

# Using College Placement Reform to Catalyze Institutional Change



# Meet Your Hosts



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# Housekeeping

- Event is being recorded and the recording will be posted online afterward.
- Speaker biographies and slides are available online at [researchforaction.org](https://researchforaction.org).
- Participants, please mute unless speaking.
- Type your **questions** and **comments** into the chat box at any time.
- Please complete the survey at the end of the event.

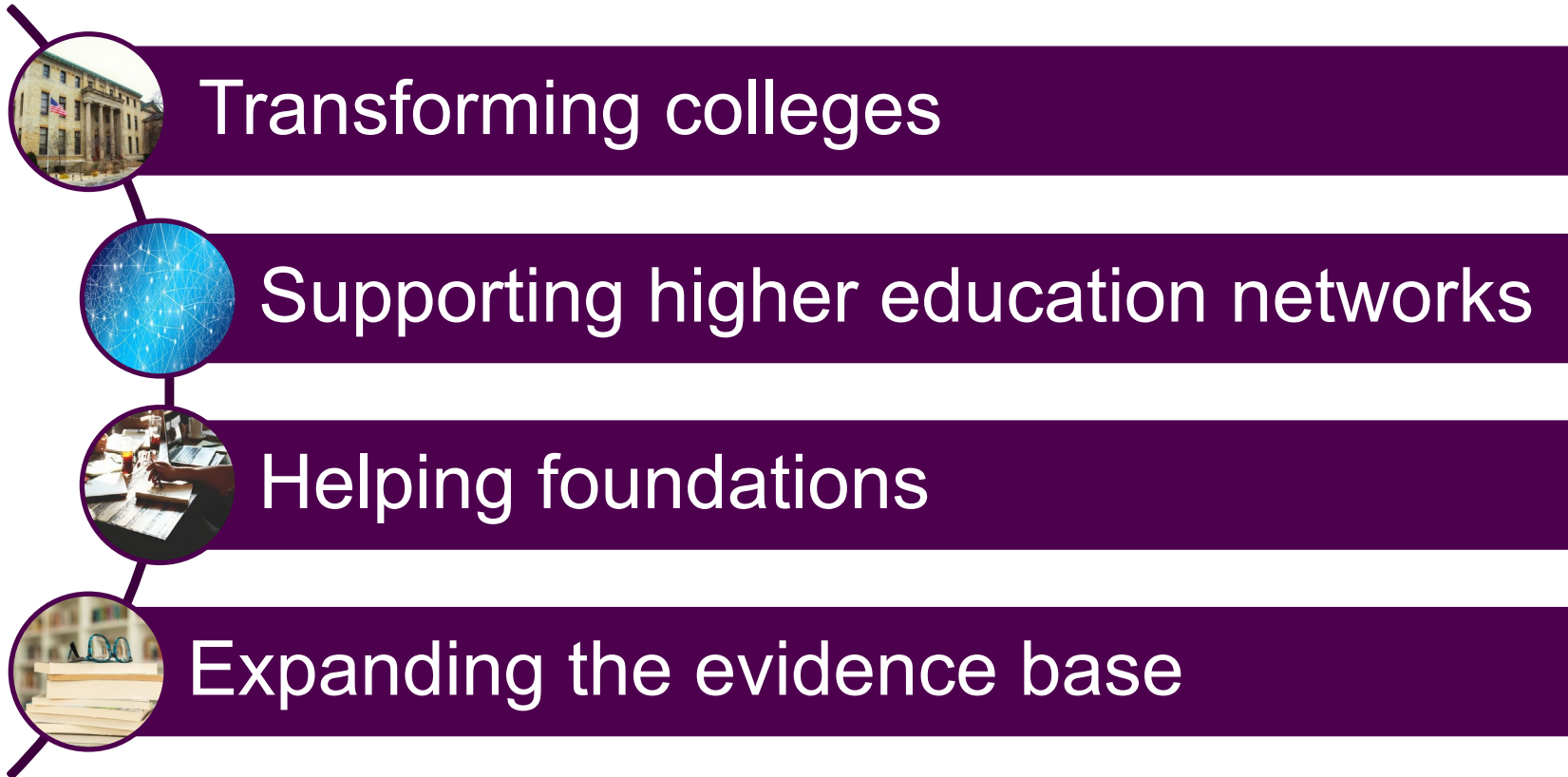
# Using Placement Reform to Catalyze Institutional Change

June 18, 2024

Research for Action + Phase Two Advisory Webinar

# Phase Two Advisory

Turning research into reality, for student success.



# Motivation:

## Equity-forward systems change is never done.

- First-generation developmental education reforms focused on removing barriers to college courses through three distinct groupings of reforms: **placement**, curriculum, and pedagogy.
- Current approaches to placement are better than their forebearers—but remain imperfect.
  - New approaches to placement improve student momentum, although many students continue to be placed in developmental courses and equity gaps—though closing—remain (Hu et al., 2019; Barnett et al., 2020; Kopko, Daniels, & Cullinan, 2023).
  - Placement reforms focused on improved accuracy and reflect inequities within the educational system, therefore continuing to serve as sorting mechanisms that reinforce racial and linguistic stratification.
  - Core institutional functions are not touched, interrogated, or improved by current placement approaches.

# What's next? Placement 2.0

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

What placement approaches are colleges implementing in order to continue to **evolve**, center equity, and improve momentum outcomes for more students?

## SECOND-ORDER INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Can placement approaches be used to **transform** institutional functioning and the student experience, rather than merely be used to improve accuracy?

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# Placement-as-Transformation

Placement-as-Transformation uses the placement process to spur broader institutional improvement efforts in order to accelerate equitable student success.

- Intentionally addresses equity gaps and/or institutional barriers to completion
- Generates structural, behavioral, and normative shifts in college practices
- Creates ripple effects in advising, teaching, support practices, or institutional infrastructure



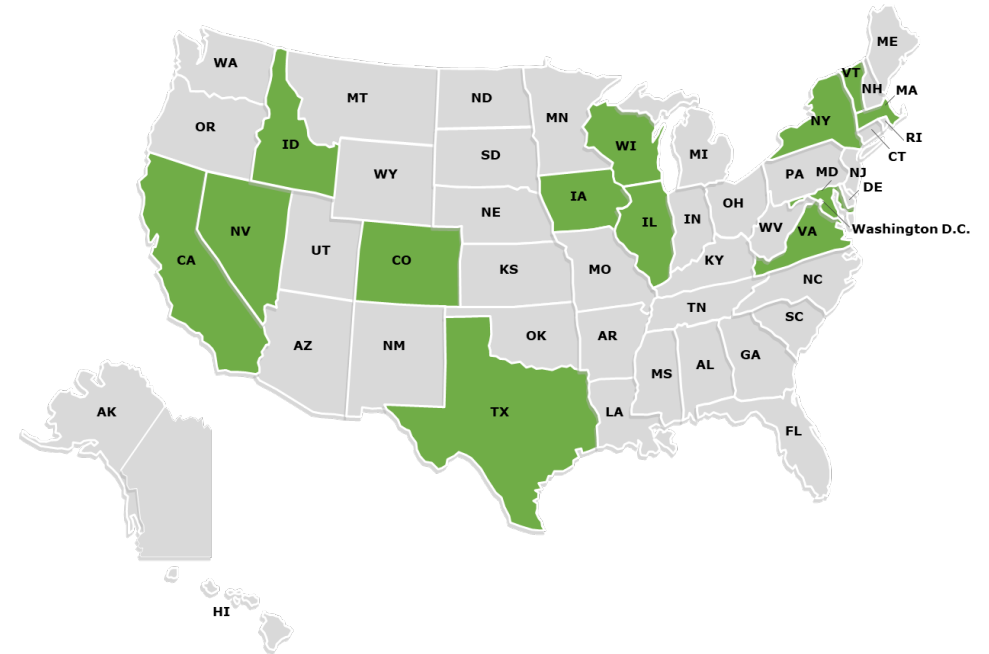
# The Exploratory Study

13 states; 15 broad access institutions

Semi-structured virtual interviews with 47 individuals

Data analysis

- ✓ Identifying new approaches
- ✓ Examining instances of transformation
- ✓ Generating implementation learnings and implications



*This project was funded by Ascendium Education Group.*

*All findings in this presentation are preliminary as of June 2024.*

# Question 1: New “flavors” of placement

## **Reflective Algorithms**

Expansion of multiple measures to include student reflections on academic experiences and/or habits. Relies on algorithmic placement.

5 institutions

## **Guided Self-Placement**

Holistic self-assessment that provides students with information about courses, and then asks about their background, strengths, and academic comfort to enable them to select into a self-identified appropriate course.

4 institutions

## **Diagnostic Just-in-time Support**

Universal access to college-credit courses coupled with intentional provision of tailored support to students identified by themselves or instructors.

3 institutions

## Question 2: Placement-as-Transformation

### Transformation Indicators

- ✓ Intentionally designed to address equity gaps
- ✓ Intentionally addresses completion barriers
- ✓ Extent of structural, behavioral, and/or normative shifts
- ✓ “Tentacles” and subsequent efforts

### Transformation Scale

- ✓ *Substantial*: Multiple indicators, across the institution
- ✓ *Moderate*: Indicators across multiple departments, but not the entire institution
- ✓ *Departmental*: Multiple indicators within a single department
- ✓ *Nascent*: Early evidence of change on multiple indicators, but insufficient to identify transformation of college functioning

# Placement reform can be used as a transformation lever.

Transformative (8)		
IL	N/A	Substantial
WI	Just-in-time	Substantial
CO	Reflective Algorithm	Moderate
IA	Just-in-time	Moderate
NY2	Reflective Algorithm	Moderate
ID	Reflective Algorithm	Departmental
MA	N/A	Departmental
NY1	Reflective Algorithm	Departmental

Non-transformative (7)		
CA2	Reflective Algorithm	Nascent
MD	Guided Self-placement	Nascent
TX	Just-in-time	Nascent
VA	Guided Self-placement	Nascent
VT	Guided Self-placement	Nascent
CA1	Guided Self-placement	None
NV	Guided Self-placement	None

For more information and support,  
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# Becoming “Student-Ready”: Faculty Mindsets in Implementation of Placement Reform



# Agenda

- Motivation
- California context – AB 705 and 1705
- Literature Review
- Methods and Analysis
- Findings



# Motivation

- Developmental Education (DE) is recognized to have failed students; deters students from credential completion
- Racial equity mandate
- Understanding students' experiences in DE reform is critical





# California Context – AB 705 and 1705

- AB 705: passed in 2017, took effect in 2019
  - Targeted placement, requiring colleges to use HS transcript data to “maximize the likelihood that students will enter and complete transfer-level English and math within one year”
  - Expanding transfer-level options and increasing supports, including corequisites
- AB 1705: passed 2022, took effect in 2023
  - Closed perceived loopholes in placement; eliminated most DE courses
- The California Community College system is the largest and most diverse in the nation, with 116 community colleges



# Literature Review

- Lots of evidence that corequisites are effective for both English and math (Boatman 2012; Cho et al. 2012; Jenkins et al. 2010; Logue, Watanabe-Rose, and Douglas 2016; Logue, Douglas, and Watanabe-Rose 2019; Ran and Lin 2019)
- Faculty mindsets matter (Kroeper et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2022, Muenks et al., 2020; Tibbets et al., 2022)
- Equity-mindedness (Bensimon, 2005); student-ready vs. college-ready



# Current Study

- 5-year IES-funded study on the implementation, impact, and cost-effectiveness of developmental education curricular reform in all California community colleges
- RFA is leading the project in partnership with The University of Texas at Austin
- The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A210286 to Research for Action



# Sample

- Sampled 13 colleges according to a Scale of Implementation\*
  - 4 low, 5 mid, and 4 high implementer colleges
- Site visits in fall 2022 and winter 2023
- Data sources:
  - Interviews with 122 faculty and administrators
  - Faculty survey in spring 2024 completed by 126 faculty



# Methods

- Faculty interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded in Dedoose
  - Equity-minded frame vs. deficit-minded frame
- Analyzed in Dedoose comparing responses from faculty at low and high implementing colleges



# Methods

- Deficit cognitive frame: inclined to attribute differences in educational outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, such as lower rates of retention or degree completion, to **“cultural stereotypes, inadequate socialization, or lack of motivation and initiative on the part of the students.”**
- Equity cognitive frame: “prone to notice and question patterns of educational outcomes and are **more likely to view inequalities in the context of a history of exclusion, discrimination, and educational apartheid**”

(Bensimon, 2005)



# Findings

*“What happened is a lot of our part-timers were the ones who were teaching remedial courses. Because our full-timers... they're just **too talented to be wasted** on teaching students who really needed to learn math.”*

*“I think that part of success in these classes is impacted by our students being in poverty... **it's really hard to get someone to write an essay when they are unhoused and they don't have food.**”*

*“Once we understood that when a student is placed too low, they do poorly because they're bored. And **it's also sending the message to them, you are not a college student. You don't belong here. Go back and take high school math.** It's all that subliminal messaging. [Instead] It's like, well, you're here. Come be a college student and we'll support you.”*



# Findings

- Significant differences in the frequency of equity- and deficit-minded comments between faculty at low- and high-implementer colleges

Code Counts associated with Deficit and Equity Cognitive Frames

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Deficit Cognitive Frame</b>	<b>Equity Cognitive Frame</b>	<b>Chi Square</b>
High	108.0204	175.0204	
Low	186.549	135.3137	23.902, $p < .00001$





# Survey Findings

- Only one mindset question was statistically different between high and low implementers, among English faculty – whether it would be better for some students to start in pre-transfer level



# So What?

- Students perceive mindsets espoused by faculty in corequisite courses
- Performative practices are not enough; faculty have to shift mindsets to support/sustain meaningful institutional transformation and make college a student-ready environment
- Faculty mindsets may be changing – eager for fall 2024 fieldwork







## Stay Connected



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