

**COLLEGE READINESS TO DEGREE COMPLETION:
REMEDIAL PLACEMENT AND PATTERNS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE**

Jessica S. Howell
Department of Economics
California State University, Sacramento

Catherine Horn
Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies
University of Houston

Michal Kurlaender
School of Education
University of California, Davis

May 2008

Abstract. College participation rates are at an all time high. Yet, despite increases in the share of high school graduates continuing on to college, college completion rates have remained relatively stagnant for the past several decades. Moreover, graduation rates remain significantly lower for minorities and for those who come from poor or modest economic backgrounds than for white and relatively advantaged students. In these paper, we identify how existing policies around remediation education at two public four-year institutions influence college persistence and completion. In particular, do college students who are required to take remedial coursework have the same patterns of college persistence and time to degree completion as observationally equivalent college students who are not required to take such courses? Analyzing detailed individual-level longitudinal data from California State University, Sacramento and the University of Houston, we utilize a quasi-experimental design to tease out the causal impacts of this specific institutional intervention on college persistence.