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Office of Academic Affairs

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: College Provosts/Chief Academic Officers, Immersion Council and CUE Council Directors

FR: Lucinda R. Zoe, University Dean for Undergraduate Studies *Y. H. Zoe*  
David Crook, Associate University Provost for Academic Affairs *David Crook*

RE: Targeted USIP Intervention Design Guidelines

DT: April 26, 2018

For more than three decades, the University Skills Immersion Program (USIP) has been a vital artery of student success, providing tuition-free opportunities for CUNY students to receive developmental and other instruction throughout the academic year. Despite its strong record of success, a fresh assessment has led us to conclude that USIP can be even more effective if we restructure the program offerings to more closely align with the needs of students.

Several factors have motivated this reappraisal of the program. First, CUNY's Academic Momentum Campaign calls upon colleges to establish practices leading more students to complete their Math and Quantitative Reasoning (MQR) and English Composition (EC) requirements during their first academic year, and to earn 30 credits per year consistently throughout their academic career. To this end, pre-matriculation programs, such as USIP, can provide a strong academic momentum boost for students assigned to developmental education. Second, over the last few years, the Office of Undergraduate Studies has worked with the colleges to improve data reporting for USIP, allowing us to assess the program with much more precision. This means that we can now take into account both student and program characteristics as well as outcomes, and identify opportunities for timely and consistent improvement of the program. Finally, over the last several years, CUE funds (primary funding for the majority of USIP programming) have been scrutinized and reduced. Consequently, improving financial efficiency of our USIP programs is more important than ever.

The purpose of this advisory memo is to provide guidelines to improve USIP's ability to serve students' needs while ensuring efficient allocation of funds. Our data indicate that too few USIP interventions provide instruction tailored to the specific needs students. OAA has identified six groups of students who have unique remedial profiles. We strongly encourage you to revamp existing interventions and design new ones this summer to meet the needs of each group. OAA will support these efforts through the strategic allocation of CUE funds and by providing analytical support. Below, we outline three principles of USIP redesign, describe the six student groups mentioned above, and provide guidelines for assigning these students to USIP interventions.

### Three Principles for USIP Redesign

We suggest that all USIP programs and offerings incorporate the following general principles:

- I. *All USIP participants should be provided an opportunity to earn proficiency in the subject.*  
As part of CUNY's Momentum Campaign, the University prioritizes students earning MQR and EC credit in the first year. For students assigned to remediation, there is an extra hurdle. To boost academic momentum, all USIP interventions should provide students an opportunity to earn proficiency.
- II. *All USIP participants should continue their momentum in the subject during the semester following participation in USIP.*  
Recent analyses suggest that approximately 30 percent of USIP summer students who are retained in the fall lose momentum because they neither take a remedial course if needed, nor enroll in a credit course if they qualify for one. We observed this pattern in both MQR as well as EC. To prevent loss of momentum, USIP programs should include a plan for students to continue their course work in the next semester.
- III. *All USIP interventions should target specific groups of students who could reasonably benefit from them.* One size does not fit all.  
The duration and types of support needed to reach proficiency should be targeted based on student characteristics such as the student's level of assignment and progress toward proficiency.

Below we describe six student groups and the intervention that our research suggests best serves their needs.

#### Six Target Groups and Intervention Guidelines

Below we provide a description of the skill profile of six student groups, the program best suited to serve each group, and a brief reference to the evidence supporting our recommendation. Three of the groups are freshmen (Groups F1, F2, and F3) and three are continuing students (Groups C1, C2 and C3).

Target Student Group	Suggested Interventions	Rationale
<b>F1:</b> First-time Freshmen assigned to two-levels of developmental work in a subject.	For students not able to enroll in CUNY Start or Math Start, USIP should provide an intervention that incorporates two-levels of developmental work or a structured sequence of interventions. (Approximately 60 hours or less of total instruction.)	Pass rates for F1 students in combo and structured sequence of offerings were often observed to be in 60% and 70% range, respectively.
<b>F2a:</b> First-time Freshmen assigned only to top-level in a subject who are near-passing proficiency criteria; Eligible for re-test.	Workshops, intensives, bootcamps, and other forms of short-term offerings. (Not to exceed 20 hours of instruction.)	About 50% of F2a students pass when re-tested.



<b>F2b<sup>1</sup>:</b> First-time Freshmen assigned only to top-level in a subject who are near-passing proficiency criteria; Not eligible for re-test	Workshops, intensives, bootcamps, and other forms of short-term offerings. (Not to exceed 20 hours of instruction.)	About 90% of F2b students pass after short interventions.
<b>F3:</b> First-time Freshmen assigned only to the top-level in subject but are not near-passing proficiency criteria.	Workshops, courses, intensives, bootcamps and other short-term offerings not to exceed 45 hours of instruction	About 70% of F3 students passed after a moderately long intervention.
<b>C1:</b> Continuing students who nearly passed their developmental coursework.	Workshops, intensives, bootcamps, and other forms of short-term offerings not to exceed 20 hours of instruction.	About 75% of C1 students passed after a short intervention.
<b>C2*:</b> Continuing students who have been enrolled for a less than one year but still did not address their need in a subject.	Workshops, courses, intensives, bootcamps and other short-term offerings not to exceed 45 hours of instruction.  (This group of students could benefit from innovative additional student supports including tutoring and use of technology.)	About 60% of C2 students pass after moderately long interventions.
<b>C3*:</b> Continuing students who have been enrolled for one year or more (includes multiple repeaters and students with breaks in enrollment).	Innovative workshops, courses, intensives, bootcamps and other short-term offerings not to exceed 60 hours of instruction.  (This group of students could benefit from innovative additional student supports including tutoring and use of technology.)	About 50% of C3 students pass after moderately long interventions.

*\*For students in groups C2 and C3, our analyses suggested that longer interventions were less successful than those not exceeding 60 hours. However, considering the lower success rates of these groups, this group of students could benefit from innovative additional student supports including tutoring and use of technology.*

This may not be an exhaustive list of student groups and other groups of students may benefit from a different model. We will continue to use student and USIP data to inform and support program development and encourage creative pedagogical and curricular innovation across the program.

#### Students best served by programs other than USIP

**CUNY Start** and **Math Start** are designed to serve subgroups of students who have multiple subject assignments and/or those with deep levels of need within one subject. Given the limited resources available for USIP and the high success rates of CUNY Start and Math Start, the following students should be referred to these two programs when possible.

<sup>1</sup> Recall the September 28, 2016 Memo *Exit Standards for Non-Course-Based Developmental Interventions* from EVC Rabinowitz indicates that the campus Chief Academic Officer may authorize the University final exam (e.g. CEAFE and CATW) be 100 percent of the grade for the intervention.

1. Students assigned to remediation in all three skill areas or in two areas, but with low scores in both. Preferred assignment: **CUNY Start's full-time program.**
2. Incoming freshmen assigned to two levels of math and at most light reading and writing remedial assignment. Preferred assignments:
  - a. **Math Start or CUNY Start's Part-time Math Program**
  - b. Otherwise, a **USIP** combination course or a structured sequence of USIP courses ending with proficiency of approximately 60 hours of instruction or less.
3. Incoming freshmen who require a substantial amount of preparation in reading and writing but not math:
  - a. **CUNY Start part-time program in Reading and Writing**
  - b. **USIP** combination course or structured sequence of USIP courses ending with proficiency with a total maximum of approximately 60 hours of instruction or less.
4. ESL students who need a significant amount of instruction to achieve English language proficiency should consider enrollment in the CUNY Language Immersion Program (**CLIP**).

We recommend that CAOs and Campus Program Directors from ASAP, USIP, and CUNY Start/Math Start meet to determine specific referrals at each campus, guided by data on success rates in each remedial alternative. For example, University-wide data reveal that about 77 percent of students who were assigned to two levels of math and who participated in Math Start achieved proficiency through the program. In comparison only 42 percent of similar students who took part in summer achieved proficiency. However, it is understood that there are many students who are not eligible for CUNY Start/Math Start or who are unable to enroll for personal reasons. For these students, USIP is their best pre-matriculation option; hence, it is important to ensure that USIP offerings are designed to meet these students' needs.

#### Recording of Outcomes

University policy requires that all USIP offerings be entered into CUNYFirst. Memos issued by the University Registrar dated October 21, 2011 and March 16, 2016 provide coding instructions for this purpose. Any individual authorized by the Provost may enter grades/outcomes for each student. On some campuses, only the USIP director enters grades, and on others, the task is distributed among multiple authorized individuals including faculty, workshop coordinators or master tutor instructors.

Cc: Vita Rabinowitz, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost  
Robert Maruca, Associate University Provost of Planning  
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