COLLEGE MILESTONES
ENROLLMENT IN GATEKEEPER MATH: VIRGINIA

What Is Measured?
Percentage of first-time Virginia Community College students who enrolled in gatekeeper math courses within four years, by math course referral status

Who Is Counted?
First-time students enrolled in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) in the summer or fall 2004 terms

What It Tells Us
Three-quarters (75 percent) of first-time VCCS students who were referred to college-level math enrolled in a gatekeeper math course within four years. Students who were referred to developmental math were less likely to enroll in a gatekeeper math course; however, students who skipped the developmental math course to which they were referred enrolled in a gatekeeper course at a slightly higher rate than those who took the developmental math course (35 percent vs. 31 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 math courses: college-level math courses including MTH105, MTH120, MTH121, MTH126, MTH141, MTH151, MTH158, MTH163, MTH166, MTH173, and MTH271.

Developmental math courses: include Pre-Algebra (MTH01, MTH02, MTH03), Algebra I (MTH03), and Algebra II or higher (MTH04, MTH05, MTH06, and MTH07). First-time college students enrolled in a VCCS college in the summer or fall 2004 terms had no prior college credits other than those earned through high school dual-enrollment programs. Sample includes students in transfer and career tech programs as well as those concurrently enrolled in high school. These students were followed for four years, through the 2008 summer term. Placement recommendations were based on students’ placement test scores, but 36 percent of the students in this group were missing a placement recommendation in math and were excluded from this calculation.

DATA SOURCE
Jenkins, D., Jaggars, S., & Roksa, J. (2009, November). Promoting gatekeeper course success among community college students needing remediation:
Findings and recommendations from a Virginia study (summary report). New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.