New resource guide documents efforts in 25 states to reduce high remedial rates, improve college readiness and success

DENVER – Efforts underway in at least 25 states to reduce the need for college remediation and improve college readiness and success are showcased in a resource guide for policymakers released today.

The Education Commission of the States and the Southern Regional Education Board collaborated on Developmental Strategies for College Readiness and Success, with assistance from Education First.

The 50-page resource guide is intended to provide an overview of the many initiatives underway in states to help students who enroll in college but are deemed not yet ready for college-level work.

Federal statistics show 19 to 26 percent of all college freshmen fall into this category. That figure usually is lower on four-year campuses and rises as high as 60 percent for some two-year schools.

Such students typically are assigned to developmental or remedial education courses. But studies show most students will finish neither the developmental courses nor a credential or degree.

“We know that traditional approaches to remedial education have not been effective for most students,” said ECS President Jeremy Anderson. “This guide shows many states are working hard to tailor remediation to students’ specific needs, with the goal of moving them into college-level courses and toward degree completion as soon as possible.”

“Degree completion depends in large part on a student’s readiness to learn at the college level, particularly the ability to read complex texts and write about them,” said Dave Spence, president of the Southern Regional Education Board. “Public schools can meet this challenge — especially if higher education embraces the college- and career-readiness standards and makes it clear that postsecondary institutions will apply them for entering students.”

Among the efforts highlighted in the guide, which includes examples of state policy, state and institutional programs, and academic research on the issue:

- **Co-requisite instruction** – This increasingly popular instructional model allows students to enroll in college-level courses while receiving additional academic support to address skill deficiencies. Examples from Connecticut, Florida, Indiana and West Virginia are included.
- **Differentiated math pathways** – With consensus growing that college algebra is relevant only for particular programs of study, a growing number of institutions are tailoring math requirements to students’ career choices. Examples from California, Colorado and Texas are highlighted.
- **Transitional courses** – This effort focuses on ensuring students reach college readiness in high school. These courses supplement a high school college-ready curriculum, usually in the junior or senior year for students who are assessed as underprepared for college. Examples from Kentucky, Maryland, New York and Tennessee are included.

*The Education Commission of the States was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.*