Over the last decade, community colleges in Tennessee have reimagined remediation. More than half of first-time students at Tennessee community colleges require remediation upon enrolling. Colleges provide these students with learning support in key gateway courses. To meet the needs of each student, Tennessee community colleges have led the way in implementing innovative strategies that provide students with timely, effective support. In 2015, TBR became the first college system in the nation to implement a corequisite model statewide. Through this reform, every student can access college-level courses during their first term of enrollment, while still receiving the additional support they need.

In Gaining Momentum, TBR seeks to build upon the momentum of a decade of successful reforms. The goal is to use data to refine learning support and boost student success in the first year and beyond.

Research Findings

Gateway course completion rates have doubled since corequisite reforms launched.

After the introduction of corequisite learning support in 2015, the proportion of students who completed gateway math, reading, and writing courses in their first year increased significantly. However, corequisite learning support had an uneven impact across colleges, and equity gaps have persisted.

Colleges have experimented with innovative & effective learning support models.

Each college has adapted the corequisite model to meet the needs of their students. Many colleges have developed innovative, effective models. Some colleges have built clear connections between college-level courses and paired learning support courses through learning communities or other techniques. These innovative models could be scaled systemwide to boost student success.

Increased accuracy in learning support placement could boost student success.

Corequisite reforms reframed the stakes of learning support placement. However, research findings suggest that existing placement metrics may not accurately identify which students would benefit from learning support. Adding new placement metrics, like high school GPA, could increase accuracy in learning support placement.

Equity gaps persist for Black & low-income students across the system.

Corequisite reform efforts have led to increased success for all students. However, corequisite reforms have not closed critical equity gaps. Low-income and Black learning support students completed gateway courses at lower rates, persisted at lower rates, and graduated at lower rates than other learning support students, even after the introduction of corequisite learning support.
Over the past decade, student success in key gateway courses improved significantly at Tennessee community colleges. However, corequisite learning support reforms had an uneven impact across colleges and student groups. Yet, community colleges across Tennessee have identified promising learning support innovations that could be scaled systemwide. Faculty have proposed clear ideas about how to improve the implementation of corequisite learning support at their colleges. Additionally, refinements to learning support placement metrics could help colleges better identify which students would benefit from learning support.

Research findings from Gaining Momentum point toward several next steps for research, policy, and practice.

**Refine learning support placement.**

*Research: Evaluate the Corequisite Placement Pilot.*

TBR and the colleges must continue to track how the addition of high school GPA affects student success, with a particular focus on how outcomes differ by student demographic and academic characteristics.

*Policy: Revisit TBR’s placement policy.*

Research suggests that additional metrics can help to improve the accuracy of learning support placement. TBR must continue to evaluate the effectiveness of existing placement methods and make updates to system policy.

*Practice: Prepare advisors to engage students in conversations about learning support placement.*

Students shared that they sometimes did not see the connections between learning support and college-level classes. TBR will need to equip advisors with tools and training to engage students in conversations about placement and prepare students to see these connections.

**Support innovations that boost success.**

*Research: Identify and scale promising practices.*

Faculty have led the way in identifying innovative and effective practices. TBR can support continued innovation by helping colleges to pilot, evaluate, and implement promising practices like faculty pairings, learning communities, and streamlined corequisite courses with consolidated syllabi.

*Policy: Discourage corequisite course pairings that are not contributing to student success.*

Data on corequisite learning support allows us to identify which course pairings contribute to student success. TBR should provide clearer guidance about effective course pairings.

*Practice: Build connections between learning support and college-level courses.*

To help colleges build connections between learning support and college-level courses, TBR will need to assist colleges in identifying resources to implement learning communities, promote faculty collaboration, or overcome other financial or administrative barriers.

**Refocus on the commitment to improving gateway course success.**

*Research: Build data tools to help faculty and advisors track gateway course success.*

To improve gateway course completion, colleges will need tools to help faculty and advisors track gateway course success and identify students in need of additional support.

*Policy: Eliminate hidden prerequisite courses.*

To promote long-term student success, TBR will need to eliminate course pairings that do not satisfy general education requirements.

*Practice: Convene faculty, staff, and administrators to share promising practices.*

TBR should convene faculty, alongside college staff, learning support directors, and administrators to revisit guidance about the fundamental features of the corequisite model and share promising practices and innovations.

**Sharpen the focus on critical equity gaps.**

The system’s commitment to closing equity gaps must remain at the center of learning support.

TBR should continue its work to examine learning support practices through an equity lens and provide resources for faculty about equity-minded learning support practices.