

In Brief

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO FACE NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT PLACEMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

On January 11, 2021, the Illinois legislature passed House Bill 2170, which will introduce sweeping educational reforms if Governor Pritzker signs the bill as expected. While most of the bill focuses on education at the K-12 level, the bill also creates the higher education-focused *Developmental Education Reform Act* (“Act”), which aims to remedy the barrier that traditional developmental education courses create for all students, and particularly Black students.

The Act requires that, on or before May 1, 2022, community colleges consider multiple measures for determining student placement in introductory English and mathematics courses, encompassing both standardized test scores and scores set forth in recommendations approved by the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (“ICCCP”). Placement measures that colleges must consider include cumulative high school grade point average, completion of “transition courses,” and completion of introductory college-level English or mathematics courses at another regionally accredited post-secondary educational institution. The Act provides that a community college may, at its discretion, accept a lower score on an individual placement measure than that recommended by ICCCP, or may accept lower scores in combination with placement measures other than the recommended measures. Each institution of higher education is required to publicly post its student placement policy in a format that is easily accessible to both students and prospective students. The Illinois Community College Board will issue a public report on or before July 1, 2023 regarding each community college’s developmental education and college-level coursework placement policy and outcomes.

The Act also requires all public universities and community colleges to prepare and submit an institutional plan concerning developmental education to the Board of Higher Education and Illinois Community College Board, respectively. Each institution’s plan must identify its strategy to scale evidence-based developmental education reforms in a way that will maximize the probability that a student will be placed in and successfully complete introductory courses in English or mathematics within two semesters. An institution’s plan must include all of the following components:

- A description of the current developmental education models offered or details regarding the decision not to offer developmental education coursework;
- A description of the models that will be implemented, as well as evidence and data that the institution relied upon when deciding to scale the model;
- Baseline data and benchmarks for progress; and
- Detailed plans for scaling reforms and improving outcomes for all students placed in traditional developmental education programs, with details about the expected improvements for Black students.

Institutional plans must be submitted by May 1, 2022. These plans will be used by the Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board to create public reports regarding the status of, and data supporting, the progress of developmental education reforms at higher education institutions throughout the State.

For further assistance regarding the impact of House Bill 2170, please contact any Robbins Schwartz attorney.