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## Remedial Education in Colleges and Universities: What's Really Going On?

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### Abstract

This article offers an overview of what is known and not known about college remediation, a topic that is attracting increasing scrutiny. It includes analyses of the purposes of remediation, types of remediation, who participates, how well it serves them, finances, the economic and social consequences of not providing remedial education, and proposed strategies for reducing the need for remediation in higher education while enhancing its effectiveness.

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## Remedial Education in Colleges and Universities: What's Really Going On?

*Jamie P. Merisotis and Ronald A. Phipps*

Offering coursework below college level in higher education institutions is coming under increased scrutiny. Various referred to as “remedial education,” “developmental education,” “college prep,” or “basic skills,” it constitutes a field about which policy makers are asking: Why are so many students in institutions of higher learning taking basic reading, writing, and arithmetic—subjects that should have been learned in high school, if not junior high school?

Over the past several years, some states—including Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia—are attempting to limit remedial education. In 1998, the trustees of the City University of New York (CUNY) voted to phase out most remedial education in the system’s 11 four-year institutions, and the CUNY plan has moved ahead steadily since its implementation in September 1999. Following similar patterns, some states such as Florida have moved virtually all remediation to community colleges. Leg-

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