COLLEGE MILESTONES

ENROLLMENT IN GATEKEEPER MATH BY REFERRAL LEVEL: ACHIEVING THE DREAM

Among first-time credential-seeking students enrolled in Achieving the Dream colleges from fall 2003 to fall 2004 who completed developmental math, percentage who enrolled in a gatekeeper math course within three years, by level of developmental referral.

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students who enrolled in a gatekeeper math course within three years.

Who Is Counted?
First-time credential-seeking students who enrolled in Achieving the Dream colleges from fall 2003 to fall 2004 who were referred to, and completed, developmental math.

What It Tells Us
Overall, about two-thirds (63 percent) of students who completed developmental math enrolled in a gatekeeper math course within three years. Students referred to lower levels of developmental math were more likely to enroll in a gatekeeper math course than students referred to higher level courses. Students referred to developmental math three or more levels below the college level were the most likely to enroll in a gatekeeper math course (68 percent), followed by students referred to a math course two levels below the college level (66 percent) and those referred to a math course one level below the college level (61 percent).

Why It’s Important
A gatekeeper course is the first or lowest-level college-level course students take in a subject such as mathematics, reading, or writing, often following completion of one or more developmental courses in that subject. Most certificate, degree, and transfer programs require students to pass gatekeeper courses in one or more subjects. Yet the largest obstacle to passing gatekeeper courses seems to be that students do not enroll in them. One study found that only 63 percent of those who finished developmental mathematics and 72 percent who finished developmental reading enrolled in gatekeeper courses for those subjects within three years of starting college. However, of those who did enroll, 79 percent passed gatekeeper mathematics and 75 percent passed gatekeeper reading (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010).

ABOUT THE DATA
Gatekeeper courses: colleges chose their own “gatekeeper” courses, but the term was formally defined in the data gathering instructions to the colleges as the first college-level courses the student must take after remediation.


Among the Achieving the Dream institutions, 9 offered one level of developmental math, 9 offered two levels, and 35 offered three or more levels of developmental math. Participating institutions were given the following instructions on how to determine whether a student should be considered referred to remedial math or reading: “Student was referred for remedial needs in mathematics [reading]. Remedial courses are instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsecondary curriculum and educational setting. The student can be referred through a counselor, a developmental office, etc.” Institutions with multiple levels of remedial education were asked to report the level to which the student was initially referred.