April 7, 2004

Commissioner Jim Horne
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Commissioner Horne:

I respectfully submit *The Delivery of Postsecondary Remediation in Florida: An Analysis of Options*. Postsecondary remediation delivery is a major task given primarily to Florida’s 28 community colleges. In 2001-02, Floridians spent more than $100 million on the delivery of postsecondary remediation. In these lean and difficult budget years, it is becoming increasingly important to maximize both the efficiency and effectiveness of government services so that limited public dollars can be stretched farther and most effectively for public benefit.

After examining three policy alternations for the delivery of postsecondary remediation, I recommend that a combination of three options should be implemented to provide an efficient and effective service for Florida’s students. This conclusion was formulated following the evaluation of three delivery options using to three criteria: monetary cost, success rates and the availability of infrastructure.

First, it was determined that community colleges should continue to be the primary delivery option, but with a stricter interpretation of the state statutes regarding remediation. Community colleges have the available infrastructure, and allow returning students to take part in remedial courses. Second, the number of Florida’s graduating high school students in need of remedial courses at postsecondary institutions should decrease significantly with a new statewide policy allowing high school students to take remedial courses as electives while still in high school. This would be convenient for the students and would save money for both the students and the state. For every 1,000 students taking remedial courses at the high school level instead of at a community college approximately $390,000 would be saved in costs to students and the state. Finally, the possibility of private providers delivering postsecondary remediation should be offered to students by their high school and college counselors, as was intended by the 1997 and 1998 legislation. It is important that students progress through these courses as quickly as possible, and the individualized instruction often available at private providers may better assist some students.

Thus, each of these three options provide choice of delivery institutions and together economically and efficiently serve the needs of students requiring remediation.

Respectfully,

Brea R. Gelin
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. PROBLEM STATEMENT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Criteria</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY OPTIONS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local School Districts</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Providers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Summary of Alternatives and Evaluative Criteria 28
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001-02, 65.6% of freshmen entering Florida’s community colleges and 11% of those entering a Florida state university failed the reading, writing or math portions of an entry-level test (ACT, SAT or College Placement Test [CPT]) and were required to take at least one remedial course. The remedial needs of Florida’s students at each of the 11 state universities ranged from 61% requiring remediation at FAMU (Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University) to zero percent at New College. In these lean and difficult budget years, it is becoming increasingly important to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of government services so that limited public dollars can be stretched further and most effectively for public benefit.

Though much has been said about the merits of postsecondary remediation, a thorough review to determine the best available institution for its delivery has not been conducted. The relevant literature on this subject centers around five major themes: estimates of costs; prevalence and characteristics of postsecondary remediation; the college readiness of high school graduates; the role of remediation in society; reviews of statewide remedial education associated policies and options; and the effectiveness of postsecondary remediation.

Available academic literature, position papers, program evaluations and popular media sources were collected and analyzed to determine the history and status quo of postsecondary remediation policies across Florida and the nation. State laws, policies and standards were also reviewed to determine the parameters under which any option for the delivery of this education must operate. Additionally, seven interviews were conducted to
gain insight into the impacts of applicable higher education policies at select state institutions.

This report describes and evaluates three options for the delivery of postsecondary remediation in Florida. These alternatives are evaluated by three criteria: monetary cost, success rates and the availability of infrastructure. Each option is given a ranking according to the extent by which each criterion was met.

Assessment of the three policy options for the delivery of postsecondary remediation indicates that a combination of all three options will provide the most efficient and effective service for Florida’s students. Community colleges should continue to be the primary delivery option; with a stricter interpretation of the state statutes regarding remediation for university students should be taken. The number of Florida’s graduating high school students in need of remedial courses at postsecondary institutions should decrease significantly with a new statewide policy allowing high school students to take remedial courses as electives while still in high school. This would be convenient for the students and would save money for both the students and the state. In addition, the possibility of private providers delivering postsecondary remediation should be offered to students by their high school and college counselors.
I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Approximately two-thirds of the first-time, degree-seeking students entering one of Florida’s 28 community colleges consistently fail at least one of the three areas of an entry-level test (ACT, SAT or College Placement Test [CPT]) and are required to enroll in remedial courses (“College Preparatory,” 2003). In 2001-02, Floridians spent more than $100 million on the delivery of postsecondary remediation (The Fact Book, 2003). Virtually all of the postsecondary remediation in Florida is delivered at the community college level, though this institution may not be the best fit for the delivery of these important services.

In these lean and difficult budget years, it is becoming increasingly important to maximize both the efficiency and effectiveness of government services so that limited public dollars can be stretched further and most effectively for public benefit. This is especially evident in the area of K-20 education due, in large part, to several successful and expensive citizens’ initiatives now cemented in the state’s constitution, i.e., reduced class-size and voluntary universal pre-kindergarten, that require an increasingly larger portion of education funds. The purpose of this Action Report is to examine alternative solutions to the delivery of Florida’s postsecondary remediation.
II. BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Though much has been said about the merits of postsecondary remediation, a thorough review to determine the best available institution for its delivery has not been conducted. This report examines the history and current status of postsecondary remediation, reviews the prevalent literature on the subject, defines criteria by which remediation delivery alternatives are evaluated and provides recommendations to policymakers as to the best available options.

Postsecondary remediation is not a new phenomenon to higher education in America. As an example, in the 1630s, Harvard freshmen with deficiencies in Latin were provided tutors to bring them up to a required level of proficiency. The first remedial education program, consisting of reading, writing and mathematics courses, began in 1849 at the University of Wisconsin. Most colleges had remedial reading courses and study skill centers by the 1930s (Breneman, Costrell, Haarlow, Ponitz and Steinberg, 1998). In 2000, some 80% of public four-year and virtually 98% of public two-year colleges engaged in the delivery of remedial education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003).

Notably, postsecondary remediation began receiving a great deal of attention in the early 1990s. The discourse has centered on several key considerations. First, remediation comes at a considerable cost to federal and state governments, the individual students and to society. Second, much of the monetary costs may be considered “double billing” because they represent skills for which instruction was delivered but was not adequately mastered at the K-12 level.
Postsecondary remediation has become a fixture in higher education because of the gap between the standards required to receive a high school diploma and those necessary to be deemed “college-ready”. The need for postsecondary remediation is projected to continue well into the future, as higher education continues to open its doors to a larger proportion of the population. Nationally, in 2000, 42% of freshmen entering a public two-year institution and 20% entering public four-year schools enrolled in remedial courses (NCES, 2003).

In Florida, virtually all postsecondary remediation is delivered by the state’s 28 community colleges. Those students who have been accepted at a public university and are in need of remedial classes generally take those classes in conjunction with a state community college. Florida’s state universities not already providing postsecondary remediation in 1996 were prohibited from doing so in the future pursuant to Section 240.117, F.S. FAMU is the only state university that offers remedial activities under this provision.

In 2001-02, 67% of freshmen entering Florida’s community colleges and 11% of those entering a Florida state university were required to take at least one remedial course. The remedial needs of Florida’s students at each of the 11 state universities ranged from 61% requiring remediation at FAMU to zero percent at New College, with a median of nine percent. The percentage of entering freshmen requiring remediation at Florida’s 28 community colleges were also quite disparate, ranging from 81% requiring remediation at Broward Community College to 42% at Okaloosa-Walton Community College. The median percentage of freshmen needing remediation throughout Florida’s 28 community colleges in 2000-01 was 61% (Florida Department of Education, 2003).

The laws governing postsecondary remedial education in Florida have gone through a number of changes since the statutorily mandated shift away from state universities in 1996.
During the 1997 legislative session, legislation was unanimously passed that required Florida's community colleges to improve their remedial programs and lower costs. The Division of Community Colleges contended that the legislation was too vague, and subsequently, no community colleges acted upon the requirement (Hackworth, 1998).

Legislation was again unanimously passed during the 1998 legislative session to strengthen the earlier law and open the remedial education to competition from other educational providers. This law requires that community colleges inform students needing remediation of the costs of all available remedial options and ways to contact other providers (Hackworth, 1998).

In 1999, legislation passed which increased the possibility of incentives for the implementation of remedial reduction plans and promoted collaboration between school districts, postsecondary institutions and practicing educators. The legislation also changed the number of times a student can enroll in remedial classes from one time to two times before they are required to pay 100% of the cost of instruction.

Postsecondary remediation has been a part of higher education in the United States for the past several hundred years and remains a central element today, as 76% of all postsecondary institutions provide remedial education to students not deemed “college ready” (NCES, 2003). The need is even greater in Florida, where the delivery of this instruction has undergone a number of significant changes in the last ten years. Policymakers have taken an increased interest in all aspects of postsecondary remediation—from its root causes to available delivery alternatives.
Literature Review

The relevant literature on this subject centers around five major themes: (1) estimates of costs, prevalence and characteristics of postsecondary remediation; (2) the college readiness of high school graduates; (3) the role of remediation in society; (4) reviews of statewide remedial education policies and other policy options; and (5) the effectiveness of postsecondary remediation. These issues are addressed by the publications discussed below.

First, the literature helps to establish a framework on which many of the other discussions are based (Breneman et al., 1998; Greene, 2000; NCES, 2003; Phipps, 1998; United States General Accounting Office [GAO], 1997). Breneman et al. (1998), NCES (2003) and Phipps (1998) provide a broad overview as to the pervasiveness of remedial activities throughout postsecondary institutions, including monetary costs and enrollments nationwide. Breneman et al. and Phipps each cite the need for more reliable data collection by the states and that the stigma attached to postsecondary remediation has probably led to the underreporting of associated costs and enrollment statistics. The authors also note the need for collaboration throughout the nation’s K-16 education institutions to ensure that students are better prepared for college.

In 1997, the GAO was directed by the U.S. Congress to take a more narrow focus on postsecondary remediation and was especially concerned with the extent to which federal financial aid monies were being given to students enrolled in remedial courses. Federal policymakers were concerned that this activity compromises the public policy objective of funding postsecondary education. The GAO conducted a survey of postsecondary institutions, which found that 13% of all financial aid awarded to underclassmen was awarded to students enrolled in at least one remedial course. More specifically, 24% of aid...
awarded at two-year schools and 10% at four-year schools was awarded to remedial education enrollees.

Greene (2000) took yet another view, and attempted to quantify the financial costs incurred by businesses and institutions of higher learning when students exit high school without learning certain basic skills. The study concluded that while Michigan spends an annual total of $65.4 million on delivering postsecondary remediation (Florida spends more than $100 million), the total direct expenditures made by Michigan’s colleges, universities and employers to address students’ lack of basic skills is between $311 million and $1.15 billion per year.

Second, the literature reviews the “college readiness” of high school graduates, how it is determined and the effect that college has on “unprepared” students. In September 2003, Green and Forester of The Manhattan Institute took an inclusive look at the college readiness of students and provided estimates by racial/ethnic group, region and state (2003). The study included an analysis of schools’ graduations rates, high school transcripts of students, the minimum coursework required by universities and the basic reading skills of students. This study found that nationwide only 32% of all students leave high school “ready” to attend a four-year postsecondary institution. Bragg, Loeb, Zamami, and Yoo (2001) estimated the college readiness of high school students in Florida and seven other purposely-selected consortia and found that Florida’s students were most likely to require remediation in all three subject areas, i.e. reading, mathematics and writing.

Bragg (1998) evaluated the college preparedness of the “neglected majority” (those “non-college bound” students targeted by federal aid programs such as the School-To-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA)) by comparing the highest-level of classes taken in academic
areas. Conley (2003) took yet another approach to the college readiness question by extensively analyzing the high-stakes exit exams of 20 states and comparing them with the standards for college success.

Third, the literature focused on the role of postsecondary remedial education to society. Each author (Adelman, 1998; McCabe, 2001; Phipps, 1998) pointed to the reliance of the U.S. economy upon a highly skilled workforce. Other economic benefits stemming from an educated workforce often include increased tax revenues, decreased crime and an increased quality of civic life.

Fourth, the available relevant literature reviews and analyzes a number of current, statewide remedial education programs as well as other policy alternatives. Phipps (1998) provides an overview of the recent state-level developments, including arguments of the opponents and proponents of postsecondary remedial education.

The 50-state survey and site visits conducted by Breneman et al. (1998) also offers relevant summary information as well as insight into policies nationwide. Crowe (1998) conducts a similar summarative analysis. Kirst (1998) provides an analysis of the policies at the heart of the postsecondary remediation: the disconnect between university and K-12 standards and higher education admissions and freshman placement policies. Kirst also suggests a number of policy changes concerning these issues.

Several authors also delve into the question of remedial instruction delivery by the private sector (MHEC, 1997; Gose, 1997; Hackworth, 1998). The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) provides a review of the case study of the experience of one Maryland community college in the contracting of remedial services to Sylvan Learning Systems.
Fifth, research is also available as to the effectiveness or success rate of postsecondary remediation. The Florida Community College System’s Office of Educational Services and Research (2000) reports the exit rates of Florida’s College Preparatory programs in reading, writing and mathematics. Adelman (2000) provides a long-term analysis of the national high school class of 1982, including the extent of remedial courses and eventual degree completion. He found that of those students enrolled in zero remedial courses, 54% earned a Bachelor’s degree and 6% earned an Associate’s degree by age 30. The graduation rates decrease dramatically as the amount of remedial work increases.

In summary, the literature portrays the current challenges that policymakers must face in making decisions regarding the delivery of postsecondary remediation. While the difficulties of making effective policies are clear, the available alternatives have not been scientifically reviewed. This study significantly adds to the existing literature by building a set of criteria by which three alternatives are evaluated. And finally, specific recommendations are formulated to help policy leaders determine the most appropriate delivery alternative.
III. METHODOLOGY & EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Methodology

Information for this report was collected using the following methods:

- The analysis of popular media and academic literature. This information was gathered through the use of JSTOR, LEXIS/NEXIS, Florida State University Library Catalog, and Worldcat specifically for the years of 1990-2003.

- The review of germane state laws, policies and standards.

- Structured interviews (n = seven), telephone contacts and electronic communication with staff from: Florida’s Division of Community Colleges (two interviews); Florida Department of Education (one interview); Florida State University (one interview); Tallahassee Community College (one interview); a potential private remedial education provider (one interview) and one interview with a K-12 district education official.

Available academic literature, position papers, program evaluations and popular media sources were gathered and analyzed to determine the background and current status of postsecondary remediation policies across Florida and the nation. State laws, policies and standards were reviewed to determine the parameters under which any option for the delivery of this education must operate.

Seven interviews were conducted to gain additional insight into the impacts of applicable higher education policies at select state institutions. Tim Elwell, the Director of Budget and Accountability for the Division of Community College and Workforce Education and Dr. Patricia Windham, the Director of Academic and Student Success at the Florida Division of Community Colleges, provided state-level perspective. Dr. Laura Hebert, Educational Policy Consultant in the Office of Articulation of the Department of Education offered insight into the status and potential future of postsecondary remediation in Florida. Dr. Mary Coburn, Vice President for Student Affairs at Florida State University was
interviewed to obtain the viewpoint of a university that is statutorily restricted from providing remediation to their students who are not deemed to be “college ready.” Coburn is also a former Tallahassee Community College administrator. Sharon Jefferson, the Vice President for Student Affairs at Tallahassee Community College was selected to add the perspective representative of one of the State’s 29 institutions (28 community colleges and one university) that provide direct delivery of postsecondary remediation. Robert Hackworth, President and Managing Director of H&H Learning Systems, a potential private provider of postsecondary remediation, was also interviewed. Finally, the Hardee County Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Greg Dick, gave insight into the potential provision of postsecondary remediation at the local district level.

**Evaluative Criteria**

Criteria will be used to determine the most efficient and effective delivery method of postsecondary remediation. Broadly, the criteria include:

- **Monetary costs** include tuition and fees as well as the state subsidy of public education. The current data on cost to community colleges are readily available and the costs to universities and other delivery alternatives were determined through the interview process and the analysis of two adult education programs delivered at the local K-12 district level.

- **Success (passage) rates** of students are the rates which students complete their remedial coursework. The data for Florida’s 28 community colleges are readily available (data on the success of university students receiving postsecondary remediation does not exist) and the potential rates for other delivery options were determined through the interview process as well as the analysis of passage rates for comparable programs.

- **Availability of infrastructure** evaluates whether the options are disbursed throughout the state in a way that will allow all residents in need of postsecondary remediation to have access. This was determined by analyzing existing locational data and through the interview process.
While these criteria are adequate to get to what is most important when determining the best postsecondary remediation delivery alternative, other criteria such as public support and ease of administration were not included in the evaluation because of their subjective nature and lack of authoritative data. Though it is important for the remedial students and administrators to have a positive impression and experience with a certain method of delivery, the overarching goal of selecting an option that is accessible, successful and provides value will suffice.

There are several components of these criteria used for the evaluation of policy options in this report for which data are unavailable. First, while it is possible to determine the physical locations of the facilities for each policy option, it is not possible to evaluate whether additional facilities would be needed to provide for an influx of new students. Also, the passage rates of students through the delivery options that are not currently in place are not exact, thus the rates for similar programs will be compared. Despite these constraints, this research will provide an accurate and inclusive evaluation of the options for the delivery of postsecondary remediation in Florida.
IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY OPTIONS

Section IV analyzes the three most common institutions for the delivery of postsecondary remediation in Florida: community colleges, K-12 county/district and private providers. These options take advantage of the infrastructure, history and economies of scale in the public sector as well as the innovation and efficiency often found in the private arena. In order to meet the needs of Florida’s students, the final policy for the delivery of postsecondary remediation will center on the combination of all three policies examined here. This will ensure that needed competitive tension exists and that postsecondary remediation is available to meet the needs of the greatest possible number of individual students. Each alternative will be evaluated using the criteria discussed earlier.

Option One: Community Colleges

This option represents the status quo of postsecondary remediation delivery in Florida. According to Florida Statute 240.117, Florida’s 28 community colleges and one public university (FAMU) are the only public institutions authorized to provide these courses. The students from the remaining Florida universities must enroll in remedial courses in conjunction with a community college.

A number of states have recently sought to constrain the types of postsecondary institutions that can deliver remedial education and the amount of public money spent on these activities. For example, Colorado and South Carolina only allow remediation at the two-year college level. Massachusetts only allows a certain percentage of university freshmen to enroll in remedial courses and Arkansas established a cap on the amount of state funds that can be used for remediation at public universities (Crowe, 1998).
Florida’s community colleges have an “open door” policy, meaning that all residents are guaranteed access regardless of their skill level. However, if students seeking an associates degree do not meet a prescribed threshold in reading, writing or math on an ACT, SAT or CPT, then they must enroll in remedial education (Florida House of Representatives, 1999).

**Monetary Cost:** Though the applicable state statutes are specific about the delivery of postsecondary remediation, the cost of that remediation, to both the student and the state, varies dramatically depending upon the host institution. For example, a student from Tallahassee Community College (TCC) registers for a remedial course and will pay the normal tuition rate of $175 for a three-credit class. However, a Florida State University (FSU) student in need of remediation registering for a class through the university’s normal method and will pay $286, the FSU tuition amount for a three-credit course. Though FSU students are required by statute to be provided postsecondary remediation in conjunction with a local community college, the FSU student attends the class on the FSU campus and the only single connection with a community college is the instructor, a TCC employee. The cost of this instruction for the university is quite low because it only has to compensate the community college equal to what the community college would pay an instructor, which is significantly less than university instructors receive.

The state subsidy of postsecondary remediation also varies considerably. The most recent data containing the costs of the postsecondary remediation delivery are for 2001-02. During that year, the total costs of community college delivery were $100.2 million. Nearly half of these monies ($45.7 million) resulted from student tuition and fees with the remaining $54.5 million from state general revenue and lottery monies (*The Fact Book*, 2003).
The total institutional cost (including tuition and state subsidy) of a remedial course at the community college is approximately $390. The cost of delivering these classes to university students is roughly $1,390 per course, for the student and state combined (Florida Department of Education, 2003). If the 1,829 university students who were not “college ready” in 2001-02 were only required to take one remedial course, and did so as a traditional community college student versus a university student, then $1.8 million would be saved.

Success rates: Across Florida’s community college system, 65.6% of the first-time freshman entering one of the state’s 28 institutions failed to reach a minimum score for reading, writing or math on at least one entry level test (ACT, SAT or CPT) and were required to enroll in postsecondary remediation. Students were most likely to require remediation in math (44.2% of freshman), while 30.2% and 24.9% enrolled in reading and writing courses respectively (Florida Community College System, 2003).

The rate at which Florida’s students pass remedial courses at postsecondary institutions increased significantly between 1996 and 2003. Students tracked for two years (six semesters), for the period ending in 1996, passed their reading, writing and math courses at 63.1%, 60.3% and 41.7% respectively (Florida Community College System, 2000). The period ending in 2003 had much greater success, with 73%, 67.9% and 53.1% of students passing their reading, writing and math courses (Florida Community College System, 2003).

It is important that the implications of these figures are fully understood. If a student does not complete his or her remedial course(s), then they may not continue in their higher educational pursuits. Remedial education takes place at the very beginning of a student’s course of study, before he or she has a great deal of time and money vested in their
education, which makes it increasingly important to provide a positive experience so that they are both willing and able to continue.

Adelman’s study of the national high school class of 1982, tracked through 1993, found that of those students taking zero remedial courses, 60% earned a Bachelor’s or Associates degree. This total decreases to 55% when the student takes one remedial course, 45% for two courses, 44% for three or four courses and 35% for five or more remedial courses (1998). In short, the success of students through remedial education has strong relationship with the attainment of postsecondary degrees, and the completion of these courses at Florida’s community colleges continues to increase.

Availability of infrastructure: The infrastructure for the status quo option is readily available and adequately dispersed throughout the state. Students participating in postsecondary remediation do so in order to continue with their higher education, and would at one of the state’s 28 community colleges, 11 public or 28 private colleges and universities. Most students requiring remediation attend a community college and therefore take the course(s) at their primary institution. The 11 public universities are located near community colleges that provide the instructor and curricular content.

In addition to physical infrastructure, community colleges are also in an important position within the state’s educational framework. A number of states, including Florida, have established partnerships to link the K-12 and higher educational systems. For example, Ohio has instituted a K-16 partnership aimed at reducing the need for remediation at the college level. Maryland’s K-16 partnership was established to identify the underlying factors that cause the need for remediation, develop best practices to reduce the need and to determine the best institutional level for delivery (Crowe, 1998).
The 2001 Legislature passed the Florida Education Governance Reorganization Implementation Act providing for a “seamless” education governance structure. Though three years have since passed, change has been slow. A K-20 Education Performance Accountability Task Force met and released a final report in late 2003. The report included several measures aimed at improving college readiness and the success of postsecondary remediation (Florida State Board of Education, 2003).

In summary, the status quo option scores moderately well on the monetary cost criterion. The community college delivery option, the primary method established in law, has a total cost of $390 per three-credit course. Approximately 1,800 university students enroll in remedial education with a per course cost of nearly $1,400. The completion rates for this option ranges from 53.1% of students completing math remediation to 67.9% and 73% finishing in writing and reading courses respectively. Because this is the status quo alternative, the infrastructure is in place and adequate to provide access to postsecondary remediation for Florida’s students.

**Option Two: Local School Districts**

Option two—the delivery of postsecondary remediation at the local K-12 school district level—could be accomplished several ways. First, high school students scoring below the ACT, SAT or CPT cutoffs could take remedial courses as electives. This would require coordination between a local community college and/or all state community colleges and universities to ensure that the course(es) articulates among institutions. The Florida Department of Education (DOE) is in the midst of planning a pilot project to begin in August 2005, which would allow for this option. However, this alternative can only work in conjunction with another delivery option that is available to those students who are no longer
in high school. Second, it is possible for postsecondary remedial courses to be provided to students through the K-12 school district’s adult education program. This could allow for the provision of courses to those who are no longer high school students.

**Monetary Cost**: The cost of delivering postsecondary remediation courses through a local high school is about $300 per course (with a per student FTE cost of $3,630). This represents only the state subsidy, as students are entitled to free public education. The delivery of remediation to high school students represent costs that would be paid by the state regardless, as the class would only take the place of an elective course. The same is not true of the local school districts’ adult education programs, whose FTE allocation of $3,387 is slightly less than that of K-12 students (Florida Department of Education, 2002). In short, the delivery of postsecondary remediation as high school elective courses could provide a low-cost policy alternative.

**Success rates**: Retention is a major issue for many of public educational institutions. Over the past several years, school districts took steps to improve performance (retention) and data reporting in the area of adult education. Between 1998-99 and 1999-00, school districts reported a 16% increase in Literacy Completion Points, their primary measure of student performance improvement. Despite these gains, school districts reported completion rates of between 13.4% and 38.3% depending upon the sub-program. The Adult High School/GED program reported that 13.4% of the enrolled students earned completions in the same year. Completion rates for the Vocational Preparatory Instruction programs, which include reading, writing, mathematics and employability skills, were higher with 38.4% of enrollees earning completions in 1999-00. (OPPAGA, 2002).
It should be noted that the delivery of postsecondary remediation to high school students as electives could expect a higher success rate. This option would provide an incentive to complete the course because the credits are needed for them to graduate. They could still benefit from the curriculum and instructors of a local community college, if the school districts contracts for their provision. Students may also retain more information because they are less removed from coursework than traditional adult education students.

Availability of infrastructure: Like community colleges, the infrastructure for the local school district option is currently dispersed across the state. All 67 districts have at least one adult education center where GED classes are delivered. Just as it is important for all residents to have access to GED courses, it is equally necessary that the infrastructure also be in place for postsecondary remediation. In addition to the adult education centers, it is also possible for courses to be delivered at local schools, thereby providing greater access to all possible clientele.

In summary, option two is the provision of postsecondary remediation at the local K-12 school district level. The total monetary cost of the K-12 district is lower than community college delivery, at $300 per course versus $390. The success rates for two local adult education programs, with 13.4% and 38.3% completing programs, is relatively low by state averages. As with community colleges, the infrastructure for school districts to deliver remediation is currently in place.

Option Three: Private Providers

In recent years some state and national policymakers have looked to private educational institutions as an efficient and effective alternative for the delivery of postsecondary remediation (MHEC, 1997; Gose, 1997; Hackworth, 1998). This can be
accomplished in a wide variety of ways. Educational institutions can contract remedial services to off-campus providers, contract with private providers to perform services on-campus; inform students of private alternatives and establish a method for the acceptance of these courses; and a number of other options (Crowe, 1998).

Below two options immediately available throughout Florida are evaluated. However, the private provision of postsecondary remediation was provided through yet another approach in one Maryland community college. Whose students paid an increased fee and took part in smaller, more personalized classes (MHEC, 1997).

Currently Florida accepts courses provided by private institutions as long as students can achieve the required CPT score. Legislation passed in 1997 and 1998 intended to make this private alternative better known to community college students. Community college officials contend that displaying brochures of private providers fulfills this obligation.

Counselors also often present this option of remedial provision when a student fails a remedial course three times because students are then required to pay the full cost of course delivery (tuition plus the state subsidy).

This alternative allows for the initial assessment of a student’s needs, followed by a “mastery learning” pedagogy. This method is primarily self-paced, includes instruction, and testing, and is supplemented by repeated instruction if the student has not reached a prescribed proficiency level with the material.

**Monetary Cost:** Unlike the previous two options, this option does not include a direct state subsidy. However, due to the wide variety of possible private remedial providers, it is difficult to obtain definitive tuition costs. The President of [www.onlinecollegeprep.com](http://www.onlinecollegeprep.com), a Clearwater, Florida based provider of online remedial courses reported tuition costs of $50
for math courses and $150 for reading and writing courses. By contrast, Sylvan Learning Center, a national private educational services provider, requires new students to first take their in-house diagnostic test (which costs $255). Once the student’s needs are determined, Sylvan delivers classes at $75 each, along with between $39-43 per hour of one-on-one instruction time depending upon the level of the class.

**Success rates:** An important aspect of this option is that students completing a postsecondary remediation course through a private provider must take the College Placement Test (CPT) upon completion. Conversely, those students at a community college or university must only “pass” the course. The stricter requirement for students choosing a private provider helps to ensure that their course contains the needed content and that the content is sufficiently retained by students. Private remediation providers do not receive public funds and are not required to release the success rates of their students. In an interview, Robert Hackworth, President of [www.onlinecollegeprep.com](http://www.onlinecollegeprep.com), reports that at least 90% of students completing his organization’s courses receive the required score on the CPT.

**Availability of infrastructure:** There are 55 Sylvan Learning Center locations throughout Florida. There is at least one center near each of the state’s 28 community colleges. To take advantage of the courses offered by [www.onlinecollegeprep.com](http://www.onlinecollegeprep.com), a student may be located anywhere in the state, assuming the student has access to a computer and the Internet. This would not pose a problem for students enrolled in courses at one of Florida’s community colleges or universities, because they have this access through their primary institution. Students without a computer and the Internet would be unable to use this option.

In summary, the monetary cost of delivering remediation via a private provider, varies substantially depending upon the company and structure of the program. While one
company provides remedial education at a very low cost, another company, providing one-
on-one instruction is very high. Because these organizations are private, the success rates are
not publicly released. Private providers are currently dispersed throughout the state and
remediation also may be accessed via the Internet.
V. CONCLUSIONS

The research described and evaluated three options for the delivery of postsecondary remediation in Florida: community colleges, local school districts and private providers. These alternatives were evaluated using three criteria: monetary cost, student success rates and the availability of infrastructure. Each option was ranked according to the extent by which the criteria were met for the entire potential postsecondary remediation population. Table 1 below summarizes the findings:

Table 1
Summary of Alternatives and Evaluative Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Options</th>
<th>Evaluative Criteria</th>
<th>Monetary Cost</th>
<th>Success Rates</th>
<th>Availability of Infrastructure</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local School Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Providers</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Ranking Scale: 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive)*

The community college option received a 2.5 on the monetary cost criterion, a mid-level score. The extraordinarily high cost of delivering remediation to university students decreased this score. The high tuition costs combined with the large state university subsidy (although providing enhanced availability) subverts the intent of Florida Statutes that allow only community colleges and FAMU to provide remediation. The success rates for this policy option received a positive rating of 4.0. This option received 5.0, the highest possible score for infrastructure. Because community colleges play such an important role in higher education, the physical infrastructure is currently in place to meet the needs of students.
Community colleges are also in an important position within the state’s educational framework and are poised to play a key role in Florida’s K-20 governance structure, which seeks to an increase the articulation of students through the state’s educational institutions.

The local school district provision of postsecondary remediation received a positive rating of 4.0 for monetary cost because delivery via high school electives does not represent a “double charge” to residents. The only comparison for success rate was with several adult education programs, which were low. Although the two adult education programs reviewed likely yielded representative results, the number of programs included precluded a more comprehensive evaluation. Finally, as with the community college option, the infrastructure for the local school district option is currently in place and can meet the needs of students.

The private provision of remediation received a neutral ranking of 2.5 for monetary cost because the one company with online delivery has very low costs, while another company with a one-on-one program had very high program costs. Though success rates are not required from private companies, the mastery learning and diagnostic skill testing aspects of the programs of private providers bodes well for the success of students finishing such programs. Also, because completers of private programs must take the CPT to ensure that concepts are truly learned, it will assist students as they further their education. Finally, though providers have a physical presence throughout the state, it is very unlikely that these locations could accommodate the influx of remedial students. It is, however, possible that the delivery could take place on community colleges campuses; therefore this criterion received a neutral score of 2.5.

Assessment of the three policy options for the delivery of postsecondary remediation indicates that a combination of all three options will provide an efficient and effective service
for Florida’s students. All three options received similar total scores when rated according to
the evaluative criteria. While the options were viewed from the perspective of how they
would serve the entire postsecondary remediation population, each can be targeted to a
specific population and thus ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness for all students
and taxpayers.

Community colleges should continue to be the primary delivery option, especially if
there were a stricter interpretation of the state statutes regarding remediation for university
students. Community colleges have the available infrastructure. Community colleges are
also poised to play an integral role in Florida’s seamless K-20 educational system. It is these
kinds of roles, together with strong leadership from state-level officials, adequate funding
and quality research that will help to provide immediate answers about the effectiveness of
the state’s educational system and offer a vision for the future.

The number of graduating high school students in need of remedial courses at
postsecondary institutions should decrease significantly with a new statewide policy allowing
high school students to take remedial courses as electives while still a high school student.
This would be convenient for the students and would save money for both the students and
the state. For every 1,000 students taking remedial courses at the K-12 level, $390,000 in
tuition charged to students and educational subsidy from the state. In addition, the possibility
of postsecondary remediation being delivered by private providers should be offered to
students by their high school and community college counselors, as was intended by the 1997
and 1998 legislation. It is important that students progress through these courses as quickly
as possible, and the individualized instruction often available at private providers may better
assist some students.
REFERENCES


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brea Rasmussen Gelin (B.A., political science and MPA, Florida State University) has served as an Assistant Research Analyst and Research Analyst at Florida TaxWatch. Ms. Gelin is interested in football, and especially enjoys the Hardee County Wildcats, Florida State Seminoles and the Green Bay Packers. She would very much like to work as an assistant to President Jed Bartlett and/or Brett Favre.