Topic: Student Experiences in Corequisite Courses

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Cho: Hi, my name is Selena Cho and I'm a researcher at CCRC. We want to tell you about our new brief on students' experiences in corequisite courses.

For a long time, prerequisite remedial courses were the dominant way to get students ready for college-level math and English. Students who are not yet ready for a college-level math class, for example, would have to take one or more semesters of pre-college level math. But research shows that co-requisite courses are more effective than prerequisites at supporting student success.

In a corequisite, students take the college-level course, but there's extra time built into the course for supplemental instruction and support. However, questions remain about how to design corequisites to best support student success.

The City University of New York system, or CUNY, mandated a full transition to corequisites by fall 2022. CUNY central office provided some guidance, but for the most part allowed colleges to implement corequisites in the way that makes the most sense for each college.

We studied the variation in corequisite models across CUNY colleges and learned about students' experiences with the corequisite courses. We talked to 57 students and we learned about three things that improved their experiences in corequisite math and English courses.

The first was embedded tutors. Embedded tutors are students who previously took the course and then serve as a peer tutor. So students found them to be approachable, relatable, and helpful.

The second was a supportive and enthusiastic instructor that took a personal interest in students and provided proactive support. Of course, the instructor plays a big role in shaping students' experiences in any class, but they may play an even bigger role in a corequisite because corequisite classes are longer than typical college classes and students spend extra time with their instructor.

The third thing that improved students' experience was a sense of community with their classmates. Since corequisite classes are longer than typical college classes,

students spend more time with their classmates. Also, many of the students in a corequisite math or English class were in their first semester of college. So, they were also enrolled in other introductory level courses with their corequisite classmates. Having multiple classes and shared learning experiences with the same classmates boosted students' comfort and motivation.

We also learned about three aspects of corequisite courses that students found to be challenging.

The first was the fast pace of many corequisite math courses. Because a corequisite math class packs pre-college content and college-level content into one semester, many students felt that the class moved at a fast and demanding pace.

The second challenge was a perceived lack of motivation and engagement among some classmates. Students cited low and inconsistent attendance in their corequisite classes as a factor that discouraged and frustrated them because it suggested low commitment and motivation among their peers.

The third challenge was insufficient advising. Because advising is often underresourced and understaffed at community colleges, students don't always get to have thorough and personal conversations with their advisers. This meant that many students didn't understand why they were placed in a corequisite course that was longer than other courses.

More and more colleges are adopting corequisite courses, and a common question is what is the best corequisite model for supporting students? Students don't talk about models the way that practitioners and researchers do, but the students in our study did talk about aspects that cut across models that influence their course experiences.

We think colleges can learn from what students told us about what is and isn't helpful for them to improve their corequisite models. Our recommendations are spelled out in the brief. Please give it a read and let us know about your experiences with developmental reform at your college. Thanks so much!