th>Math Cutoff scores</th>
<th>English Test(s)</th>
<th>English Cutoff scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSN</td>
<td>MPT and (ACT-M and/or SAT-M)</td>
<td>MBSC &lt; 355 and (ACT-M &lt; 21 or SAT-M &lt; 540)</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIL</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>MBSC &lt;= 445 or ALG &lt;= 375 or TRG &lt;= 850</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAU</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>ALG &lt;= 395</td>
<td>EPT and ACT-E</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 374 and ACT-E &lt;= 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBY</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>ALG &lt;= 385 or MBSC &lt;= 375</td>
<td>ACT-E or SAT-E</td>
<td>ACT-E &lt;= 16 or SAT-E &lt;= 440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAX</td>
<td>MPT and ACT-M</td>
<td>MBSC &lt;= 395 and ACT-M &lt;= 20</td>
<td>EPT and ACT-E</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 355 and ACT-E &lt;= 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSH</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>MBSC &lt;= 375 or ALG &lt;= 445</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRK</td>
<td>ACT-M</td>
<td>ACT-M &lt;= 19</td>
<td>ACT-E</td>
<td>ACT-E &lt;= 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLT</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>ALG &lt;= 460</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVF</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>Use a formula to combine MBSC, ALG and TRG</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>EPT &lt; 355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STP</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>MBSC &lt; 346 or (MBSC &lt; 446 and ALG &lt; 346 and TRG &lt; 850)</td>
<td>EPT plus a Writing sample</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO</td>
<td>ACT-M and MPT</td>
<td>ACT-M &lt;= 16, use a formula to combine MBSC, ALG and TRG</td>
<td>ACT-E and EPT</td>
<td>ACT-E &lt;= 16 and EPT &lt;= 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUP</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>MBSC &lt;= 415 or ALG &lt;= 375</td>
<td>EPT or ACT-E or SAT-E</td>
<td>EPT &lt;= 365 or ACT-E &lt;= 18 or SAT-E &lt;= 489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTW</td>
<td>ACT-M or SAT-M</td>
<td>ACT-M &lt;= 18 or SAT-M &lt;= 450</td>
<td>ACT-E or SAT-E</td>
<td>ACT-E &lt;= 16 or SAT-E &lt;= 420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>MBSC &lt;= 395 and ALG &lt;= 850</td>
<td>EPT</td>
<td>(EPT + EPT-Read) &lt; 700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B. Comparison of *Bridge to Nowhere* and UW System Remedial Education Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>To Provide a “snap-shot” and Advocate Know This (Data snapshot)/ /Do This (promising practices)</th>
<th>To Provide Information, Analysis, and Promising practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Four-year and two-year institutions of higher education (including community colleges and technical colleges) across thirty-one states in Complete College America</td>
<td>UW System Institutions, four-year and two-year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study sample</td>
<td>Freshmen (students who entered college) Fall 2006 Cohort -course enrollment and completion Fall 2002 Cohort (4-year) Fall 2004 Cohort (2-year) -graduation</td>
<td>New Freshmen Fall 2008-2010 Cohorts -remedial required, course completed rates Fall 2009 Cohort -require, completed, retained Fall 2005 Cohort -required, completed, graduated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaggregated groups</td>
<td>For enrolled and completed coursework: -race -age -Pell (income)</td>
<td>For required and completed coursework within the first year – disaggregated by: -race ethnicity -age -Pell (income) -gender -HS rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrics</td>
<td>Need Remediation – Students enrolled in remedial coursework (enrolled) Remediation Success – Completed remediation req. (%) within two-years. AND – Completed remediation and associated subsequent coursework (%) within two-years Persistence to Degree – No metrics</td>
<td>Need Remediation – Students placed into remedial coursework (required) Remediation Success – Completed remediation requirements in the first-year (N and %) Persistence to Degree – Retained to second year (% of required)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Conclusions

**Fact + Advocated Solutions**

1. Too many entering freshmen need remediation – Solution: better prepare students for college
2. Most students don’t make it through college-level gateway courses (gateway means remediation and subsequent coursework) – Solution: Provide help as a co-requisite, not a pre-req.
3. Most remedial students never graduate. – Solution: Align co-requisites with programs of study.
4. Does not recognize non-academic factor that may impact completion.

**Fact + Information on Promising Practices**

Conclusions are presented as findings of analyses and articulated as:

1. Associations (e.g. remediation completion is positively related to hs rank)
2. Comparisons (e.g. a higher % of URM students than non-URM students placed into remedial coursework)
3. Success rate pathways analysis (e.g. a significant % of students identified as needing remediation, complete remediation, and of those students, most graduate)
4. Recognizes a number of factors impact completion, among them remediation.
5. Advocates for effort to reduce remediation and promote student success.

### Promising Practices

1. Core graduation requirements.
2. Curricular alignment
3. 11th grade testing
4. 12th grade transitioning programs.
5. Place borderline students in redesigned college-level courses.
6. Redesign remedial coursework.
7. Provide alternative pathways for students with significant academic needs.
8. Obtain major commitment.
9. Place students in correct math.
10. Expand co-req support to other gateway courses.

1. Common Core - State initiatives to standardize learning outcomes
2. Curricular alignment
3. Transition or precollege bridge programs.
4. Remedial course delivery and/or curricular redesign.
5. Supplemental instruction for students in remedial coursework (in many cases extended beyond remedial courses)
6. Development of common learning outcomes and professional development for faculty teaching remedial courses.

### Question...Does the evidence indicate promising practices work?

We don’t know. The CCA data is historical, not current (though they present it as results from states). I presume the promising practices and interventions were

We might know. UWSA report presents current data and current and historical interventions. Therefore, the intervention examples we give may have impacted the same cohort of
developed following analysis of the baseline data. If this is the case, the interventions they discussed would impact later cohorts of students.

Continued...next page

There is limited data regarding the success of the promising practices. Some of the course redesign examples do make statements about outcomes.

students. If we would like to demonstrate potential change, we may want to point out historical data from previous remedial reports. Points to note:

More of the Fall 2009 new freshmen (30338) and a higher percent were required to take remediation than in 2006 (29342).

- Math Remediation course completion rates are improving. Of 2009 cohort, 65% completed requirement within first year, while 57.7% of the 2006 completed requirement w/in first year.

- A greater number of students – but a small percentage of students who completed math remediation were retained (3217 (75.9%) of 2009 vs. 2388 (77%_ 2006)

- Marginal (but positive) completion and retention movement in English.

- Grad rates slightly higher for 2005 cohort needing and completing math than for 2002 cohort (53.7 v. 51.1). Grad rate decreased for English.

There is limited data regarding the success of the promising practices. Some examples do make statements about outcomes.