



New College Readiness Assessments for New York State April 2012

One of the key goals in SUNY's strategic plan, [The Power of SUNY](#), is a seamless education pipeline. In her [January 2012 State of the University address](#), Chancellor Zimpher committed to strengthening the pipeline by reducing the need for entering students to take non-credit remedial courses at SUNY. Consistent with these goals, SUNY is a partner in the New York State Education Department's (SED) efforts to develop assessments that indicate whether students in grades 3 through 8 and high school are on track for college and careers. This report explains the policy context for these new assessments, and describes the assessments and some of their implications for SUNY. It is intended to promote awareness and discussion among SUNY faculty and others involved in advancing SUNY's seamless pipeline goals. It contains hyperlinks and a list of online references for those who may want more detailed information.

National Policy Context

New college readiness assessments are part of a national agenda to improve student achievement and prepare high school graduates for success in college, the workplace, and the global community.

- **[Remediation in U.S. Higher Education](#)**. Only one in three students graduating from a U.S. high school is prepared for college. As a result, more than three in four degree-granting institutions of higher education offer at least one non-credit remedial (also called developmental) course, at an estimated cost of \$1 billion per year. At community colleges, which are open access institutions, more than four in ten students take at least one remedial course. First-year students who take remedial courses are less likely than other students to continue to continue their studies and complete degrees. [Getting Past Go](#) aims to improve the outcomes of remedial education and serves as an online resource on current practices. In April 2012, [Complete College America](#) released a [report](#) documenting problems with remedial education and recommending that colleges replace non-credit remedial courses with for-credit, entry-level courses that have co-requisite academic support for underprepared students.

- [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\)](#).** With the goal of improving academic achievement in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 (P-12) schools, the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), in partnership with Achieve, ACT, and the College Board, led a national initiative to create rigorous student learning outcomes for voluntary adoption by the states. Released in June 2010, the CCSS in [English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects](#) and [Mathematics](#) define what students should know and be able to do in grades 3 through 8 and high school in order to be on track for college and careers. At last count, 45 states and the District of Columbia, including New York, had adopted the CCSS, and had begun to align their schools’ curricula, instruction and assessments, as well as teacher preparation and teacher professional development, with the new standards. SED’s [Common Core Video Series](#) describes the CCSS and its implications for schools, and its webinar, [Bringing the Common Core to Life](#), explains that the CCSS requires schools to revamp the “mile-wide, inch-deep approach in curriculum and textbooks” to focus on deeper understanding. Using the CCSS as a model, the National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve are developing [Next Generation Science Standards](#). The American Council on Education (ACE), the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and Achieve issued an [action agenda](#) encouraging higher education to become involved in the CCSS and college readiness work.
- Assessing P-12 Student Achievement of the CCSS.** For decades, colleges and universities have used college admissions exams, such as the [PSAT](#), [SAT](#), [SAT Subject Tests](#), and the [ACT](#), and academic placement exams, such as the [COMPASS](#) and [ACCUPLACER](#), to assess students’ preparation for college. The publishers of these exams contributed to the creation of the CCSS, and the [ACT](#) and [PSAT/SAT](#) exams are aligned with the CCSS. In addition, in October 2010, the U.S. Department of Education’s [Race to the Top Assessment Program](#) announced that it had funded two multi-state consortia to develop new CCSS-based assessments that could replace state-by-state testing of student learning in grades 3 through 8 and high school. About half of the \$330 million award went to the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers \(PARCC\)](#), a 24-state consortium in which New York is a member; the rest went to the [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium \(SBAC\)](#). These two consortia are in the process of designing assessments that will track student progress toward college and workplace readiness and support school and teacher accountability.
- Debate on the CCSS and College Readiness Assessments.** While most state education agencies appear to support the CCSS and CCSS-based assessments, there is some scholarly debate about them. In 2011, the [Educational Policy Improvement Center \(EPIC\)](#) released a [study](#) indicating that the CCSS are well aligned with the expectations of a nationwide sample of college faculty in multiple disciplines. However, a 2007 EPIC [report](#) argued that predicting student success in college requires a definition of college readiness that goes beyond the subject-specific knowledge and skills in the CCSS to include what the author, David T. Conley, calls “key cognitive strategies, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness.” In February 2012, the Community College Research Center at Teachers

College, Columbia University, released reports on two empirical studies, one by [Scott-Clayton](#), and the other by [Belfield and Crosta](#), demonstrating that a high school grade point average (GPA) may be better than a placement exam score at predicting whether a community college student can benefit from a non-credit remedial course, and suggesting academic placement decisions should be based on multiple measures.

New York State Policy Context: [Engage NY](#)

After receiving a \$700 million [Race to the Top award](#) in September 2010, the New York State Board of Regents began implementing the Regents Reform Agenda, which, among other things, calls for SED to develop two sets of new CCCS-based assessments for grades 3 through 8 and high school—one through the PARCC consortium, and the other to replace existing New York State assessments—with the Regents planning to adopt one or the other when more information is available. In related work, SED is creating a five-year transition plan for moving schools from paper-and-pencil testing to computer-based testing.

- **[PARCC's Assessment](#)**. PARCC's grade 3 through 8 and high school assessments in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects and in Mathematics, which are expected to be ready for school year 2014-15, with standard setting in summer 2015, are being designed to include:
 - Four components, two optional and two required, to be used at various points throughout the school year, including a required “rich performance-based assessment” to be administered as close to the end of the school year as possible to assess deeper learning than is usually tested by traditional test items.
 - Computer administration—although students in grades 3-5 are expected to respond with paper and pencil—in order implement innovative items and give teachers rapid feedback that can be used to improve instruction.
 - Course-based exams—rather than cumulative exams—for high school students.
 - Backward design, from high school exams to grade 3 through 8 exams, so that students' progress toward college and career readiness can be tracked and gaps addressed as soon as possible.

PARCC released draft [model content frameworks](#) to support educators as they implement the CCSS and to lay the groundwork for its assessments, and is in the process of designing and developing assessment items and performance level descriptors, which are profiles of what students at different levels should know and be able to do. In consultation with higher education faculty and others, PARCC is identifying the evidence that will be needed to demonstrate that scores on its high school assessments are valid and reliable for college placement purposes, and is planning a research agenda to obtain the necessary evidence. PARCC is also planning for the technology infrastructure that states and schools districts will need to implement its exams, exploring the latest breakthroughs in automated scoring, and helping states plan for the transition to PARCC assessments. All of PARCC's efforts are managed by Achieve and described in its [Progress Reports and Newsletters](#).

- **[SED's Assessment](#)**. SED is in the process of aligning curriculum, instruction and New York's grade 3 through 8 and high school assessments with the CCSS. It plans to use its [revised assessments](#) until PARCC assessments are available in 2014-15, or if the Board of Regents does not adopt PARCC assessments. It has appointed Content Advisory Panels for English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science to assist in the development of its revised assessments, and plans to administer revised Regents exams in English Language Arts (grade 11), Algebra I and Geometry in 2013-14, and Algebra II in 2014-15. The revised exams will have both multiple-choice and constructed-response items.

SUNY's Policy Context and Role

SUNY is participating in SED's development of new college readiness assessments because the assessments are directly related to SUNY's goals for a creating a seamless education pipeline and reducing need for remediation.

- **Remediation at SUNY**. Although every SUNY campus offers academic support services, non-credit remedial courses *per se* are taken only by students in two-year programs at community colleges and colleges of technology. At SUNY's open access community colleges, over 40 percent of students take at least one remedial course, at a cost of \$70 million per year. Johanna Duncan-Poitier, Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and the Education Pipeline, who is leading efforts to promote a seamless education pipeline and reduce the need for remediation, has convened a high level Task Force to study remediation and make recommendations by fall 2012. In addition, the SUNY and CUNY boards of trustees are expected to submit a joint report to the legislature on remediation, transfer and degree completion by November 1, 2012.
- **[SUNY and PARCC](#)**. In June 2010, at the request of the New York State Commissioner of Education, Chancellor Nancy Zimpher [committed SUNY](#) to participating, as appropriate, in PARCC's work, by engaging SUNY faculty and others in the development of PARCC's assessments and validation studies, and using PARCC exam scores as one (not exclusive) indicator for academic placement. Since then, SUNY has participated in PARCC's efforts in several ways.
 - A representative from SUNY System Administration has served as a "higher education lead" to PARCC, as part of [PARCC's strategy for engaging higher education](#) at more than [200 institutions](#) in participating states. The "lead" and a SUNY faculty member, and their counterparts from CUNY, have represented higher education in New York at PARCC meetings and conferences.
 - A small advisory group of SUNY faculty nominated by faculty governance leaders and campus chief academic officers provides feedback to PARCC on confidential draft materials.
 - In October 2011, SUNY's Chief Academic Officers discussed [PARCC assessments](#) with Dr. Allison Jones, PARCC's Vice President for Postsecondary Collaboration.

- SUNY is involved in PARCC’s governance process through CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, who SED appointed as New York State’s higher education representative to PARCC’s [Advisory Council on College Readiness \(ACCR\)](#). ACCR is a group of higher education leaders from PARCC states and national associations that helps PARCC make decisions that will have a direct impact on higher education, including “the development of performance level descriptors, providing the evidence to be used to inform standard setting and to validate the assessments as indicators of college readiness, and to serve on the standard setting committee to set the college ready cut score.”
- [SUNY and SED’s Assessments](#). In the summer of 2011, John King, New York State’s Education Commissioner, invited SUNY Provost David Lavalley to work with SED to develop revised State assessments that are part of the Regents Reform Agenda. As a result, SUNY appointed a liaison to SED for this project, SUNY faculty members who were nominated by faculty governance leaders and campus chief academic officers have been appointed to serve on SED’s Content Advisory Panels, and SUNY and SED will exchange data to help SED validate revised high school assessments as indicators of college readiness. In November 2011, Commissioner King met with SUNY Chief Academic Officers, faculty governance leaders and others to discuss the [Regents Reform Agenda for College Readiness and Student Success](#), and its implications for SUNY.

Issues for Consideration

SUNY faculty and others currently use multiple approaches to making decisions about admissions and academic placement. In a few years, they will be asked to add new college readiness assessments to their approaches, making it important for them to be informed about these assessments, consider their implications, influence their development, and plan for their use. Some issues that have been raised to date are summarized below, along with potential discussions questions, in italics.

- **SUNY Decision Making.** SUNY faculty and others will need to be informed about PARCC’s and SED’s assessments, and involved in decisions about their development and use. *FOR DISCUSSION: In addition to SUNY faculty participation in a PARCC advisory group and SED’s Content Advisory Panels, how can faculty and others become involved in decisions about the development and use of PARCC’s and SED’s new college readiness assessments?*
- **Pre-College Preparation.** The CCSS and new college readiness assessments can improve students’ preparation for college provided that students who are not “on track” are able to receive the help they need to succeed. *FOR DISCUSSION: SUNY campuses are already involved in Early College High Schools, Cradle-to-Career networks, and many other partnerships with schools and community-based organizations to help prepare students for college and careers. What are the best ways to share and replicate promising practices and promote innovation?*

- **Educational Aspirations.** Students who are not “on track” to college may become discouraged, and plan not to go to college, even though PARCC’s and SED’s assessments will not be 100 percent accurate at the individual student level, and a student who appears to be underprepared may be able to excel in college. *FOR DISCUSSION: How can SUNY faculty and others work with schools and community organizations to help all students make appropriate educational plans?*
- **Academic Placement.** PARCC’s and SED’s assessments are being designed to yield scores on a college readiness scale, but not to provide diagnostic information about students’ academic strengths and weaknesses. *FOR DISCUSSION: What evidence will demonstrate to SUNY faculty and others that PARCC’s and SED’s assessments are valid and reliable for making academic placement decisions?*
- **Time Lag.** PARCC’s and SED’s high school mathematics assessments will be end-of-course exams that students may take a year or more before entering college. *FOR DISCUSSION: How should this time lag be addressed when using PARCC or SED exams for placement purposes?*
- **Entry-Level College Courses.** Both PARCC’s and SED’s assessments are being designed to predict student success in entry-level, credit-bearing courses in English or mathematics, which are typically [SUNY General Education Requirement \(SUNY-GER\) courses](#). These courses vary widely depending on a student’s plans and major. *FOR DISCUSSION: Which course or courses should be used as target courses for the validation of PARCC’s and SED’s high school assessments in English and mathematics?*
- **Curriculum Alignment.** Over time, school reforms related to the CCSS may increase the knowledge and skills of entering SUNY students. *FOR DISCUSSION: If high school graduates become better prepared for college, what are the implications for SUNY’s introductory courses?*
- **Preparation of Teachers and School/District Administrators.** As the CCSS and college readiness assessments become increasingly important in P-12 schools for curriculum, instruction and assessment, as well as for school and teacher accountability, SUNY faculty preparing teachers and school or district leaders will need to remain informed about them. *FOR DISCUSSION: What are the best ways for SUNY’s teacher education faculty to stay informed about the Regents Reform Agenda and its implementation?*

Online References

National Policy Context

Remediation in U.S. Higher Education

Research Summary <http://www.postseconnect.org/files/college%20prep,%20etc%20logo.pdf>

Getting Past Go <http://gettingpastgo.org/>

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Overview <http://www.corestandards.org/>

English Language Arts http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

Mathematics http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_Math%20Standards.pdf

Next Generation Science Standards http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13165

SED's Video Series on the Common Core

<http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-video-series/>

SED's Bringing the Common Core to Life Webinar

<http://engageny.org/resource/bringing-the-common-core-to-life-slideshow-and-details/>

Action Agenda from ACE, SHEEO and Achieve

<http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=39580>

Assessing P-12 Student Achievement of the CCSS

Existing college admissions and placement exams

PSAT: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/psat>

SAT: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat>

SAT Subject Tests: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-subject>

ACT: <http://www.actstudent.org/fag/answers/what.html>

COMPASS: <http://www.act.org/compass/>

Accuplacer: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/higher-ed/placement/accuplacer>

PSAT/SAT Alignment with CCSS

http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/cb/common_core_alignments

ACT alignment with CCSS <http://www.act.org/commoncore/>

Race to the Top Assessment Program

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html>

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

<http://www.parcconline.org/>

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>

Debate on the CCSS and College Readiness Assessments

EPIC https://www.epiconline.org/about_epic

EPIC Report on Alignment of Common Core Standards and College Faculty Expectations (2011)

<https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/ReachingtheGoal-FullReport.pdf>

EPIC Report on Redefining College Readiness (2007)

<http://www.avpf.org/documents/RedefiningCollegeReadiness.pdf>

Community College Research Center: Scott-Clayton Study

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=1026>

Community College Research Center: Belfield and Crosta Study

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=1030>

Complete College America: Remediation-Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere

<http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>

New York State Policy Context

Regents Reform Agenda

Main Page <http://engageny.org/>

Federal Race to the Top Award

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase2-awards/new-york.pdf>

PARCC's Assessment

PARCC's Assessment <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment>

PARCC's Draft Model Content Frameworks <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks>

PARCC's Progress Reports and Newsletters <http://parcconline.org/parcc-updates>

SED's Assessment

SED's plan for revising Regents exams to align with Common Core Standards

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2011Meetings/May2011/511p12ccrd1.pdf>

SED's assessments and timeline

<http://engageny.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/ccsstimeline.pdf>

SUNY's Policy Context and Role

http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/assessment.cfm

Section 4 on College Readiness Assessments in New York State)

Remediation at SUNY

Chancellor's Zimpher's January 9, 2012 State of the University Address

<http://www.suny.edu/sunynews/News.cfm?filename=2012-01-09-FINAL-SOU-RELEASE.htm>

SUNY and PARCC

Chancellor Zimpher's PARCC commitment letter

http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/files/assessment/PARCC%20%20Zimpher%20Letter.pdf

PARCC's Allison Jones' Presentation to SUNY Chief Academic Officers, October 2011

http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/files/assessment/PARCC_HE%20PPT_SUNY_20111020_FINAL.pdf

PARCC Strategy for Engaging Higher Education <http://parcconline.org/postsecondary>

PARCC Participating Institutions of Higher Education

http://parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCParticipating_Postsecondary_Institutions.pdf

PARCC Advisory Council on College Readiness (ACCR)

<http://parcconline.org/advisory-committee-college-readiness>

SUNY and SED's Assessments

Commissioner John King's Presentation to SUNY Chief Academic Officers and Others, November 2011

http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/files/assessment/CAO%202011%20Nov%2016-KING_Final%20Version%20SUNY%20Nov%2016.pdf

Issues for SUNY's Consideration

SUNY's General Education Courses

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/CourseList/mastercampuslist.cfm>