

Moise Philippe Laub

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Supporters of developmental education reform promote structures that have been shown to positively impact students' progression in college. This People in the Reform features the journey of Moise Philippe Laub, a student in the State University of New York's college system and shows how advising and co-requisite courses helped to make a positive difference in his educational trajectory.

Personal Story

Originally from Haiti, Moise was adopted by a family, moved to New York state when he was 12, and served in the Navy for over a decade after high school. Family needs drew him home and in 2017, he enrolled in Onondaga Community College (OCC) to pursue a college degree. Moise entered OCC with a plan to transfer to Syracuse University (SU). Credits from his military service and completed courses at another college put him ahead of students who enter colleges like OCC without prior coursework under their belts. The advising system at OCC helped him navigate the college process, which can be challenging for many students. With his advisor, Moise created a strategy that would allow him to transfer from OCC with ease. He shared, "I chose a General Studies major because it would allow me to transfer most credits to Syracuse University." Further describing the plan, he noted, "We would look at classes that I was going to take next semester and see if they met the two-year program agreement [between OCC and SU]...because once you get an associate's degree, the max they would allow you to transfer over is about 60 credits. So, we just made sure that most of the classes...would be ones that SU would accept." Moise stuck to his plan, took courses every term, and graduated with an associate's degree in 2018. He is now attending SU, majoring in international relations.

Policy-Related Overview

For institutions that utilize traditional advising structures, completing community college in fewer than two years has been rare. Within this framework, students choose from a broad selection of courses to fulfill the requirements of their major without a clear roadmap to complete a credential. While this structure provides a rich set of options, it also lays an unclear path that learners must navigate with little guidance. The approach used at OCC addresses the intricacies of the traditional structure by organizing academic programs into career-related majors (meta-majors), designing program maps with designated course sequences, and providing co-requisite and contextualized courses. Developmental education reforms complement some approaches which provide four areas for practice: (a) identifying the pathways to students' end goals; (b) assisting students to select and enter program pathways; (c) keeping students on a path; and (d) ensuring that students are learning (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, & Ganga, 2018). A review of pathways programs in City University of New York's community colleges shows benefits such as clearer pathways to degree, improved gateway course-taking in the first year of college, expedited student progression through college, and improved retention and graduation rates (Bailey, T. Jaggars, S., & Jenkins D., 2015).

Moise's comments about experiences in his first English class at OCC also reflect how other aspects of co-requisite and contextualized courses support student success. After entering OCC, Moise took a placement exam and was assigned to a co-requisite English course, which pairs a college-level class with a supplemental course. He admitted, "I was worried that there would be two different kinds of requirements for writing, and... that there would be more work. I was kind of skeptical, and then I signed up for it anyway." Five other students were assigned to his supplemental class, so the small class structure provided opportunities to engage in conversations and writing activities that helped them connect assignments to real life. Moise shared, "We talked about normal issues...we used it to connect with each other. It was very helpful and relaxed, and so you were able to think."

The instructor helped students explore their ideas and then incorporate these into their work. "So instead of talking about this grand idea, he would ask you for your own experience and then he helped you to use that in your writing." Moise also revealed how instructor feedback, personalized attention, and faculty expectations in subsequent English courses differed from this early experience:

There's a level of feedback that I got from [the co-requisite course] that I didn't get from the other classes. And I think it's because you're not getting that extra time, you know. You don't have that relationship, so you're not gonna get that the feedback that might specifically pertain or help you...With that extra time, [the instructor] got to know who I am...and how to get me where I was going. In the other classes, there's just this expectation that you should know...I kept wanting to get better in other writing styles, but I didn't know if I was moving forward after that class.

Now in his senior year at SU, Moise shared that he plans to earn a law degree and a Master's in Public Administration through SU's joint degree program. "I'm hoping to give back to communities that I came from, so I'd like to have my own organization or work for an international development organization."

References

Bailey, T., Jaggars, S.S., & Jenkins, D. (2015b). What we know about guided pathways. New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

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