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Community-College Students Shun Basic Courses

By ELYSE ASHBURN

Community colleges are increasingly concerned about the large number of students who require remedial education and never make it into college-level classes. And a new study confirms what some have long suspected: Many students don't even attempt to take remedial classes.

Among the 250,000 participants in the study, 36 percent of those referred to remedial mathematics did not complete their precollege work — not because they didn't pass, but because they did not enroll in a required course. Likewise, 27 percent of those who required remedial English failed to enroll in a required course.

By comparison, 13 percent of those in remedial math didn't complete the required sequence because they failed a course. And 18 percent of those in basic English did not complete because they failed, according to a report on the study, "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges."

Researchers at the Community College Research Center at Columbia University tracked students at 57 colleges over a three-year period. Not surprisingly, students who required the most remedial work — three or more courses — were the most likely to drop out of the sequence.

Community-college officials have long worried that many students in basic-education courses drop out of college because of the daunting prospect of going months or years without earning college-level credit.



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