An NCPR Working Paper

The Common Core State Standards

Implications for Community Colleges and Student Preparedness for College

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Abstract

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English and math were finalized in 2010 and, as of July 2012, have been adopted in full by 45 states. These standards provide a framework that is intended to ensure that all students who graduate from high school in the United States have attained the knowledge and competencies that prepare them well for college and for their future careers. Two sets of assessments that map to these standards are currently under development by two consortia of states and are expected to be deployed beginning in 2014.

Based on a review of literature and on interviews with individuals involved in the CCSS nationally and in Washington, Florida, and Kentucky, this paper outlines the development of the CCSS and the CCSS-aligned assessments, the involvement of higher education representatives in their design and implementation, and how the CCSS and the aligned assessments can be used to support the mission of community colleges.

The authors recommend that community colleges use the CCSS 11th grade assessment as one in a set of multiple measures used in placement decisions for students entering college directly after high school, align developmental education and introductory college-level courses in math and English composition to the CCSS to smooth the transition for recent high school graduates entering college, and work directly with local K–12 partners to help more graduating high school students enter college without needing remediation.

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1. Introduction

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English and math were finalized in 2010 and, as of July 2012, have been adopted in full by 45 states (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). These standards provide a framework that is intended to ensure that all students who graduate from high school in the United States have attained the knowledge and competencies that prepare them well for college and for their future careers. Use of the standards is also expected to increase the likelihood that the U.S. education system will graduate students who meet international benchmarks of high levels of performance. Two sets of assessments that map to these standards are currently under development by two consortia of states and are expected to be deployed beginning in 2014.

The CCSS initiative represents the first attempt to create consistency in the knowledge and skills that students should gain in K–12, anchored in a common definition of what it means to be college and career ready (Rothman, 2011). This initiative is expected to contribute to the quality of education in a number of ways — in particular, it is intended to enable students to improve their level of critical thinking and their ability to transfer knowledge from one setting to another, and to enable teachers to offer more engaging, relevant instruction (Hirsh, 2012). Further, it will have the advantage of promoting cross-state consistency in terms of what students should know and be able to do upon high school graduation.

But what does this mean for community colleges? So far, postsecondary involvement in the process of developing these standards has been uneven, and awareness of them has remained low in the higher education community (Education Trust, 2011). This is particularly concerning given that the CCSS are derived from a set of anchoring standards that are pegged to *college*-readiness. But this lack of connection may be in the process of changing — and we contend that it should. The principles underlying the CCSS appear to be well aligned with the findings of recent research emerging from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University.[1] Understanding and building on the CCSS could allow colleges to promote highly valued goals such as reducing the number of students requiring remediation and increasing the number of students who progress toward, and who complete, college credentials.

Based on the research described in this paper and its intersection with prior research, we suggest that community colleges consider the following recommendations:

[1]CCRC is a partner organization of the National Center for Postsecondary Research.

- Introduce the CCSS 11th grade assessment as one in a set of multiple measures used in placement decisions for students entering college directly after high school.
- Align developmental education and introductory college-level courses in math and English composition to the CCSS to smooth the transition for recent high school graduates entering college.
- Work directly with local K–12 partners to make sure that every student completing high school is ready to enter college without needing remediation, and with skills that are strong enough to complete a college credential in a timely manner.

In support of these recommendations, this paper will: (1) briefly describe existing research that frames ways that community colleges could interact with the CCSS; (2) provide background on the CCSS, the related CCSS-aligned assessments, and the process by which they are being implemented across the United States; (3) share information on higher education's participation to date in the development and implementation of the CCSS, particularly in three states; and (4) discuss the implications of the CCSS and the aligned assessments for community colleges.

What We Know About Developmental Education, College Assessments, and College Readiness

Developmental Education

Developmental education, sometimes called remedial education,[2] is offered to students enrolled in college who are deemed underprepared for college-level reading, writing, and/or math. For the least prepared students, placement into multiple levels of developmental education upon entry into college has become the norm (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Fully 40 percent of all entering college students require some developmental education (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). These students may spend semesters or even years engaged in pre-college coursework, and they use up considerable amounts of personal funds or financial aid just to reach the point where they can enroll in college-level courses.

[2] *Developmental education* is used interchangeably with *remedial education* and *remediation* is this report.

Recent research (e.g., Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2011; Boatman, 2012; Boatman & Long, 2010; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012) suggests that this prevailing pattern does not serve students — or society — well. While many agree that developmental education offers vital access to college for those who might not otherwise be able to attend (Bailey, 2009), there is also concern about the large numbers of students who do not succeed in making it through their developmental education sequences. Students who begin their college careers in developmental education are substantially less likely to complete a degree or certificate (Adelman, 2006; Attewell et al., 2006).

College Placement Assessments

A range of assessments is used to determine whether students are ready for college-level work in math, reading, and writing. The most common of these is the ACCUPLACER, used by 62 percent of community colleges; the second most common is the COMPASS, used by 46 percent of community colleges (Hughes & Scott Clayton, 2011). Other tests have been developed by states as well as by individual colleges. The policies on cutoff scores on particular tests used for placement into developmental education often vary widely from college to college.

CCRC research has raised important questions about whether these tests do, in fact, predict success in college. New analyses by Belfield and Crosta (2012) and Scott-Clayton (2012) indicate that common placement tests misplace students at high rates; substantially more accurate results are obtained when more than one measure is used, such as a test score in combination with a high school GPA. Of particular concern is evidence that the tests are more likely to "underplace" students (place them into developmental education courses they do not need) than to "overplace" them (place them into college-level courses for which they are not well prepared to succeed). Those who are underplaced take extra developmental courses, thus joining the ranks of students described above who face additional hurdles to successfully complete college.

College Readiness and College Readiness Partnerships

The diversity of college placement tests in use and the range of scores used to indicate readiness for college coursework both point to another little discussed issue in higher education — the lack of a broadly shared definition of what it means to be college ready. College readiness is commonly defined in terms of test scores that purport to indicate the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in initial college-level courses; however, some scholars have taken a more nuanced perspective. Karp and Bork (2012), for example, undertook research in Virginia in which a wide range of skills and attributes were identified as necessary for college success, including balancing multiple roles and understanding college cultural norms. Others have taken

different approaches.[3] Those in K–12 education point to this lack of consensus on the meaning of college readiness as an important explanation for why misalignment between high school graduation and college entry requirements continues to be a problem.

Researchers have also looked at ways that community colleges can work with high schools to increase the chances that students who enroll will be college ready. Research conducted by NCPR (Barnett, Corrin, Nakanishi, Bork, Mitchell, & Sepanik, 2012) found that college readiness partnerships have sponsored programs with an academic readiness focus and/or a "college knowledge" focus. While there is limited research on the effectiveness of these programs, they show promise in terms of reducing the need for developmental education and helping students feel more confident about navigating college systems.

The CCSS have the potential to be useful in addressing pressing concerns related to both assessment and college readiness that are contributing to low college progression and credential completion rates. Before discussing this, however, it is important to understand what the CCSS and CCSS-related assessments are, as well as what higher education's role has been in their development and implementation.

About the CCSS

The Common Core State Standards initiative was led by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). The purpose of this initiative was to create a set of standards in math and English for grades K–12 that were "fewer, higher, clearer" (Rothman, 2011, p. 27) than previously developed standards and consistent across U.S. states and territories. The writers of the standards believed that *fewer* important standards would lead to greater depth of understanding among students, that the standards should be *higher* than those used previously in many states and should match or exceed international benchmarks, and that a high level of *clarity* would help teachers to use them effectively. The final standards were released in June 2010.

In addition to the advantages mentioned, proponents argue that a common set of state standards will lead to: (1) a clearer, consistent understanding by parents, students, and the general public of what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade and upon graduation from high school, (2) more focused professional development for educators,

[3]The diversity of approaches to college readiness is illustrated in a CCRC overview on the transition from high school to college (Barnett & Hughes, 2010).

(3) the opportunity to share best practices across states, (4) the use of multiple, common assessments aligned with the standards, and (5) the creation of textbooks and learning materials that are aligned to one set of standards rather than those from many states (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.; Rothman, 2011). The use of common assessments and textbooks is expected to save money. In addition, the new standards will introduce greater objectivity and fairness into discussions about the performance of education systems across districts and states as they will be based on common metrics (Education Trust, 2011).

While the history and key features of the CCSS initiative have been well documented elsewhere (see, for example, Rothman, 2011), it is useful to note several important points (a more detailed summary of the initiative's key dimensions is also included in Appendix A).

- The CCSS developers began by arriving at a definition of college readiness that served as the "anchor" for the entire system. Sources of guidance used in formulating a conception of college readiness included research by ACT, Inc. and others, a review of introductory college textbooks, and information from faculty teaching first-year college courses in math and English (Rothman, 2011). Subsequently, research by Conley, Drummond, de Gonzalez, Seburn, Stout, and Rooseboom (2011) and others was used to validate this definition.[4] Thus, by design, the standards were intended to close any gap that may exist between high school graduation requirements and college entry requirements in math and English.

- The CCSS writers followed the lead of ACT, Inc. (2006), Achieve, Inc. (n.d.), and others who argue that there is no substantive difference between college readiness and career readiness. They are taken to be the same.

[4]Research by Conley et al. (2011) compared the CCSS college-ready benchmarks to five sets of existing standards: (1) the Content Standards for California Public Schools in mathematics and English language arts; (2) the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English language arts and mathematics; (3) the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards in English language arts, mathematics, and cross-disciplinary standards; (4) the Knowledge and Skills for University Success Standards in English and mathematics, developed by Standards for Success (see Conley, 2007); and (5) the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme English language arts and mathematics standards, developed by the Educational Policy Improvement Center. Their conclusion was that "the overall findings from this study suggest a general level of agreement between the Common Core standards and the comparison standards regarding what is important for high school students to know and be able to do and the cognitive level at which they need to demonstrate key skills … to be ready for college and careers" (p. ES-5).

- The writers of the CCSS were concerned that depth and critical analysis in education are often sacrificed because of the need to cover large amounts of material. They worked on the assumption that college readiness is best addressed by offering students multiple opportunities to engage with challenging texts and solve problems in different ways, that is, to practice the kinds of skills typically expected of college students.
- The CCSS only cover math and English language arts. Other standards are being developed in science and social studies, but these are not part of the CCSS.
- Participating states have agreed that the CCSS will represent 85 percent of their state standards in mathematics and English.
- According to research by the Center on Education Policy (Kober & Rentner, 2012), states have shown that they are committed to implementing the CCSS. As of January 2012, the majority of participating states had plans in place to change assessment systems, teacher professional development offerings, and curriculum or materials. The majority also planned to revise teacher evaluation systems, require districts to implement the CCSS, create initiatives to ensure implementation of the standards in the lowest performing schools, and change educator certification programs.

About the CCSS-Aligned Assessments

Two consortia, each comprised of multiple states, are currently racing to have CCSS-aligned assessments in place for use in the 2014–15 academic year. The consortia, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced), were selected as grant recipients in the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Core Assessment Program in 2010. PARCC was awarded $170 million, while Smarter Balanced was awarded $160 million; the Smarter Balanced award was later augmented to $175 million (U.S. Department of Education Press Office, 2010). They have since, with input from members, working committees, and external groups, made considerable progress toward defining the parameters of their respective systems. Some key points about the aligned assessments are included here (more detail is provided in Appendix B).

- The assessment systems will have the capacity to provide summative and formative information on students in grades 3 through 11. In addition to traditional test questions, both consortia are committed to using performance-

based items, including research and essay writing, to measure higher order critical thinking.

- As with the CCSS, the assessments will be anchored in an 11th grade test that will provide information on whether students have met benchmarks for college readiness in math and English. Once the tests are finalized, a single cutoff score in each subject area will be established, for use by all states in the consortium, that indicates college readiness. Students who are not yet college ready will be able to use their senior year to improve their skills with the hope that they will place out of developmental education in college. There are high hopes that the 11th grade test score will be accepted and used by colleges and universities for placement purposes (Sawchuk, 2010).

- In both consortia, the 11th grade assessments will have designated cutoff scores that indicate college readiness in math and English. The designation of the cutoff scores will be led by higher education representatives. In both sets of assessments, according to interviewees, the cutoff scores can be used to show that students either are or are not college ready but cannot be used to provide more fine-grained information about the ways in which students are not yet college ready. An interview respondent from Smarter Balanced reported that the Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessment will provide four sub-scores in English and three in math that will help schools at least identify broader areas of strength and weakness. The two assessments will be cross-walked so that a score on one test can be translated into an equivalent score on the other.

- There is a commitment by both consortia to using a computer platform for testing. However, the Smarter Balanced assessments will be computer adaptive; those of PARCC will not be. Both will use a combination of computer and human scoring; Smarter Balanced believes that involving teachers in scoring provides important opportunities for professional development (Sawchuk, 2010).

2. Methods

We undertook the current research in order to study the development of the CCSS and the involvement of the higher education sector in their design and implementation, and to assess how the CCSS may be able to support the efforts of community colleges to reduce remediation rates and improve rates of college completion.

Research Questions

The questions that drove this study are as follows:

1. What role has higher education played in the development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and aligned assessment systems?

2. How is the implementation of the CCSS and their aligned assessment systems unfolding in three selected states? What has been the role of higher education in these states?

3. What are the policy and practice implications for community colleges of the CCSS and their aligned assessment systems, particularly in light of recent research by CCRC and others?

Data Sources

We used three information sources to answer the research questions. The first was the available academic and research literature on the subject, which we reviewed. The second was documentation of a meeting held in February 2012 in Louisville, Kentucky, that focused on the role of higher education in the implementation of the CCSS.[5] The third and most important information source was two sets of interviews conducted by NCPR researchers. One set was conducted with individuals involved in the CCSS nationally, in particular those concerned with the role of higher education. Interviewees were selected via snowball sampling, in which those

[5]The meeting, entitled *Architecture for Implementing the Common Core Standards: Strategies, Partnerships and Progress,* was sponsored by the Council of State School Officers (CCSSO), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). Its purpose was to encourage collaboration of K–12 and higher education systems at the state level around Common Core State Standards implementation and aligned assessments.

who are interviewed are asked about others who might also be knowledgeable. The second set was conducted with people at the state level involved in the implementation of the CCSS and aligned assessment systems. The state-level interviewees were from three states that have had diverse experiences in their initial efforts to implement the CCSS: Kentucky, Florida, and Washington.

Data Analysis

The data gathered via the literature review were compiled into two fact sheets, which can be found in Appendices A and B. These serve as contextual material useful for understanding the CCSS overall (Appendix A) and the emerging CCSS assessments (Appendix B); they were also helpful in considering the research questions. The documentation record from the Kentucky meeting and the interview notes were classified according to a set of topics derived from the research questions and then coded to identify themes and patterns.

3. The Role of Higher Education in the CCSS and the CCSS-Aligned Assessments

Our interviewees generally agreed that postsecondary involvement in the CCSS initiative has been increasing and that there are multiple ways for representatives of higher education to engage with the initiative. There was also a sense that it would have been beneficial for higher education to have been involved earlier and more deeply. It appears that, while individual representatives participated in the development and validation of the CCSS, only recently have there been systematic efforts to bring together K–12 and higher education leaders together to talk about cross-sector implications. This section describes how higher education involvement with the CCSS has evolved over time.

Drafting the Standards

Based on interviews and literature on the CCSS, there appears to have been a significant amount of higher education involvement in the standards development process in the sense that individual faculty members and K–16 policy officials were well represented on the bodies that designed, wrote, and reviewed the standards. Despite this, there was not a systemic inclusion of the higher education sector leadership during this time. Some interviewees believed that limitations to higher education involvement may have been related to logistical constraints caused by the short time frame for the CCSS development and the decision that the standards would be evidence-based. Some thought that prioritizing the use of evidence meant that fewer groups and individuals were invited to the table. One study participant believed that large working groups had caused problems in previous academic standards initiatives, observing that "past standards had failed because they tried to make everyone happy, and ended up being a mile wide and an inch deep." In addition, representatives of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) stated that they wanted to keep the working groups small in order to streamline and depoliticize the drafting process.

Interviewees reported that the standards drafting process began with the creation of anchor standards based on a definition of college and career readiness. According to study respondents, the process of defining the core competencies that make a student college and career ready began in 2002 with the creation of the American Diploma Project. With staff support from Achieve, Inc., states convened committees of K–12 and higher education faculty to compare content and performance standards for high school mathematics and English language arts (ELA), as well as to compare standards for proficiency on state high school tests with the standards implicit in placement tests used by colleges (Education Trust, 2011). The views on college and career readiness that emerged informed the CCSS definition, which

specified that the standards should prepare students for academic, credit-bearing college courses. Additionally, the American Council on Education (ACE) convened panels of faculty in cooperation with leading disciplinary groups, such as the Modern Language Association and the Conference Board on the Mathematical Sciences, to provide input on the college and career readiness anchor standards. The CCSS working groups then used these definitions to "back-map" and determine what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

The extent to which higher education played a role in the CCSS development process is well summarized in an Education Trust (2011) white paper that explains that, while higher education's involvement has been substantial, much of this has been from faculty or others recruited for their individual expertise. Higher education faculty made up nearly one half of the mathematics work team and feedback group, one fifth of the ELA work team, and over a fourth of the ELA feedback group. However, this involvement does not automatically translate into institutional representation or needed buy-in.

Validating the Standards

Following the drafting of the CCSS, a validation committee (VC) was charged with reviewing the extent to which the standards: (1) reflected the knowledge and skills requisite to produce college-ready students, (2) were clear and specific, (3) were comparable with other leading academic standards, and (4) were based in research. More than half of the VC membership was comprised of college faculty, including mathematics and English language arts content experts as well as faculty from schools of education. The committee was led by David Conley, known for his expertise on college-ready knowledge and skills.

The primary activity of the VC, according to one interviewee, was to compare the CCSS to international academic standards and to the most rigorous U.S. academic standards (e.g., from Massachusetts and Texas). One VC member reported that there were constraints built into the review process, including a lack of clarity about what the standards should look like and a tight time frame (one year). These constraints made it difficult for committee members to take into account everything that was supposed to be considered in the review process. This interviewee believed that it would have taken up to four years to truly validate whether the standards prepare students for college-level work.

Recent Developments

The CCSS drafting process made it difficult to obtain the large scale, higher education sector buy-in for the standards prior to their finalization and release. That said, there are now important efforts underway to engage the higher education sector as a critically important, if not equal, partner. One reason this has become a higher priority is that the usefulness and credibility

of the CCSS system rests on the assumption that it is pegged to true standards of college readiness. Interviewees noted two ways that this is likely to be verified in the eyes of key stakeholders, including policymakers. One is for higher education to become involved in the process of validating and implementing the standards across the states. The other is for colleges to accept the 11th grade (final) assessment associated with the CCSS as indicating college readiness in English and math, permitting students who pass the test[6] to place out of developmental education in college.[7]

Multiple initiatives have been established in order to involve higher education representatives in discussions and action related to the CCSS, led by both state and national players. At the state level, different approaches are being used, some of which are described in the state profiles in Section 4. At the national level, we identified six initiatives. These include two associated with the two assessment consortia and four that are national higher education-focused projects to engage states in CCSS-related planning and implementation.

The states participating in each initiative are shown in Table 1 (next page). These six initiatives, explicitly designed to further engage higher education representatives in discussions or actions related to the CCSS and their aligned assessments, are described below. The majority are in very early stages of development, meaning that they are still in the process of defining their purposes and activities.

[6]The definition of *pass* has yet to be determined.

[7]The implementation of a college readiness test in 11th grade raises a number of key questions. First, if students are deemed college-ready in 11th grade, what should be the focus of their 12th grade year? Would they then begin college (dual enrollment) courses? Will there be options for students who are not deemed college ready to make up any deficits during the 12th grade year? Will the 11th grade test results arrive in time for students to make informed course selections in the 12th grade?

Table 1

CCSS Higher Education Involvement Initiatives

	Initiatives					
States	CRP[a]	Core to College[b]	CCPC[c]	CBAN[d]	SMARTER[e]	PARCC[f]
Alabama					X	X
Alaska						
Arizona						X
Arkansas						X
California					X	
Colorado		X			X	X
District of Columbia						X
Connecticut					X	
Delaware					X	
Florida		X				X
Georgia				X		X
Hawaii		X			X	
Idaho					X	
Illinois						X
Indiana		X		X		X
Iowa					X	
Kansas					X	
Kentucky	X	X				X
Louisiana		X				X
Maine	X				X	
Maryland			X	X		X
Massachusetts	X	X				X
Michigan					X	
Minnesota						
Mississippi			X			X
Missouri	X				X	
Montana					X	
Nebraska						
Nevada			X	X	X	
New Hampshire					X	
New Jersey						X
New Mexico						X
New York						X
North Carolina		X			X	
North Dakota					X	X
Ohio						X
Oklahoma				X		X
Oregon	X	X			X	
Pennsylvania					X	X
Rhode Island						X
South Carolina					X	
South Dakota					X	
Tennessee	X					X

States	Initiatives					
	CRP[a]	Core to College[b]	CCPC[c]	CBAN[d]	SMARTER[e]	PARCC[f]
Texas						
Utah						
Vermont					X	
Virginia						
Washington		X		X	X	
West Virginia					X	
Wisconsin	X				X	
Wyoming					X	

NOTES:

[a]The College Readiness Partnership (CRP) was initiated by the Council of State School Officers (CCSSO), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

[b]Core to College is managed by Education First and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and funded by the Lumina and Hewlett foundations, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

[c]The Common Core Postsecondary Collaborative (CCPC) is a new project created through a partnership of the Education Delivery Institute (EDI) with the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and the National Governors Association (NGA).

[d]The College Board Affinity Network (CBAN) is convening an affinity network to strengthen connections between K–12 and higher education.

[e]Smarter Balanced (SMARTER) higher education initiatives: Higher education representatives on the executive committee and the higher education advisory committee.

[f]Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) higher education initiatives: Advisory committee on college readiness and the higher education leadership team.

Core to College

Managed by Education First and the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and funded by Lumina Foundation for Education (Lumina), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates), this three-year project is engaging 10 states in state-selected activities designed to address this project goal:

> …To promote successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the aligned assessments and shared ownership of college readiness by the K–12 and postsecondary sectors, including specifically through the use of the aligned assessments in the determination of a student's readiness for placement into credit-bearing courses by postsecondary institutions. (Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, pp. 1–2)

Each participating state has a funded, full-time staff person whose job is to coordinate this effort. States are also assigned coaches who assist them with implementation and facilitate

opportunities to learn from one another. The desired outcome of the project is for each state to arrive at

> …a statewide definition of college readiness, postsecondary institution use of CCSS assessments as a determinant of a student's readiness for credit-bearing course enrollments, and K–12/postsecondary sector alignment to the CCSS around academic courses and sequences, data and accountability, and teacher development. (Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, p. 3)

As of summer 2012, most states involved with Core to College were at the planning or implementing stages: states had held meetings on CCSS implementation (seven states), meetings to discuss the use of CCSS assessments for college placement purposes (six states), or meetings to create a communications plan around the CCSS (six states).

College Readiness Partnership

The College Readiness Partnership (CRP) was initiated by the Council of State School Officers (CCSSO), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) with funding from the Lumina and Hewlett foundations. As organizations with high levels of commitment to the CCSS, they developed a project intended to bring leaders and faculty across K–12 and higher education together around the implementation of the CCSS. The aim is to delineate the specific steps that must be taken to improve teaching and learning in ways that will promote the goal of college and career readiness by the end of high school. Priority objectives are to make college and career readiness expectations more transparent, to align curricula, to assess student performance more effectively, and to improve teacher preparation and professional development.

In our interview with SHEEO Executive Director Paul Lingenfelter, he stated that seven states will work together, trying to figure out how to carry out this work and engage increasing numbers of people in the process. He strongly believes that many different organizations need to get involved because of the importance of this issue, and he remarked that the CCSS are "the most promising idea for improving instruction and student learning that I've seen." Initial work on the CRP, which began in early 2012, has involved the recruitment of states to participate and initial planning activities.

Common Core Postsecondary Collaborative

This new project involves a partnership of the Education Delivery Institute (EDI) with the National Association of System Heads (NASH) and the National Governors Association (NGA). This effort is especially concerned with effective implementation of the CCSS and ways to further engage the higher education sector. The collaborative proposes to deploy a

process developed by Michael Barber of Great Britain, designed to facilitate strong implementation of new initiatives.[8] It will work with three states not yet participating in the other initiatives that support K–12 and higher education sector alignment.

EDI Deputy Director Rebecca Martin informed us that the collaborative plans to work with state and system teams to assess their capacity to implement the new standards. It will prepare maps of state policy and regulatory authorities in each state so that decisions can be made on where to focus efforts in implementing the CCSS. The EDI will then assist in the development of an implementation plan with a clear timeline and sequencing of actions, with a particular focus on reaching out to and engaging college faculty.

College Board Affinity Network

In April 2012, the College Board launched an Affinity Network to strengthen connections between K–12 and higher education and to facilitate a smooth transition from high school to college (College Board, 2012). Each year, they bring together a new group of participants to discuss a critical issue that requires collaboration across the two sectors. The focus of the work of their first cohort, comprised of colleges from six states, is the implementation of the CCSS and addresses the following two questions:

> How could the Common Core State Standards result in changes/shifts in the alignment of high school exit expectations with postsecondary entrance expectations? And what supports (legislative, institutional, research, resources, conversations, etc.) need to be in place to successfully accomplish this alignment?
>
> How could the Common Core State Standards impact the design of remedial education courses on college campuses? (College Board, 2012, p. 1)

Smarter Balanced Higher Education Initiative

According to Jacqueline King, director of higher education collaboration for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the organization recognizes the importance of active participation of higher education representatives in the development and use of the CCSS-aligned assessments. She noted that, while large numbers of colleges signed documents

[8]See http://www.deliveryinstitute.org/delivery-approach

expressing the intent to use the CCSS assessments in college placement, there needs to be much deeper and more wide-ranging discussions about the ways in which they might be used.

Smarter Balanced has taken several steps to increase its engagement with higher education. First, the consortium has two higher education members on its executive committee, as well as designated higher education leads for each member state with whom the consortium communicates at least once each week. Second, each of the 10 Smarter Balanced working groups, collectively charged with all aspects of development of the new assessments, now has two higher education representatives, mainly faculty members. Higher education faculty are also recruited to serve on topical advisory committees and working groups. For example, higher education faculty were recruited to work with K–12 teachers to draft detailed descriptors for achievement levels on the grade 11 summative assessment. The organization also recently hired five semi-retired higher education leaders; they are serving as regional senior advisors, each working with three to five states. According to King, their job is to offer "hands-on support for the states" that are members of the Smarter Balanced consortium.

PARCC Higher Education Initiative

Allison Jones, senior fellow for postsecondary engagement at Achieve, Inc., the implementing organization for PARCC, has stated that "The ultimate goal of the PARCC initiative is to ensure that students are ready for college-level work after high school graduation." (PARCC, n.d.). With this in mind, the organization recently named an advisory committee on college readiness to contribute to discussions on how to ensure that the new assessments are truly aligned to college and career readiness benchmarks. There is also a higher education leadership team, responsible for coordinating higher education engagement for PARCC. A separate K–12 team with working committees is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the development of the assessments (PARCC, n.d.).

These six initiatives demonstrate that there is a perceived need for greater higher education engagement in the process of implementing the CCSS. In some cases, the initiative grew out of an excitement about the potential for improved education and student outcomes; in others it appears to have been undertaken out of a concern that a lack of buy-in from higher education could be detrimental to the whole enterprise. In any case, these efforts increase the chances that higher education stakeholders will become aware of the CCSS and be better able to consider ways to align efforts with the K–12 education sector.

4. Implementation of the CCSS in Three States

Progress on the implementation of the CCSS is being monitored and studied, most notably via a set of surveys conducted by the Center on Education Policy (Kober & Rentner, 2012) and the Education First/EPE Research Center (Porter et al., 2012). However, this research provides only limited information on the ways that higher education, and community colleges in particular, have been involved with this process. To understand variations in the implementation of the CCSS across states and especially the role of higher education, we conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders in Florida, Kentucky, and Washington State. The interviewees were mainly officials from state education agencies involved in implementing the CCSS in the K–12 and higher education sectors.

As illustrated in the table below, the three states represent some diversity in their implementation of the CCSS. They were members of different assessment consortia; Kentucky is a participating state in the PARCC consortium while Florida and Washington are governing and procuring states for PARCC and Smarter Balanced, respectively. At the time that this research was conducted, Florida was the only state of the three to have received Race to the Top funds to support the implementation of the CCSS. The states were also at different stages of CCSS implementation according to the Education First/EPE Research Center (Porter et al., 2012) report. Each state belonged to at least one national higher education involvement initiative. It should be noted that the landscape of CCSS implementation has been rapidly evolving — these profiles represent a particular moment in time.

Table 2 provides an overview of several aspects of CCSS implementation in these three states.

Table 2

CCSS Implementation Information Among the Profiled States

State	Consortia membership		RttT[a]	Level of CCSS implementation			Higher education involvement initiatives		
	SMARTER	PARCC		PD[c]	Curriculum/ materials	Teacher evaluation	Core to College	CRP	CCPC
Kentucky		x[d]	x (Phase 3)	x[e]	x	x	x	x	
Florida		x[f]	x (Phase 2)	~[e]	x	x	x		
Washington	x[g]		x (ELC[h])	~[e]	no activity	no activity	x		

NOTES:
[a]Race to the Top grant, important because those receiving these grants have financial resources available for the implementation of the CCSS.
[b]The three major areas considered essential to the CCSS transition process assessed in the Education First/EPE Research Center 2012 report: Professional development, curriculum and instructional materials, and teacher evaluation systems (Porter et al., 2012).
[c]Professional development.
[d]Kentucky is a participating state in PARCC. See notes in Appendix Table B.2 for an explanation of the terms *participating*, *procuring*, and *governing*.
[e]x indicates fully completed plans in this area, ~ indicates plans in development.
[f]Florida is the procuring (and a governing) state for PARCC.
[g]Washington is the procuring (and a governing) state for Smarter Balanced.
[h]Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge supports early learning and developmental programs for young children.

Florida

Overview

At the time that the CCSS emerged, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) was immersed in the process of revising its state academic standards. Florida's original standards, called the Sunshine State Standards (SSS), were created in 1996. They were revised in 2006–2007 with the goal that they be grounded in empirical research and reflect international benchmarks; the revised standards were titled the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). Work to further refine the NGSSS in English language arts was put on hold pending adoption of the CCSS.

When the CCSS were released, state education officials conducted a review and concluded that they were at least as rigorous as Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. They agreed that it made sense to adopt the CCSS, as there would be national resources available to support their implementation and the state would be able to invest less of its own funds in developing curricular materials and tests. An official at the FLDOE explained

that the department also welcomed the focus within the CCSS on college and career readiness and on improving alignment between the K–12 and the postsecondary sectors.

Florida adopted the CCSS on July 27, 2010 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). However, until the CCSS are fully implemented in Florida in the 2013–2014 academic year, the state will continue to use the NGSSS (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). In addition, Florida is deeply involved in the PARCC consortium and is a governing state as well as the consortium's fiscal agent (see notes in Appendix Table B.2 for an explanation of the terms *participating*, *procuring*, and *governing*).

Role of Higher Education in the Development and Implementation of the CCSS in Florida

Since February of 2012, Florida has partnered with Core to College to engage higher education stakeholders in the CCSS implementation process and to build cross-sector alignment. Much of the work of the three-year Core to College grant is driven by an alignment director, a position housed within the Division of Florida Colleges. The alignment director's role is to engage higher education faculty, particularly those in Florida College System institutions, in support of the implementation of the standards. The state is undertaking initial Core to College grant–related activities, with a focus on professional development to build awareness and knowledge of the CCSS among higher education faculty, particularly those teaching developmental education and entry-level college courses. The purpose of the professional development, according to a study participant,

> is to get everyone on the same page with the standards. The goal is that the CCSS assessment be used as a college-ready indicator, which can't happen if the faculty don't understand the standards on which assessments are based.

There has also been cross-sector collaboration around the development of common assessments aligned to the CCSS. Both the Florida College System, which consists of 28 community and state (four-year) colleges, and the 12 public universities that make up the Florida State University system have been involved from the beginning with alignment discussions related to the PARCC assessments. The focus has been on assuring that the 11th grade assessments measure all of the skills and knowledge that are necessary for college readiness. In addition, higher education stakeholders will participate in setting the provisional college-level cutoff scores for the PARCC 11th grade assessment An official involved with the PARCC assessment work in Florida explained that they plan to track students' performance through their initial college courses to learn whether the interim college-ready cutoff scores for the common assessment, once established, accurately place students into entry-level courses.

Policy and Practice Implications for Higher Education in Florida

A Florida state statute maintains that high schools must administer a college readiness assessment in 11th grade to students that score within a certain range on the state assessment exam, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT 2.0). School districts may use any Florida State Board of Education–approved assessment, and many districts have chosen the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) for this purpose. If a student does not attain the college-ready cutoff score on the PERT, she is required to take college postsecondary preparatory instruction, called College Success and College Readiness courses. This set of courses is comprised of college developmental education courses offered at the high school level and is aligned to the CCSS and to college-level competencies.

In terms of the implications of the CCSS for high school exit and college entry and placement assessments in Florida, an interviewee speculated that the PARCC 11th grade exam could replace the existing college readiness assessments that are conducted while students are still in high school. However, the interviewee doubted that the 11th grade assessment would entirely displace regular college placement tests because returning adults would not be able to use a CCSS assessment.

Implications for the Demand for and Delivery of Developmental Education in Florida

An official with the Florida Division of Colleges was hopeful that the implementation of the CCSS would decrease the demand for developmental education in Florida, but said that it was too early to know what the initiative's impacts may be on developmental education in the state.

Challenges to CCSS implementation in Florida

One challenge to CCSS adoption and implementation was the timing of the emergence of the CCSS in relation to Florida's planned revision of its state academic standards. Florida began full implementation of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) in fall 2011, aligning all instruction, accountability, and assessment systems to those standards. An interviewee from the FLDOE acknowledged that it will be challenging to transition to yet another set of standards, but that the NGSSS provided a logical stepping stone between the previous standards and the CCSS. Interviewees also noted that the size and diversity of the state presents unique challenges to building K–12 and higher education sector alignment.

Kentucky

Overview

The appearance of the CCSS was timely for Kentucky. In 2009, legislators enacted a new state law, Senate Bill 1 (SB1), which required the state to revamp both its standards and assessments by spring 2012. SB1 included a mandate that the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) collaborate to create a unified college and career readiness plan that would lead to a reduction in remediation rates and an increase in college graduation rates (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2013).

As soon as this law went into effect, the CPE, in partnership with the KDE, began work to define new Kentucky academic standards, revising those that had been in place for over 20 years. However, soon after they started this process, the CCSS emerged. Kentucky quickly moved to adopt the new standards, as SB1 required the state to revamp educational standards by December 2010 and the CCSS had materialized at an ideal moment. Kentucky was the first state to adopt the CCSS on February 10, 2010 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.); in fact, the state adopted the standards before they were officially finalized (Alliance for Excellence in Education, 2012). They were renamed the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.

Kentucky developed its own system of assessments aligned to the CCSS because the SB1 legislation also required the implementation of an assessment aligned to the new state standards no later than spring 2012. Kentucky was thus not in a position to wait to use the consortium-generated assessments, which would not be ready until 2014–2015. Kentucky became a member of both the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia, and has since left Smarter Balanced and remains a participating state in PARCC. The state initially participated in both consortia to see how the assessments would develop and to determine which would be the best fit for Kentucky. The state eventually dropped out of Smarter Balanced because PARCC is considering a high school end-of-course component and because the demands for active participation in two consortia were too great. According to a state education official, Kentucky may not ever use the assessments developed by the consortia, but they want to continue to partner with PARCC and decide whether the PARCC assessments will meet the state's testing needs.

Role of Higher Education in the Development and Implementation of the CCSS in Kentucky

One interviewee from the KDE described the involvement of the higher education sector in the CCSS implementation process as "comprehensive." Higher education faculty

members were involved in the CCSS standards draft review process in Kentucky. One interviewee from the CPE created and led statewide teams that consisted of over one hundred postsecondary faculty members who provided feedback on every draft of the CCSS to ensure that the expectations for postsecondary education were reflected in the standards. They also looked at the implications of the CCSS for universities and two-year colleges, such as how these new standards would impact the teaching of introductory-level general education courses. Among the three states profiled for this study, Kentucky was the only state where those interviewed reported that the higher education sector had played a substantial role in reviewing and providing feedback on the drafts of the CCSS.

The higher education sector was also involved in developing a statewide definition of college and career readiness, also required by SB1. The staff of the CPE went through a two-year process working with postsecondary faculty to arrive at a common understanding of college readiness that integrated all the different standards of the state's college and university systems. In this way, the college readiness standards in Kentucky were set by the entire higher education sector. Further, if students completing high school meet that definition of college readiness, all public colleges and universities have agreed to enroll those students in credit-bearing courses.[9]

Kentucky has also created a professional development structure in which leadership teams from each of the 174 school districts participate in monthly, full-day professional learning sessions on the CCSS. The district teams, called the Kentucky Content Leadership Networks, consist of 3–4 math teachers, 3–4 ELA teachers, 3–4 school-level leaders, and 3–4 district-level leaders. Higher education faculty members lead these "learning communities." The meetings of the leadership networks are meant to facilitate the implementation of requirements set forth in SB1 by focusing on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards and other related topics.

Policy and Practice Implications for Higher Education in Kentucky

As part of the SB1 legislation, the state of Kentucky established goals to (1) reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level by 50 percent in five years and (2) to increase college completion rates of underprepared students by 3 percent per year from 2009–2014. State education officials feel that the increased rigor of the CCSS and the improved alignment

[9]For more information, see http://www.cpe.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/FDA8331F-B247-4740-8AAD-F5721C73B2B6/0/10_College_Admission_Regulation_Revision.pdf

between the K–12 and higher education sectors, facilitated by the implementation of the standards, will support the state in reaching these goals.

Several colleges are looking at ways to align college course syllabi with the CCSS. For example, at Eastern Kentucky University, faculty involved in the CCSS review process have created professional learning communities that are reviewing course syllabi in light of the standards to ensure that they are reflected in the content of entry-level and developmental education courses in math and English. An interviewee at the CPE explained that this is often the first time that developmental education instructors and general education instructors have worked together to discuss substantial changes to course syllabi.

Implications for the Demand for and Delivery of Developmental Education in Kentucky

An interviewee at the CPE expects that, following implementation of the CCSS, there will be an increased demand for developmental education in the short term because students will not be able to meet the more rigorous standards associated with the CCSS. She believes that the developmental education system in Kentucky will need to "rethink itself" and implement programmatic changes that will help students build the skills they need to move forward in a more efficient way. She also believes that developmental education will need to create and implement better diagnostic assessments. "It is not effective to place people based on a single score; we need to diagnose exactly what students need." She believes that the education system will evolve so that more interventions happen during the earlier grades, such as middle school transition courses, to ensure that students are ready to move forward into high school.

Institutions that offer adult basic education have also adopted and are implementing the CCSS. Adult basic education serves those who have been outside of formal education programs for a long time and who want to return and pursue higher education. One such program in the community and technical college system is called "Learn on Demand" and is aligned with the CCSS. This is an online, open entry, and open exit program that offers modularized developmental education courses designed to minimize the time required to prepare a student for college-credit-bearing coursework in a given subject area. These courses are recognized by the entire higher education system in Kentucky as pegged to college readiness standards. Students who complete them will be recognized as not needing remediation.

Challenges to CCSS Implementation in Kentucky

Two interviewees at the KDE enumerated some of the challenges to the CCSS implementation process. Under the new CCSS-aligned assessment system, students will be assessed once a year. However, a study participant at the KDE felt that a single yearly

assessment would not provide enough information on student performance. Diagnostic or formative assessments are not part of the KDE system; they are relying on the districts to create the formative tests from state-provided collections of test items, local collections of test items, or vendor tests.

Kentucky did not win Race to the Top funds in rounds one or two and, according to interviewees at the KDE, this has limited the state's ability to create comprehensive structures to support transition to the CCSS. As a result, they have had to curtail their professional development activities at the state level. Though they have created district leadership networks to provide ongoing professional development, the training is decentralized and less consistent in quality. State officials worry about what this will mean for CCSS implementation. As one state official said,

> All along, we've known that just standards won't change practice; you don't implement standards without trying to have a systemic impact on the way that teaching and learning are happening in every classroom every day. So, financially that's a huge challenge because we want to provide effective support … to every district.

Finally, from the perspective of KDE officials, it has been challenging to communicate to stakeholders that the CCSS are not just another set of academic standards. They believe that these standards will require huge shifts in the way that schools go about teaching and hope that there will be widespread support for effective and full implementation.

Washington

Overview

A higher education official described a history of education reforms in the state that set the stage for Washington's adoption of the CCSS. Washington implemented a comprehensive education reform initiative in the 1990s that created a set of standards, called the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EARLs), similar to the CCSS in that they explicitly defined what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. However, they stopped at 10th grade because high school assessments were not conducted thereafter. Several college readiness projects were subsequently designed to bridge the gap between 10th grade and college.

Washington State became involved with the CCSS initiative in 2009 when the governor and superintendent of public instruction signed onto the CCSS adoption process; this allowed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to review the standards as they were being developed. The OSPI wanted to adopt the standards when they were first released in June

2010, but the legislature was hesitant to do so before seeing the final public version. Delays in the legislative process caused Washington State to adopt the CCSS late, and, according to an interviewee at the OSPI, contributed to the state not receiving Race to the Top grant funding. The grant application required that states adopt the CCSS by August 2010, and Washington formally adopted the CCSS in July 2011.

A key motivation for adopting the CCSS, according to an interviewee in the OSPI, was a desire to obtain textbooks that are clearly aligned with the academic standards of Washington State. Whereas previous textbooks were aligned with large textbook markets such as California, publishers are now creating instructional supports that are linked to a single set of standards; Washington State teachers and students would benefit from this closer link.

As with Florida, the timing of the emergence of the CCSS did not align well with Washington's standards revision processes. Washington had just created and adopted new mathematics and science standards in 2008–2009. One state official explained that she initially felt that it would place too much pressure on the state education system to change standards yet again. However, she went on to say that she eventually came to see that the goal of the CCSS is to create deeper and more focused standards, and she believed that this was not something that Washington State could achieve as effectively alone.

Washington is the procuring and a governing state for the Smarter Balanced consortium.[10] Because Washington State was interested in creating a new system of assessments based on a computer adaptive test model, the state was a natural fit to lead the Smarter Balanced consortium. Also, according to study participants, Washington's past work on college readiness and the connection to K–12 standards positioned the state well to lead the Smarter Balanced consortium work. The state has close ties to the consortium, as Washington's former assistant superintendent for assessment and student information, Joe Willhoft, is now the executive director of Smarter Balanced.

Role of Higher Education in the Development and Implementation of the CCSS in Washington

According to a state higher education official, the higher education sector played no formal role in the early stages of the adoption process for the standards and, outside of connections to teacher education programs, there had been minimal outreach to higher

[10]See notes in Appendix Table B.2 for an explanation of the terms *participating*, *procuring*, and *governing*.

education representatives to participate. However, they have become more involved with the CCSS implementation process in recent months.

Washington, like Florida, partners with Core to College to encourage K–12 and higher education alignment activities. A higher education official involved in this work has assembled a CCSS review group comprised of mathematics and English faculty from two-year and four-year colleges, along with a number of K–12 representatives. The review group convened in the spring of 2012 to compare the CCSS to Washington State's college readiness standards, developed in the mid-2000s and built as an extension of the existing Washington K–12 standards. The group will look at how the two sets of standards compare and comment on the extent to which the CCSS truly represent what students need to know to be ready for college. One goal of this activity is to build greater understanding of the CCSS among college faculty, especially in English and mathematics, with the review group working to disseminate information about the CCSS to their colleagues in two-year and four-year colleges.

The official facilitating this work expects that the faculty will find that the CCSS aligns with or surpasses Washington's current standards for college readiness. However, they are trying to be clear that there is no opportunity to actually implement faculty feedback on the standards or to change the CCSS. The goal is to encourage discussions about whether or not higher education will utilize the CCSS, or the aligned assessments, in an official way. According to this interviewee,

> No matter what was promised on the state level, if they don't get the faculty and individual institutions on board and show them concrete ways to use the CCSS and assessments, the initiative won't have much impact in higher education.

Another higher education sector interviewee observed that there has been little activity to engage schools of education to support P–12 educators to implement the CCSS. This person went on to note, "If CCSS implementation requires significant shifts in pedagogical practice, knowledge of the standards alone will not have the impact on student learning hoped for in CCSS implementation."

Higher education officials are also supporting six local teams that will meet beginning in fall 2012 to build K–12 and higher education partnerships and to discuss how best to implement the CCSS. The local teams will also consider the role that the CCSS assessments will play in college placement decisions. Unlike some of the other states involved in Core to College, according to a higher education official, the state of Washington has already had extensive conversations about college readiness. They want to implement the CCSS and the aligned assessments in a way that is grounded in past college readiness initiatives and standards and supportive of local articulation and alignment initiatives.

Policy and Practice Implications for Higher Education in Washington

Despite their role as lead of the Smarter Balanced consortium, Washington State has not yet committed to using any of the developed assessments. A higher education interviewee reported that they are going to wait until the tests are finalized before they decide on how they will use the 11th grade assessment in higher education. If the assessment is considered appropriate for placement purposes, the higher education system will explore, through the Core to College effort, whether a system-wide approach would be both feasible and supported by the colleges and universities in the state. If not, it's likely that some two-year colleges will still use the assessment, but it will be up to individual institutions to decide on how they will use the results.

Although there has been limited discussion about how the implementation of the CCSS may impact four-colleges, one interview participant in Washington referred to discussions about the use of the CCSS assessments in the admissions process. According to this interviewee, to be used in admissions, the assessments would have to demonstrate alignment to the ACT or the SAT. Currently, Washington state policy requires the submission of ACT or SAT test scores as part of admissions applications. A policy change would be necessary for four-year colleges to be able to consider using the consortium assessment scores in their student admissions decisions.

The same higher education interviewee went on to point out that questions have been raised as to whether they should align pre-college (developmental) curriculum to these standards. Clearly, they would need faculty buy-in on the standards in order to do that. Colleges in the state are already considering new approaches to pre-college mathematics, possibly using more technology or taking a modular approach to developmental education. The intent is for faculty to infuse the CCSS into conversations about changing and improving developmental education in the coming years.

Implications for the Demand for and Delivery of Developmental Education in Washington

One higher education official interviewed hopes that implementation of the CCSS will decrease the need for developmental education in Washington. He noted that adults who have been out of school for a long time will still require developmental education courses but thinks that the initiative will have a more significant impact on recent high school graduates. He believes that developmental education will continue to be a large part of the work done by community and technical colleges.

Challenges to CCSS Implementation in Washington

An official at the OSPI reported that engagement with the higher education sector around CCSS implementation is a challenge because higher education stakeholders often take the perspective that the CCSS are just "another set of standards." They have not been at the table for all conversations about the CCSS and its implementation, and that makes it harder for them to understand the potential impacts. However, the fact that this is a nationwide initiative is helpful for drawing higher education stakeholders into the conversation. Further, the higher education sector generally expects the K–12 sector to align to higher education standards; they are not as inclined to engage in conversations about how higher education should align to K–12 standards.

A higher education official also commented that, though stakeholders in Washington's P–16 education system learned a lot during past college readiness projects, there are still important differences between the K–12 and higher education sectors. In his view, "The systems aren't really designed to be well connected; they're designed to be separate." He described talking across sectors as a "cross-cultural conversation" that requires attention to clarifying language and terms.

Another interviewee cited the proliferation of instructional resources available to support the transition to the CCSS as a problem. He described the amount of resources available and emerging as "overwhelming." He discussed the need for curating, vetting, and focusing the resources being developed in order to make them useful for higher education. He believes that it is the state offices' and alignment directors' jobs to pare down and classify the resources available to support CCSS implementation.

In past iterations of state assessments in Washington, education officials found it challenging to balance the costs of testing with the desire to assess students using multiple measures. The state became interested in the computer adaptive approach as a way to assess students in a balanced time- and cost-efficient manner and hopes that the computer adaptive assessments developed in the Smarter Balanced consortium will work in this way.

Summary

The three state profiles illustrate some of the successes achieved and challenges encountered in implementing the CCSS in state and local contexts. While the states were selected to illustrate a range of experiences in CCSS implementation, we noted several common factors that appeared to facilitate or impede progress in CCSS implementation.

Timing

The timing of states' adoption of the CCSS with respect to existing processes for revising statewide academic standards played a role in the CCSS adoption process. In Kentucky, all interviewees attested to the fact that the state's early adoption and comprehensive implementation of the CCSS was largely due to fortunate timing. The CCSS emerged just after the passage of legislation that required the state to revamp its academic content standards in an 18-month timeframe. Kentucky was in the market for revised academic standards, and the CCSS were released at the ideal moment for swift adoption. Further, Kentucky had not implemented any major revisions to its academic standards for 20 years prior to the adoption of the CCSS, and it was widely agreed that the time was ripe to do so. Conversely, in both Florida and Washington State, interviewees identified the timing of the release of the CCSS as a challenge in their adoption and implementation processes. Both states had recently revised their academic content standards at the time that they embarked on the CCSS adoption process, and the prospect of changing over to yet another set of academic standards led to resistance among teachers and other education stakeholders in those states.

Legislation

The passage of legislation linked to the adoption and implementation of the CCSS was a significant facilitating factor for Kentucky. Numerous interviewees in this study identified Kentucky as a state considered to be at the forefront of CCSS implementation work, particularly in terms of building K–12 and postsecondary sector collaboration. Interviewees within Kentucky attribute much of the state's success to the passage of legislation in 2009 that mandated cross-sector collaboration around academic standards and college readiness. As a result of this legislation, which started the state on the road to CCSS adoption quite early, Kentucky is the only state among the three in which there was broad higher education sector engagement in the CCSS draft review process. Thus, the postsecondary sector in Kentucky played a role in shaping the standards themselves, whereas in Washington, higher education officials and faculty members are only now being invited to review the standards and provide a postsecondary perspective on their content and utility in higher education.

Funding

Interviewees from Kentucky and Washington discussed challenges that resulted from a lack of funding to implement the CCSS in a comprehensive manner. An education official in Washington State described how a lack of funding weakened implementation efforts as only a limited number of staff are able to effectively engage in the work. From the early days of the CCSS, national education experts have expressed concern that declining state education budgets and lack of funding would imperil CCSS implementation efforts (Lewin, 2010). It was also

predicted that only states that received Race to the Top funding would have the resources and incentive to implement the standards with fidelity (Lewin, 2010). At the time that interviews for this study were conducted, only Florida had received Race to the Top grant money, and it was the only state out of the three in which officials did not name funding as one of the barriers to CCSS implementation.

5. Implications for Community Colleges and Others

Despite the tremendous amount of activity surrounding the CCSS and recent efforts to raise awareness of them in many corners, these standards and the Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments are still relatively unknown in higher education. Interviewees noted that those in the K–12 and higher education sectors continue to live in very different worlds and speak different languages, although some believe that this is slowly changing.

The preceding sections discussed ways that higher education involvement in discussions about the CCSS and the related assessments has been expanding, with considerable encouragement from national educational organizations and foundations. But how will (or could) the CCSS affect the life and daily practice of those in community colleges? Those participating in interviews for the current study responded to a series of questions on this topic. In some cases, interviewees spoke about changes that are already taking place; in other cases their responses were more speculative, especially as regards the yet-to-be developed CCSS-aligned assessments. Below we group analysis of their comments into three topical categories: (1) college assessment and placement, (2) changes to the college curriculum, and (3) partnerships with high schools related to college-readiness. Under each of these categories we summarize the status of the CCSS initiative in relation to the higher education sector and consider implications for community colleges and others. We also offer a recommendation on each topic based on the findings of the current study as well as on consideration of relevant prior research. This paper ends with brief concluding thoughts about the broad potential of this ambitious initiative.

College Assessment and Placement

The two consortia involved in developing assessment systems, PARCC and Smarter Balanced, are designing 11th grade tests that are aligned with the CCSS college and career readiness standards. These summative assessments will serve as the official state standardized tests for accountability purposes (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in the states that sign on to use them. As noted in the state profiles, some states are taking a wait-and-see attitude about which test they will use. However, the assumption of most people we interviewed was that, at the end of the day, almost all states will sign on to use one of the two assessments.

Higher education officials, in large numbers, have already agreed to use these test scores for placement purposes. In most cases, their agreement to do so took the form of letters that were prepared to accompany funding requests for Race to the Top grants or federal waivers from NCLB requirements, often carried out on a short timeline. According to interviewees,

there were few opportunities for discussions of the implications of the CCSS and aligned assessment systems before signing on. Further, they noted that colleges were agreeing to use the assessments as *part* of an overall placement system rather than as the only or primary way that they would place students into or out of remedial coursework in college. An interviewee from Smarter Balanced pointed out that Smarter Balanced expected and encouraged colleges to consider additional data points, such as courses completed in high school, grades, and other test scores, to support the placement process.

A number of our interviewees consider it very important to the ultimate success of the CCSS initiative that higher education institutions agree to use the CCSS 11th grade test results for placement purposes. They believe that this would add a great deal of credibility to the CCSS and accompanying assessments, which would mean a lot to state legislators and others concerned with public education. Many are conscious of the fact that, while there is great momentum behind the CCSS, the initiative could easily be derailed, as has happened with past efforts to establish common standards (see Rothman, 2011). The use of the assessments for placement purposes is seen as the most concrete indication that the higher education sector agrees that the standards are pegged to accurate benchmarks of college readiness.

However, several interviewees noted that many in higher education are approaching the tests cautiously. In particular, people are waiting on the results of studies that indicate whether the new assessments do a good job of placing students as well as evidence of their concordance with other key measures such as the SAT and the ACT. Both assessment consortia are actively engaging higher education representatives in setting the college-ready cutoff scores for the assessments as one way of making sure that they have direct involvement in this key aspect of the work.

Based on an analysis of the interviews conducted, there are a number of possible implications for community colleges related to the availability of the new 11th grade assessments:

- *Use of the CCSS assessments for placement purposes*: Decisions will have to be made on whether and how to use the CCSS assessments for college placement purposes. CCRC research (e.g., Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012) has pointed to a number of inadequacies in current practice. The tests that are most commonly used are not highly predictive of college success. What is more, they frequently misplace and sometimes "severely misplace" students with the result that considerable numbers of students take remedial courses that are not needed. Additional remedial courses cost money and are associated with lower and/or slower rates of college completion. Higher education representatives aware of this research are searching for alternatives

to current testing systems and may well be open to the use of alternative measures.

- *The use of CCSS assessments in combination with other measures*: Research from CCRC and others points to the value of using multiple measures of college readiness when considering whether students should be placed into remedial courses. In general, studies find that no one measure does a good job of placing students. In most cases, combinations of measures do better, although the best combination may differ by subject area (Scott-Clayton, 2012) and other factors. A number of interviewees suggested ways that the CCSS assessments might be combined with other measures to improve placement decisions. One suggestion was to establish a "fuzzy cutoff score" on the CCSS assessment; students who place within a certain range of the cutoff score would be then be re-assessed using other instruments.

- *Demand for dual enrollment*: Presumably, a considerable number of students will be deemed college ready in math and/or English by the end of 11th grade once the CCSS assessments are administered. It is not hard to imagine that this could increase the demand for access to dual enrollment courses.[11] Colleges in some states are already serving large numbers of high school students; in some locations, they would be able to serve more. In others, however, they are straining to meet the needs of already enrolled students and may not have the capacity to meet increased demand (Barnett & Stamm, 2010)

- *Demand for college readiness interventions*: In addition, large numbers of 11th grade students will probably learn that they are not yet college ready and that they need to take measures to become better prepared. Research on California's Early Assessment Program (Howell, Kurlaender, & Grodsky, 2010) indicates that students who receive information on their preparedness for college are more likely to take steps to become college ready.

[11]Dual enrollment courses are college courses offered to high school students; institutions may or may not offer the opportunity to earn dual credit.

Recommendation 1: Use the CCSS 11th grade assessment as one measure in a set of multiple measures used in placement decisions for students entering college directly after high school. Research indicates that the use of multiple measures is likely to result in better placement decisions and, potentially, better college outcomes. The first CCSS test scores of graduates will be available to colleges for placement purposes in (for most students) the fall of 2016. Thus, colleges interested in the possibility of incorporating CCSS 11th grade test scores into their placement assessment system have ample time to consider the costs, benefits, and logistics involved in using them. The initial incorporation of these scores could be done on a pilot basis to allow time to assess the extent to which they contribute to the accuracy of student placement decisions.

Changes to the Community College Curriculum

Some interviewees raised questions about whether developmental education should change in response to the establishment of the CCSS. As developmental education is essentially high school–level work, it could make sense to align these courses to the CCSS. While it is an open question whether there was sufficient postsecondary input into the development of the original anchor college readiness benchmarks, they are receiving widespread acceptance across the country. What is more, many in higher education perceive that there is value in having agreed-upon criteria for college readiness to provide clear signaling to high schools about college expectations. For example, Graff and Birkenstein (2008) argue that students benefit when expectations are clear and well known, rather than just the purview of those guided by prosperous and savvy parents. Further, some interviewees proposed that introductory college-level courses in math and English composition could be designed to take up where high school education leaves off. Discussions were underway in several states about this at the time of this study.

Clearly, calls for aligning curricula with a set of K–12 standards fly in the face of historical precedent and are unlikely to sit well with many college faculty, who generally value high levels of control over the design of their courses. But at least one of the interviewees considered this a necessary step, stating, "There will be resistance from all sorts of quarters, and a challenge is to address those areas of resistance respectfully, but to address them."

Some of the implications of the CCSS for the design and delivery of developmental education are as follows:

- *Alignment of developmental education and introductory college-level courses with CCSS*: Assuming that colleges agree that the CCSS are pegged to appropriate college readiness standards, it makes sense that their developmental education courses would cover the same material. In addition,

initial college-level courses could be designed to take up where the CCSS leave off. This would allow recent high school graduates who enter college to move into college-level material more seamlessly, building on a foundation of recently completed courses in high school and facilitating a smooth transition from high school to college.

- *Improved pedagogy*: To the extent that the CCSS encourage better critical thinking and other key academic skills, they might serve as a good foundation on which to work toward improving pedagogy in community colleges. Research by Grubb et al. (2011) and Arum and Roska (2011) suggests that both college pedagogy and student learning outcomes could be improved and that too little attention is paid to problem solving and critical thinking in typical college classrooms.
- *Better textbooks and learning materials*: Many in the K–12 sector are expecting the emergence of better quality textbooks and materials that are more closely aligned to the CCSS. It is likely that costs could be reduced due to the volume of purchases that will be made. Further, some of the newly created learning materials may involve the use of emerging, effective technologies with high initial development costs. These resources may be useful in community colleges as well, particularly in developmental education courses that are essentially teaching high school–level content.

Recommendation 2: Align developmental education and introductory college-level courses in math and English composition to the CCSS to smooth the transition for recent high school graduates entering college. As seen in this study, in some states and colleges, discussions are already underway on how to align developmental education and/or introductory college-level courses in math and English to the CCSS. We contend that these conversations could be taking place more widely. There would be many advantages to creating greater alignment between high school, developmental (and/or adult) education, and college courses, creating a smoother transition for students at each stage. Greater alignment would also mean that students transferring among colleges would be less likely to experience problems with transfer.

College Readiness and Partnerships with High Schools

Colleges have long called on the K–12 sector to better prepare students for college. Strong high school preparation is closely tied to good college outcomes. In many studies (ACT, Inc., 2010; Adelman, 2006), the most powerful predictor of college success is high school performance as indicated by enrollment in rigorous coursework, GPA, and/or standardized test scores. If implementation of the CCSS helps high schools to graduate more students who have attained an agreed-upon college-ready benchmark, more students will arrive at college well prepared. One interviewee underscored that this expectation would be the principal driver of higher education support for the CCSS; as pressure continues to mount on higher education representatives for better completion rates, it is in their interest to do everything possible to enroll better prepared students.

Several of the interviewees pointed out that it has not been easy for those in the K–12 sector to get clear and actionable information on what higher education representatives mean by college readiness. While college placement tests such as the ACCUPLACER and COMPASS are used to place students, there are no easy, accessible ways for high schools to get information on what is covered in these tests. As shown in research by Barnett et al. (2012), colleges are increasingly working with local high schools to inform them of what they expect students to know and to proactively develop approaches to improving student preparedness for college.

Implications of the CCSS that relate to defining and working toward higher levels of college readiness are as follows:

- *Increased conversations on the definition of college readiness:* While a college readiness definition is already established and embodied in the CCSS, there are a number of states and colleges that are setting up opportunities for postsecondary faculty to review it. The idea is to broaden awareness of this definition and encourage its use in communications with high schools around preparing students for college.

- *Strengthened partnerships with local high schools*: Community colleges are typically concerned with meeting the needs of their local regions. Students, families, colleges, employers, and civic life can all be enhanced by the creation of an education system in which everyone works together to make sure that students have good educational opportunities. In addition, colleges are increasingly held accountable for their graduation rates. As previously discussed, students who graduate high school college ready are considerably more likely to complete college in a timely manner. Colleges can work closely with K–12 partners to develop initiatives to promote college readiness.

Recommendation 3: Work directly with local K–12 partners to make sure that every student completing high school is ready to enter college without needing remediation, and with skills that are strong enough to complete a college credential in a timely manner. Discussions related to the CCSS could pave the way for more postsecondary involvement in preparing high school students for college. In particular, students identified as not-yet-college-ready in the 11th grade could benefit from participation in explicit college-readiness activities in the 12th grade. Involvement of local colleges in designing and implementing these initiatives could lead to improved student preparation for college and better college outcomes.

Concluding Thoughts

A recent report from the *21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges* (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012) offers support for the CCSS. It recommends that community colleges work to "dramatically improve college readiness: By 2020 reduce by half the number of students entering college unprepared for rigorous college-level work…" (p. 26). It goes on to encourage colleges to use more explicit definitions of college readiness that are in alignment with the CCSS. We support the idea that college readiness definitions should be clear and comprehensible. We also contend that there are opportunities for community colleges that grow out of national and state efforts to implement the CCSS and related assessments. Current challenges in higher education can be addressed and possibly ameliorated by taking advantage of these opportunities. Indeed, exploration of these possibilities has the potential to increase the number of students who, at every level of the education system, have access to better experiences and outcomes.

Appendix A: Overview of the Common Core State Standards

This is a summary of the information assembled as of June 2012 regarding the design, development, and implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

What are the basic facts about the CCSS initiative?

- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in 2009 between 48 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the National Governor Associations (NGA), and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) committing to the development of the CCSS (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).
- The standards were released in June 2010.
- States' participation in CCSS is voluntary.
- The initiative is state-led, not federal. However, the federal government incentivized states to participate through grant money and relaxing enforcement of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in states that adopt rigorous college and career standards (Phillips & Vandal, 2011).
- As of December 15th, 2011, 45 states and three territories have signed on to the initiative. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia have not adopted the standards, and Minnesota has adopted the ELA standards only (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011).
- Quick adoption of the standards by states is attributed to monetary incentives through the Race to the Top competition (Lewin, 2010), and the perception by adopting states that the CCSS will guide statewide education improvement (Center on Education Policy, 2011).
- The purpose of the CCSS initiative was to create a set of fewer, clearer, and more rigorous standards that will be consistent across all states and territories (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011).
- Participating states have agreed that the standards will represent 85 percent of the state's standards in mathematics and language arts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011).

What are the goals of the CCSS?

1. To create clearer expectations among parents and the general public regarding what students should be able to do and know by the end of each grade and when they graduate from high school (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)

2. To facilitate the alignment of U.S. materials and curriculum to rigorous international standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)

3. To set the foundation for more focused professional development for educators (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)

4. To provide opportunity for states to come together to develop multiple, common, and innovative assessments aligned with the standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)

What led to the creation of the CCSS?

- Uneven state standards/policies, which were further exacerbated under NCLB, in which some states weakened education standards to avoid penalization under NCLB (Lewin, 2010)

- The desire to become competitive with higher performing nations (Sawchuk, 2011)

How were the CCSS created?[12]

- The CCSSO and NGA created three groups to work on different aspects of the CCSS:

    1. Standards development work group, a group of content experts from Achieve Inc., ACT, Inc., and the College Board who were charged with writing the common state standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011);

[12]Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011.

2. Feedback group, charged with revising the standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011);

3. Validation committee, ensured that the standards are research- and evidence-based and meet the following criteria: "aligned with college and work expectations, inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills, and internationally benchmarked (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011)."

- Teachers, researchers, administrators, policymakers, higher education officials, and other state leaders informed the development of the standards (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).
- Public feedback was solicited throughout the process (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).

Who was/is most involved in the creation of the CCSS?

- The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers led the effort (Lewin, 2010).
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided financial backing to most of the organizations involved in drafting, evaluating, and winning support for the standards (Lewin, 2010).

Who/what organizations support the CCSS?

- There are many. "Voices of Support" (see website below) features endorsements from individuals including high school teachers, high ranking, state-level education officials, and business leaders. The endorsing partners are associations, and non-profit and for-profit organizations devoted to education and the development of educational tools. See:
    - Statements of support: http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/statements-of-support
    - Voices of support: http://www.corestandards.org/voices-of-support
    - Common Core Endorsing Partners: http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/common-core-endorsing-partners

Where are states/districts in the process of implementation?

- As of January 2012, all participating states and the District of Columbia had finalized formal CCSS implementation plans (Porter et al., 2012); 20 states had completed teacher professional development plans; 17 states had completed plans for the creation of curriculum guides or instructional materials; and 15 states had completed plans for teacher evaluation systems. Only seven states (Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and West Virginia) have completed plans in all three areas (Porter et al., 2012).
- Other common activities that roughly one third to one half of districts were engaged in, or planned to engage in, by the 2011–2012 school year were the following: developing or purchasing new curriculum materials, developing new local assessments, providing professional development, assigning resource teachers to assist teachers in integrating the CCSS in instruction, designing a teacher evaluation system aligned to the CCSS, and aligning the content of teacher training programs in schools of education to the CCSS.
- Thirty-three to 74 percent of districts, depending on the activity, did not plan to implement any of the above by the 2011–2012 school year (Center on Education Policy, 2011).
- Most adopting states expect to make changes to professional development programs by 2012, but anticipate that to fully implement changes to assessment, curriculum, teacher evaluation, and teacher certification could take until 2013 or longer (Center on Education Policy, 2011).

What are anticipated challenges to implementation?

- More than half the districts in CCSS-adopting states believe that implementing the CCSS will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials (Center on Education Policy, 2011).
- Decreases in school districts' budgets may slow down or stop implementation of the standards (Center on Education Policy, 2011).
- Lack of guidance from states on how to implement the CCSS is seen as a challenge by a majority of districts (Center on Education Policy, 2011).

- There are challenges associated with adjusting teacher education programs and revising in-service professional development (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).
- Teachers require greater and deeper content knowledge to effectively teach according to the CCSS (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).

Who is developing the CCSS-aligned assessments?

- Winners of the Race to the Top Comprehensive Assessment Systems Competition (announced in September 2010): Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) (Tamayo, 2010)
- PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments are grounded in the following principals (Tamayo, 2010):
    1. Assessments are common across states and are aligned to the CCSS.
    2. Students take "performance-based" assessments for accountability.
    3. The assessment systems are "computer-based" for more sophisticated design and quick, reliable scoring.
    4. Transparent reporting systems are intended to drive effective decision making. Results will show whether students are "on-track" for college and career readiness.
- There are differences between the PARCC and Smarter Balanced approaches to system design. States will use either Smarter Balanced or PARCC depending on which consortium they join. PARCC has *governing* and *participating* states. Smarter Balanced has *governing* and *advisory* states. *Advisory* and *participating* states may join both consortia until the assessments are fully implemented in 2014–2015. At that point, states must choose one assessment system; governing states may belong to only one consortium (Tamayo, 2010). See Appendix B for a more detailed comparison of the two consortia.
- CCSS assessments will replace the NCLB-mandated assessments currently used in participating states in the 2014–2015 academic year (Tamayo, 2010).

What was higher education's role in the development of the standards and assessments?

- Leaders from higher education participated in the advisory group that provided feedback and guidance on the development of the CCSS. These experts included representatives from: Achieve, Inc., ACT, Inc., the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011).
- The American Council on Education (ACE) convened panels of faculty in cooperation with leading disciplinary groups (Modern Language Association and Conference Board on the Mathematical Sciences) to provide input on the college and career readiness anchor standards. The Race to the Top Comprehensive Assessment Systems competition, which awarded grant money to state consortia to develop assessment systems aligned with the CCSS, awarded up to 20 points for "buy-in" from higher education (Sawchuk, 2010).
- In order to win higher education "buy-in" points, both consortia secured commitments from public colleges and universities to use the results of high school–level assessments developed by the consortia to place students who met college-ready benchmarks on the assessments into credit-bearing, college-level courses. The PARCC consortium secured the agreement of 184 institutions and systems of higher education across the states (representing 90 percent of direct-matriculation students), and Smarter Balanced secured agreement from 162 institutions and systems (representing 74 percent of direct-matriculation students) (Sawchuk, 2010).
- Both consortia have staff positions and committees or working groups devoted to outreach to and collaboration with the higher education sector.

What are some implications for higher education?

- There is hope that the effective implementation of the CCSS will facilitate greater alignment between K–12 and higher education sectors (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011), but officials from most adopting states were unsure of whether they would align undergraduate admission requirements to the CCSS (Center on Educational Policy, 2011).

- Most discussions about the impact of CCSS focus on students attending college directly after high school, while adults (above 25 years old) comprise 39 percent of college enrollment. There has been little discussion of how the CCSS may impact this population (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2011).
- There has also been discussion that the consortia-generated 11th grade assessments may be used by two-year colleges to place students into developmental education, and that colleges may align developmental education and general education courses to the CCSS. For more information on these implications for higher education, see the state profile section of this report.

What are some critiques of the CCSS?

- Who will control the national standards? Politics could inform the curriculum of certain subjects, particularly social studies (Goldstein, 2010).
- The CCSS will diminish individuality and creativity in classrooms (Fuller, 2011).
- The CCSS does not require students to pass Algebra I in 8th grade, which has long-term implications for advanced mathematics course-taking (Stotsky, 2010).
- States that are not winners in the Race to the Top competition may have less incentive to carry out standards (Lewin, 2010).
- Lack of funds makes it difficult to implement all aspects of the CCSS (Center on Educational Policy, 2011).
- The lack of funding for assessment research will make it difficult for the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia to develop effective, new, large-scale tests (Sawchuk, 2010).

What are some claims of CCSS supporters?

- Because of alignment between states, it will be easier to share curriculum (Goldstein, 2010).

- National standards pair well with the rise of blogs and self-publishing (i.e., BetterLesson.com), which will give teachers greater flexibility to buy curricula that meets their needs (Goldstein, 2010).
- Fewer resources will need to be spent by individual states on developing their own standards and tests (Lewin, 2010).
- Given the mobility of the American population, it makes sense to create common standards across states (Kahlenburg, 2011).
- Three fifths of states found the CCSS standards to be more rigorous than those that they will replace (Center on Educational Policy, 2011).

What resources are available or are being proposed for implementation?

- As of January 2011, the majority of adopting states planned to make changes to assessments, curriculum guides or materials, professional development programs, and revising educator certification and evaluation policies (Center on Educational Policy, 2011), and by September 2011, one third to half of participating districts were developing or planned to develop curriculum materials, local assessments, professional development, and teacher evaluation programs (Center on Educational Policy, 2011). This information implies that the development of resources to support the implementation of the CCSS is underway, though it is unclear who is developing materials or how they are being developed. As of January 2012, roughly one half to roughly one third of states had finalized plans in at least one of the above areas. See the section 4 for more details on state and district progress on implementation.
- Student Achievement Partners has produced publisher's guides to both help frame the development of new materials and assist states and districts in making purchasing decisions.
- Mastery Connect, a web company that allows educators to share formative assessment tools, developed a Common Core app, available on iTunes: http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/common-core-standards/id439424555?mt=8

Appendix B: Comparison of CCSS Assessment Systems

Table B.1

Consortia

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Name	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
Grants	$186 million from the U.S. Department of Education to create assessment systems aligned to the CCSS[a]	$175 million from the U.S. Department of Education to create assessment systems aligned to the CCSS[b]

NOTES:
[a]PARCC (n.d.).
[b]Sawchuk (2010).

Table B.2

Governance

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Procuring State	Florida	Washington
Governing States	Arizona, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee	California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan., Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont., Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin
Participating States	Alabama, Colorado, Kentucky, North Dakota, Pennsylvania	Alabama, North Dakota, Pennsylvania Wyoming
What are states in either consortium required to do?	Sign an MOU stating agreement to: • Adopt a common core of content for ELA and math by December 12, 2011 • Use consortium's tests as federal accountability system by 2014–2015 school year[a]	
Project Management	Achieve, Inc.	WestEd

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Committees or Working Groups	• Governing board • Advisory committee on college readiness • Technical advisory committee • Leadership team • Postsecondary leadership team • Technical advisory • Technical working groups • Operational working groups • Content leads[a]	• Executive committee (full governing board consists of K–12 leads from governing states) • Higher education leads • Technical advisory committee • Students with disabilities advisory committee • English language learners advisory committee • Accessibility and accommodations working group • Formative assessment practices and professional learning working group • Item development working group • Performance tasks working group • Reporting working group • Validation and psychometrics working group • Technology approach working group • Test administration working group • Test design working group • Transition to CCSS working group[b]

SOURCE: Adapted from Sawchuk (2010).

NOTES: The *procuring state* is the "fiscal agent" that oversees all financial procurement on behalf of the consortia. *Governing states* are those states that have fully committed to implementing their consortium's assessment system by the 2014–2015 school year. Each governing state controls one vote in either the governing board (PARCC) or the steering committee (Smarter Balanced), which are the main policymaking bodies for the consortia. *Participating* or *advisory states* can belong to either consortia, and participate in activities of both for now, but they must decide by the 2014–2015 school year which assessment system they will implement and thereby commit to one consortium.

[a]Achieve, Inc. (2010).

[b]State of Washington (n.d.).

Table B.3

Grade Level and Timing of Assessments

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Grade level assessments	Both consortia designed assessments for primary and secondary school.	
High school assessments	Requires tests in grades 9–11	One required test in 11th grade, and optional interim assessments for grades 9 and 10

SOURCE: Table adapted from Tamayo (2010).

Table B.4

Types of Assessments

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
End of year	One end of year assessment in ELA and one in mathematics	One summative assessment per year in reading; one in writing, listening, speaking, and language; one in mathematics; assessments consist of computer adaptive test and performance tasks
Through-course	Quarterly assessments in ELA and mathematics that are included in the summative, end-of-year scores for accountability	N/A
Performance-based	Both consortia use "performance-based" assessments, including research and essay writing, to measure higher-order critical thinking	
Formative	Both consortia offer the option of accessing a broad range of formative assessments to provide teachers with feedback on students' learning needs throughout the year	

SOURCE: Table adapted from Tamayo (2010).

Table B.5

Content of Assessments

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Assessment description: ELA	• End of year literacy • "Through-course" focused literacy • "Through-course" extended research/writing • "Through-course" speaking and listening	• Summative assessment instrument in English language arts/literacy (including reading, writing, listening and research)
Assessment description: math	• End of year math • "Through-course" focused assessment of essential topics • "Through-course" extended math assessment	• Summative assessment instrument in math (concepts and procedures, problem solving, communicating reasoning, modeling and data analysis)
Measure higher order thinking ability	Both consortia will explore the use of "technology enhanced" items that measure higher order critical thinking abilities. This could include requiring students to interact with an on-screen graph, for example.	

SOURCE: Table adapted from Tamayo (2010).

Table B.6

Procedural Issues

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Technology for test delivery	Computer-based, web-delivered[a]	Computer-adaptive, web-delivered[a] Smarter Balanced will offer a paper and pencil option for the first 3 years of operational testing
Scoring of tests	Combination of human and computer scoring, but allow states to determine whether teachers would participate in scoring[a]	Combination of human and computer scoring, but stronger approach to teacher scoring as tool for professional development[a]
Cutoff scores	Finalize assessment standards and cutoff scores after full-scale administration in 2014–2015[b]	Set initial cutoff scores in summer 2014 after field testing[b]
Data sharing capability	Both consortia plan to develop systems for sharing data with educators, parents, and teachers throughout the year,[a] including annual and periodic reports for individual students, classes, schools, districts, and states[b]	
Unique features	Development of assessment instrument to determine whether students can succeed in college without remediation, and/or graduate with proficiency for entry-level jobs[a]	Development of "interim" assessments to gauge student progress and pinpoint areas of weakness which are not linked to accountability determinations; computer adaptive testing
Timeline	Implementation at scale at all consortia sites by 2014–2015[b]	

NOTES:
[a]Sawchuk (2010).
[b]Tamayo (2010).

Table B.7

Higher Education Involvement

	PARCC	Smarter Balanced
Agreements of collaboration with institutions of higher education	755 colleges and universities have committed to participating in PARCC[a]	175 public and 13 private systems/institutions of higher education
Alignment with higher education	Participating institutions of higher education will use consortia assessments as indicators of students' readiness for placement into entry-level, credit-bearing coursework[c]	
Higher education representatives or faculty participation in drafting process	Postsecondary faculty from math, English, and composition participated in the design, development, and review of assessments[a]	Higher education representatives were on the committee, advisory committees, and all working groups[b]
Professional positions or bodies devoted to higher education collaboration	• Higher education leadership team • National-level advisory committee on college readiness (ACCR)[a] • Senior fellow for postsecondary engagement position[d] • Program associate for postsecondary engagement[d]	• Director of higher education collaboration position • 5 part-time regional senior advisors • Higher education leads for each state[b]

NOTES:
[a]PARCC (n.d.).
[b]Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (2012).
[c]Sawchuk (2010).
[d]PARCC (n.d.).

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