



# Higher Ed | Improving College Completion: Scaling Promising Reforms

Moderated by James T. Minor, Southern Education Foundation



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WINNING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT PROGRESSION AND  
COMPLETION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Vice President For Institutional Effectiveness

Atlanta Metropolitan State College



## Leading Competing Interests/Needs

Class Attendance, Financial Aid,  
Academics, Personal Problems,  
Degree Selection/Mapping, Course  
Selection

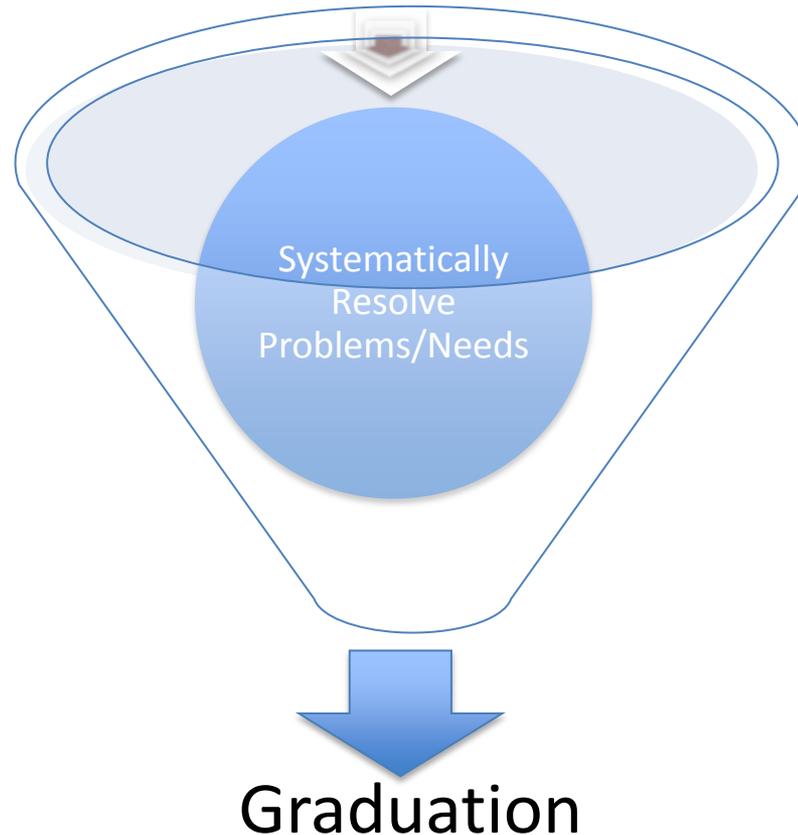
## Graduation

3 Years to Associate's Degree  
6 Years to Bachelor's Degree

# “Step 2” - Develop a Relevant, Practical, Comprehensive approach

## Strategies

Multiple levels: Institutional (macro) and Individual Students (micro) Based on Data



# Use Multiple Strategies

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
Human Touch/Intervention	Highly effective in identifying and resolving programs; Personalizes the Process; Most effective for addressing personal problems	Very expensive; Inefficient/ time consuming; Requires large staff to identify, address, and track various student cohorts (e.g. first-time full-time freshman, adult learners, military students, part-timers)
Analytics	Efficient/Effective in identifying/alerting needs; Powerful for early alert; Powerful for tracking, and predicting outcomes	Expensive; Does not resolve problems
Data Mining	Efficient/Effective in discovery/identifying and associating underlying widespread institutional problems (e.g. attendance AND low GPA, Financial Problems, degree selection/mapping)	Expensive; Does not address needs at the individual (micro) level; Does not resolve problems

# What has worked @ Atlanta Metropolitan State College

## Successful Strategies Addressing Financial Aid Problems

- Low Tuition/High Quality
- **Education & Notifications** (e.g. text messages, social media, letters, website, individual/small groups ) of Completing FAFSA
- More Scholarships (30-40%)
- Strict Loans Requirements (Careful Here!)

## Successful Strategies Addressing Academic Problems

- Monitoring & Support Through Freshman Year - High School through Freshman Year (e.g. Pre-MAT, Early Alert. Learning Communities)
- Pedagogical Changes – Convert Traditional Lectures to Active Learning Environments; (e.g. Learning Support classes converted to computer-based delivery)

## Successful Strategies Improving Course Selection/Degree Mapping

- Intrusive Advising - Ensuring Student Follow-through/Accountability; Reduce time to graduation through deeper advising techniques (e.g. earned/attempted credit hours, reduce graduation requirements)
- Interactive Technology (e.g. Degree Works, D2L Analytics)

## Successful Strategies Addressing Personal Problems/Attendance

- Clearly Demonstrate the “We Care” Message - (e.g. phone banks, early referrals to counseling/disability services, student/faculty/administration luncheons, discussion groups)



# **Higher Ed | Improving College Completion: Scaling Promising Reforms**

**Daniel Smith, Executive Vice President  
Athens Technical College**

# ATHENS TECHNICAL COLLEGE



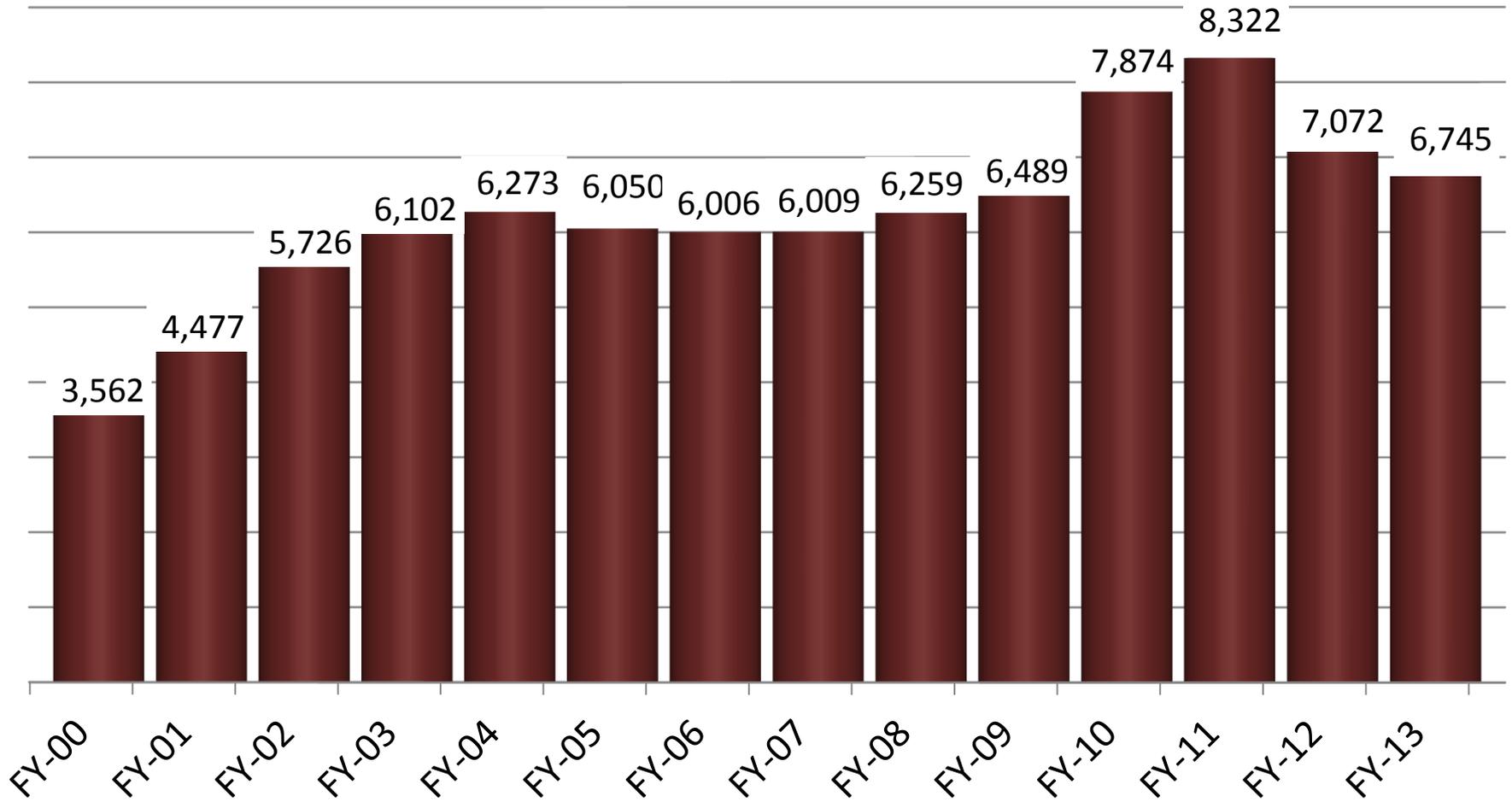
Focused on Student Success

College offers 131 programs  
in the following areas:

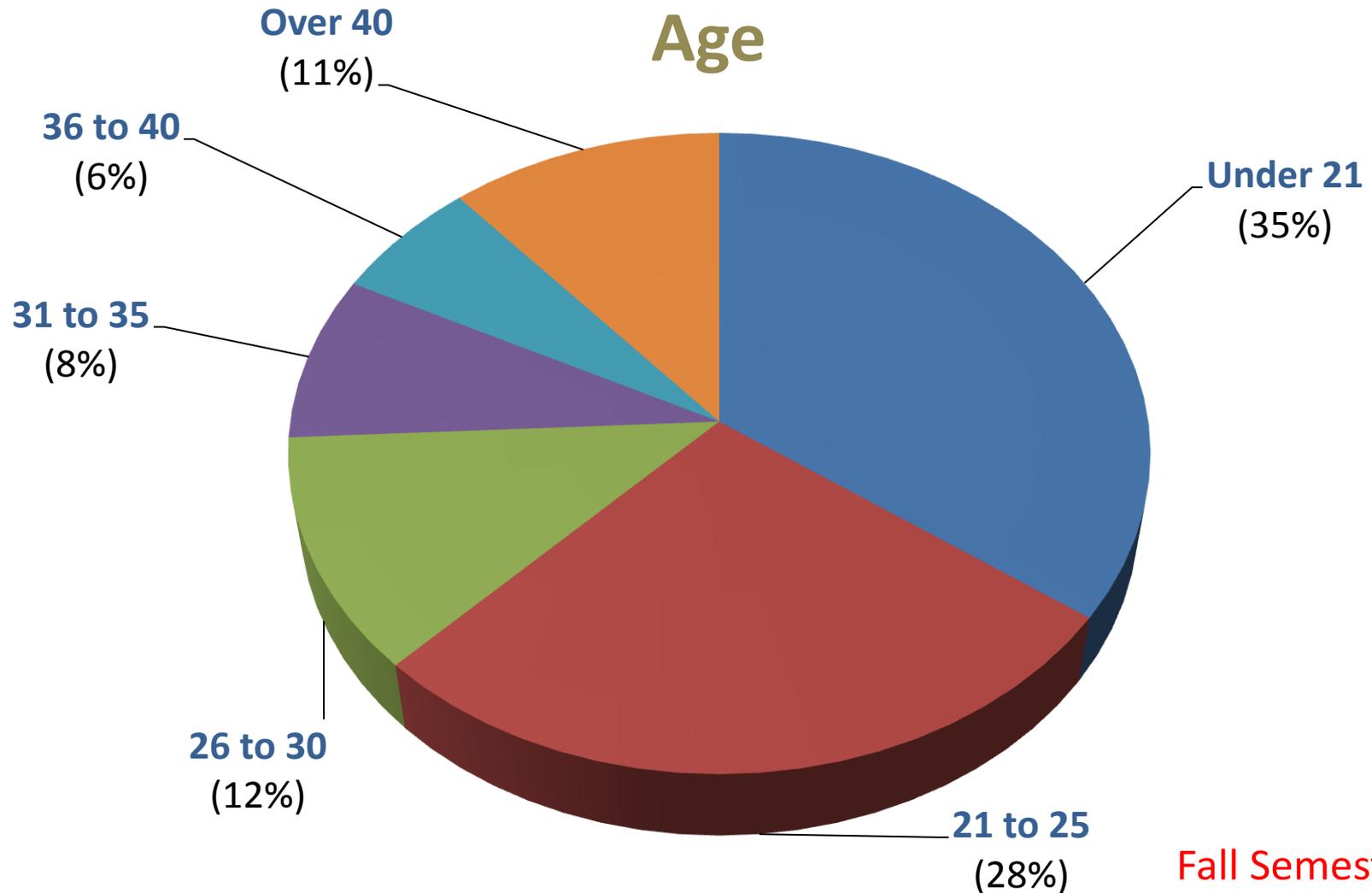
- Business and Public Service
- Life Sciences
- Technical Studies



# Academic Enrollment



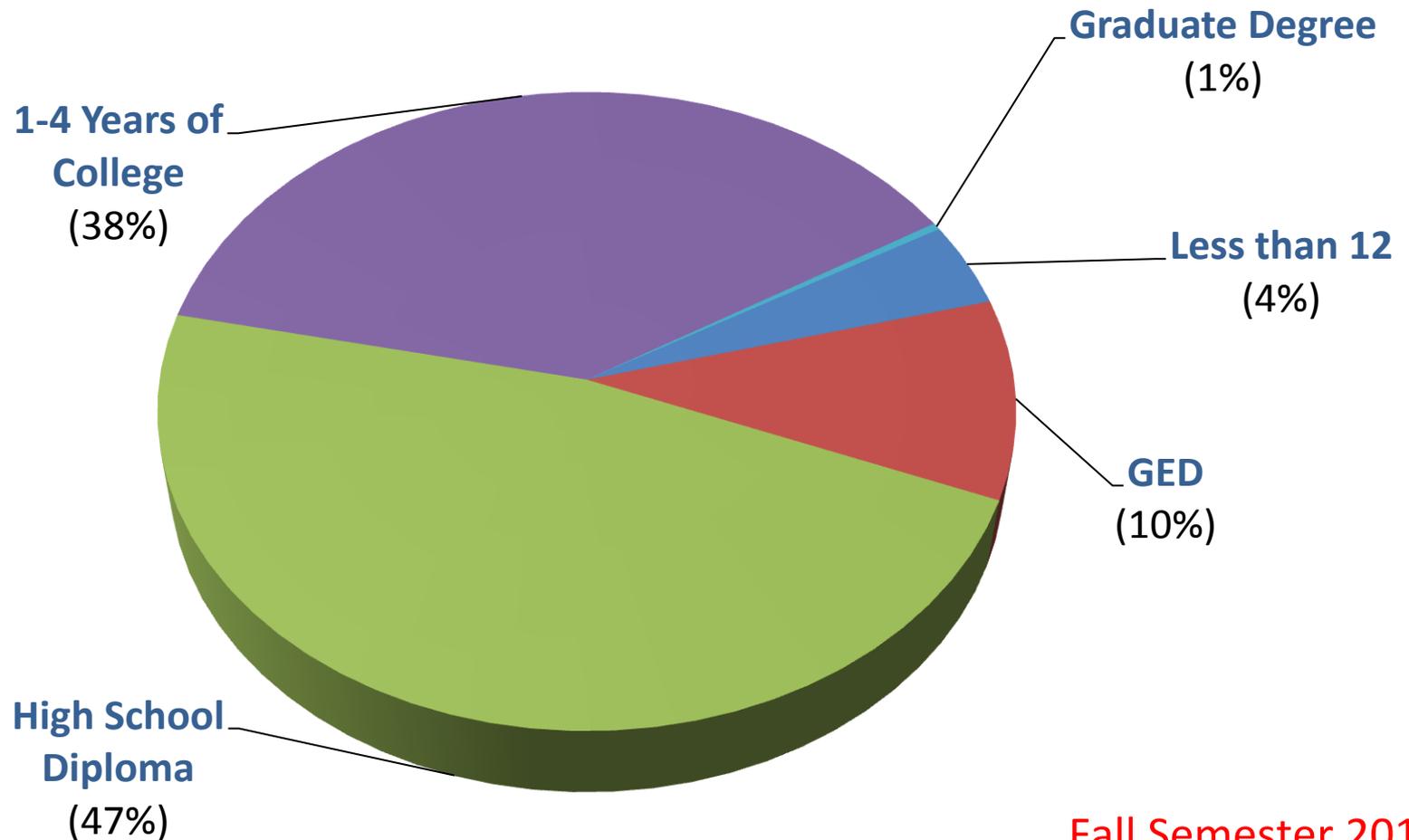
# Academic Enrollment



Fall Semester 2013

# Academic Enrollment

## Education Level



Fall Semester 2013



Achieving  
the Dream

Community Colleges Count

SACS  COC

**COMPLETE  
COLLEGE  
AMERICA**

**How we define success:  
more students  
earning certificates or  
degrees, going to work  
or transferring to  
4-year institutions.**





## What we have accomplished:

- Disaggregated success data on first-time students to the college
- Engaged college community in discussions on improving success while maintaining—and enhancing— quality of programs and services
  - Identified achievement gaps
  - Engaged students, faculty, and staff in diagnosing causes of problems
  - Identified additional data needs
  - Established task force to address issues

What we  
have  
learned?

**40%** of students leave after one term.

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**46%** must complete learning support coursework.

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**Largest age group** referred to learning support are students under 19 years old.

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Students **are more successful** if they complete their learning support and corresponding gatekeeper classes in the first year.

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**38%** of students eventually transfer to other colleges.

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Achieving  
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- **Priority 1:** Transform learning support
  - **Modularized mathematics** courses with diagnostic assessments
  - **Accelerated English approach** in which class time is devoted to developing students' writing skills/modularized grammar and writing skills development
  - **Streamlining students** into ENGL 1101 with just-in-time English remediation
  - **Streamlining students** into ARTS 1101 with just-in-time reading remediation
  - **Adjustment of transfer policies**



- **Priority 1:** Transform learning support
  - **31% of mathematics students** completed two or more courses during Spring 2013 and were ready to move into credit-bearing courses
  - **73% of students** completed redesigned MATH 0098 course, compared to only **65% of students** in traditional delivery format
  - **79% of students** complete ENGL 0989, compared to a **52% completion rate** in the two-course sequence
    - Our redesigned course is 5 credit hours in length; provides more time on task

- **Priority 2:** Develop a strategic student engagement model
  - Expand **career planning services**
    - Provide career planning during first term (based on input from Community Conversations with students)
  - Create **intentional advising model**
    - Expand the number of professional advisors available to students
    - Surveys reveal that access to instructors/advisors is a major issue with students
  - Redesign **early alert process**

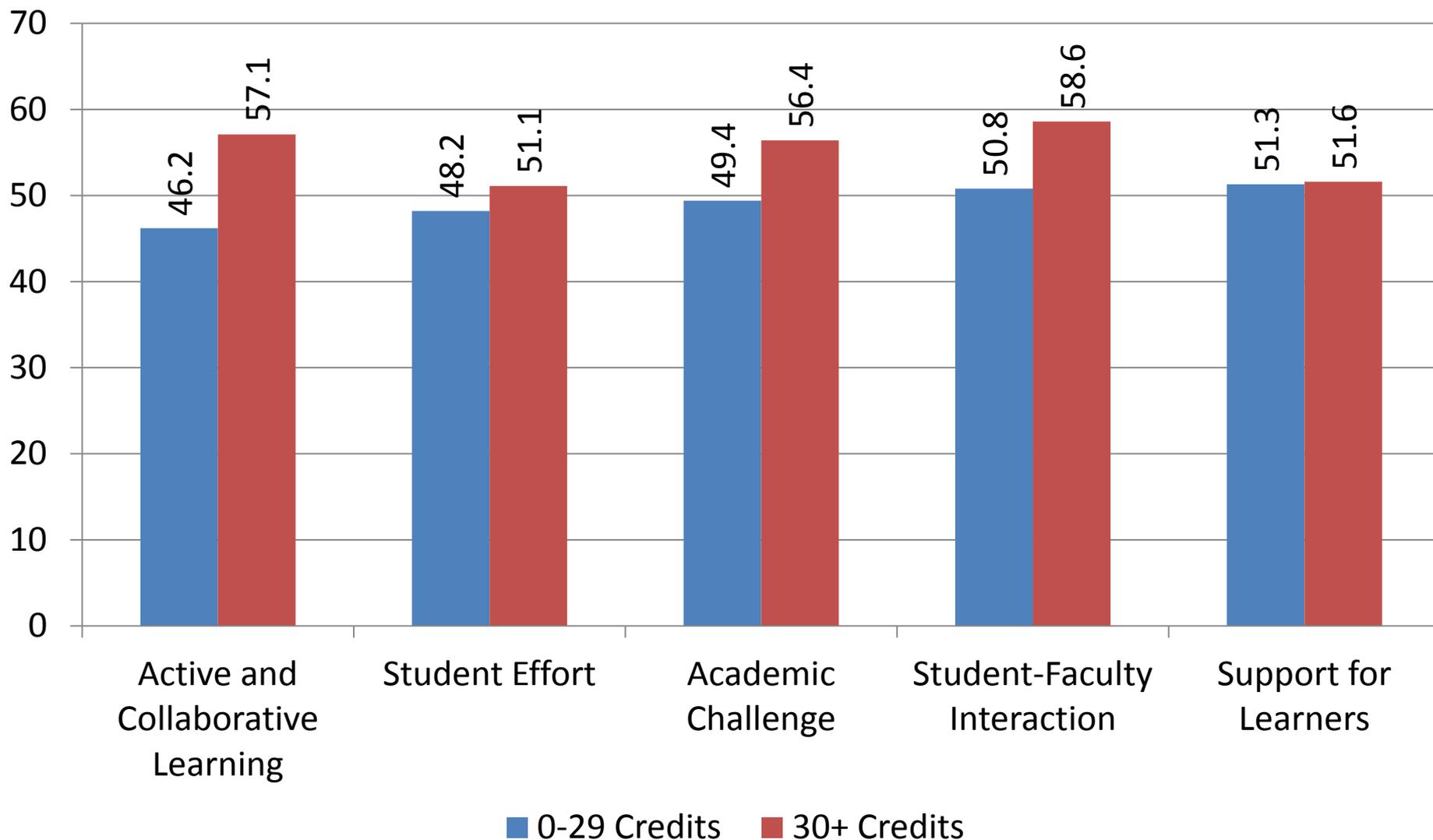


- **Priority 3:** Provide targeted faculty and staff development
  - Require **all** faculty (full-time and adjunct) and staff to complete **Student Success Specialist certificate** program and renew every three years
  - Require **all** faculty to complete professional development on **active and collaborative learning and special needs** of first-time in college, college success, and learning support students
  - Require **all** faculty to complete professional development on **teaching students to read** subject-specific materials
  - Develop comprehensive, standard training for **academic advisors** to support intentional advising initiative



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Community Colleges Count





Georgia

Complete College Georgia



- Develop and implement **program-level plans** to improve retention and graduation rates based on progress rates of Fall 2012 cohorts
  - Met with each program chair to review retention and graduation data
  - Tracking students from fall to spring and fall to fall to measure retention within program and retention within the institution
  - Providing means to utilize strength of faculty to improve college measures



# Quality Enhancement Plan



- Received 28 proposals that address **The First-Year Experience**
  - Over 1,000 people viewed proposals; 78 provided comments
  - 20 combined into comprehensive QEP
- Focus is on providing students with **ways to build and sustain connections** at the college in order to ensure first-year success and pathways to completion
  - Will include a comprehensive first-semester seminar

- **Learning Outcomes**

- Students will **demonstrate appropriate communication skills.**
- Students will be able to **apply time management strategies.**
- Students will be able to **identify effective study strategies.**
- Students will be able to **describe various student resources** that contribute to the educational experience.
- Students will create an **educational and career plan** with defined short-term and long-term goals.
- Students will **develop a College Success Portfolio.**

# ATHENS TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Founded in 1958

# Working Toward Impactful and Sustainable Higher Education Reform

- Nikki Edgecombe
  - Community College Research Center

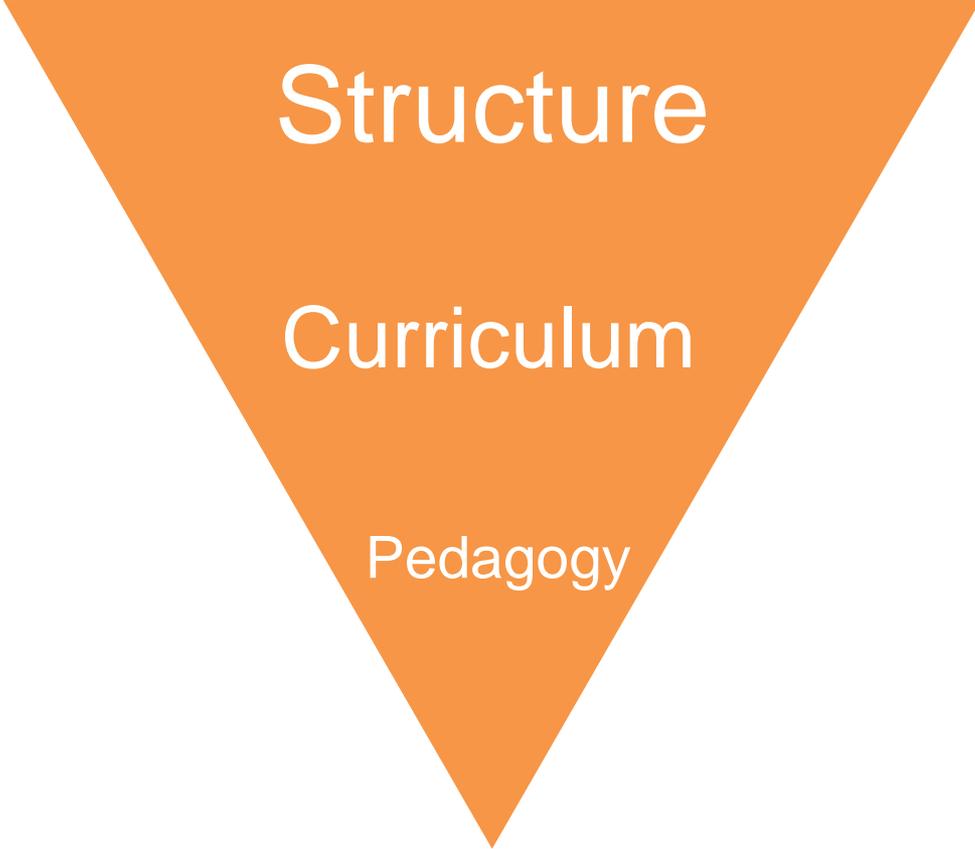
Why don't most developmental  
education reforms generate  
substantial and sustainable  
impacts?

# Obstacles to **substantial and sustainable** improvement

Colleges often enact developmental education reforms in ways that may undermine their potential benefits



# Obstacles to **substantial and sustainable** improvement



Structure

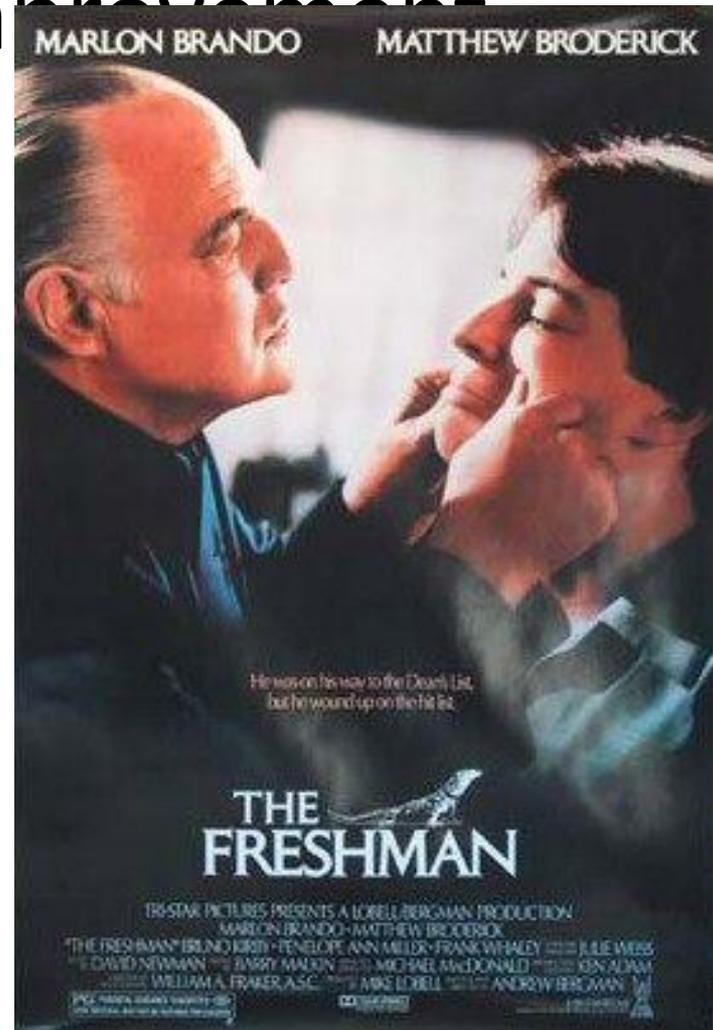
Curriculum

Pedagogy

The predominant orientation toward reform typically leads to the adoption of minimally disruptive, small-scale approaches

# Obstacles to substantial and sustainable improvement

Developmental education reforms only affect the beginning of students' college experience and may not provide the intensity or duration of supports necessary to impact long-term outcomes



# More effective **implementation** requires a comprehensive approach

## What

Limitations of minimally disruptive, small-scale approaches

## Where

Need for change across students' college careers

## How

Mitigating counterproductive implementation processes

# Reform Adoption

## Diagnose

- Identify and prioritize student needs

## Select

- Align reform theory of action with needs

## Prepare

- Adjust reform to context and context to reform

# Reform Adaptation

## Assess

- Analyze implementation processes and outcomes

## Refine

- Develop structure for ongoing improvement

## Scale

- Allocate resources for institutionalization

## Working toward impactful and sustainable change

- Critical to expand the focus beyond “what works” to the complex set of processes that facilitate and inhibit effective reform implementation
- Absent a systematic focus on strengthening individual and institutional resources in conjunction with reform efforts that span the college experience, college completion rates will not dramatically improve

# For more information

**Please visit us on the web at**

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>

where you can download presentations, reports,  
and briefs, and sign-up for news announcements.

We're also on Facebook and Twitter.

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