

# Standards at Work: Postsecondary Success

Many states have already begun using higher standards and aligned assessments to reshape how colleges, universities, and state higher education agencies organize, design, and execute policies and practices that establish stronger alignment with K–12. In the process, they are helping more students succeed.

For the first time, in states with high standards and aligned tests, higher education institutions can be confident that students who meet these expectations are academically prepared for entry-level, credit-bearing coursework in college.

For students who are not yet prepared, higher education is now in a better position to provide relevant support, working closely with colleagues in the K–12 sector.

All of this good work would be placed at risk if states back away from strong standards and aligned assessments.

Higher education is advancing the P–20 alignment agenda by leveraging higher standards in three key areas:



**Precollege interventions to help students get ready for college by the time they graduate high school.**

These include collaboration with K–12 school districts to design 12th grade bridge courses and support programs based on areas of student need revealed through the new college-ready assessments. For example:

**Delaware** is piloting a Foundations of College Math course that will guarantee placement into credit-bearing coursework in six institutions of higher education for any high school senior who passes. **Tennessee** designed a voluntary Bridge Mathematics course for students who have not scored a 19 or higher on the ACT by the beginning of their senior year. **West Virginia** legislation requires that all public high schools offer transitional courses for students who do not meet college readiness benchmarks. In **Washington**, math transition courses are triggered by a student's 11th grade Smarter Balanced score. **Colorado's** GEAR UP Early Remediation Pilot program allows partner middle and high school students to participate in online, self-paced English Language Arts (ELA) and math courses that mirror the content of the remedial courses offered in state colleges and universities.

**Postsecondary placement practices to put incoming college students into appropriate courses and, consequently, on a path to persistence and completion.**

This includes using the new high school assessments to determine if entering freshmen are ready for credit-bearing college courses. For example:

**The California State University (CSU) system**, a national leader in this area, supplemented the state's former 11th grade math and ELA/literacy exams with a small number of additional items to measure students' readiness for credit-bearing courses. CSU also partnered with K–12 to develop 12th grade bridge courses for students who needed extra support before high school graduation and offered professional learning workshops for educators.

More than 220 colleges and universities in seven states will honor **Smarter Balanced** scores as college-ready indicators (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington).

States in the **PARCC** assessment consortium also are preparing to use scores on the high school assessments as indicators of college readiness. Systems or institutions in three states (Arkansas, Colorado, and Illinois) have adopted such policies to date. Massachusetts and New Jersey also are considering the issue.

**Postsecondary freshman-year experiences to align secondary and higher education content and support students' transition into credit-bearing coursework.**

Efforts include improving counseling, providing co-requisite remediation, and changing credit-bearing course sequences, consistent with the more ambitious expectations embedded in the new K–12 standards. For example:

In **Indiana**, Ivy Tech Community College and the Lumina Foundation for Education have created a one-year accelerated associate degree program. In **West Virginia**, Mountwest Community & Technical College provides multiple approaches to co-requisite remediation, including fall bootcamps to get students ready for college-level math courses. The **State University of New York (SUNY)** recently

committed to offer the Quantway and Statway programs to all of its 30 community colleges and any four-year campuses over the next three years. These programs have proven successful in the pilot phase with 57% of students in Quantway completing their developmental math requirements in one semester and 52% of Statway students receiving college credit in one year. The **Community College of Baltimore County** in Maryland allows the majority of students who did not pass the writing placement test to enroll in both English 101 and a companion course that provides extra support. **Austin Peay State University** in Tennessee replaced its two remedial math courses with enhanced sections of its two gateway college-level mathematics courses.

More detailed examples can be found in our [Proficient Means Prepared toolkit](#).

**For more information, visit  
[higheredforhigherstandards.org/aligningexpectations](https://higheredforhigherstandards.org/aligningexpectations)**

