



# South Carolina Course Alignment Project

conducted by:



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## South Carolina Course Alignment Project Enters Phase III

The South Carolina Course Alignment Project is now in Phase III of the project: statewide expansion. During this phase, paired courses in English, math, and science which were taught in 32 pilot classrooms across the state last year will be revised based on feedback from the Pilot Implementers. Collectively, Pilot Implementers submitted feedback on each of the 285 course documents developed in the first phase of the project and provided approximately 100 additional documents. Once the paired course materials are revised and the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) has finalized selection of the additional documents submitted by Pilot implementers for use in paired courses, EPIC will prepare all course documents for distribution. During this time, Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and EPIC staff will also recruit additional implementers to teach the paired courses during the 2011-12 academic year.

## Doubling the Number of Implementers

CHE and EPIC plan to double the number of Implementers teaching paired courses in the 2011-12 academic year. Both new and returning Implementers will attend a training workshop scheduled for February 5, 2011. In addition, from February – May 2011, Implementers will participate in a series of exercises to prepare for teaching paired courses and to build strong relationships with their partner Implementers. For example, higher education faculty will be asked to observe the classroom of a high school partner and be prepared to talk with students about expectations for incoming freshmen while high school teachers will be asked to observe the postsecondary classroom for evidence of what will be expected of students when they enroll in college. Implementers will also be asked to meet with their partners frequently, either by phone, email, or in person, in order to engage in meaningful interactions with partners who teach at other institutions to develop better ways to connect the paired courses to create a more seamless transition for students and better prepare them for success in college.

## Tracking Math Tech 4 Students

Because of significant revisions to the Math Tech 4 curriculum, including the addition of more algebra content to create better alignment with credit-bearing, entry-level college math courses, CHE staff will track the Math Tech 4 students who completed the paired course version offered during the Pilot. CHE is interested in determining whether these students had better outcomes than their counterparts who did not complete the paired course version in terms of placement into and success in a credit-bearing college math course.

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## Review of Paired Courses

The South Carolina Course Alignment Project paired courses consist of a secondary course that is matched or "paired" with a postsecondary one. Five design teams (English, math, chemistry, biology, and physics) produced a total of 17 courses designed to help facilitate the seamless transition of students from exit-level high school courses to entry-level college courses in the same curricular areas. Each course is aligned to the *South Carolina Academic Standards* and with the *South Carolina College Readiness Reference Standards* (available online at: [www.che.sc.gov/AcademicAffairs/EEDA/SC\\_College\\_Readiness\\_Standards.pdf](http://www.che.sc.gov/AcademicAffairs/EEDA/SC_College_Readiness_Standards.pdf)).

### Paired English Language Arts Courses

#### High School Courses

English 3 (American Literature/Composition)  
English 4 (British Literature/Composition)

#### College/University Courses

American Literature  
British Literature  
English Composition

### Paired Science Courses

#### High School Courses

Biology  
Chemistry  
Physics

#### College/University Courses

Biological Sciences I  
College Chemistry I  
University Physics (Algebra-based)  
University Physics (Calculus-based)

### Paired Mathematics Courses

#### High School Courses

Pre-Calculus  
Math Tech 4

#### College/University Courses

Elementary Calculus  
College Algebra  
Probability and Statistics

## Highlights of the Pilot Implementation Phase

The pilot implementation of paired courses resulted in some interesting activities and discussions:

- Collaboration and dialogue among secondary and postsecondary educators in the state increased;
- Higher education Implementers visited the classrooms of their partner high school Implementers to speak with high school students about college expectations;
- Implementers engaged in philosophical and pedagogical discussions about the best ways to approach teaching particular topics and in what order;
- Implementers created opportunities for professional development with colleagues at other institutions to brainstorm and engage in problem solving and held joint faculty meetings between institutions;
- Implementers shared equipment between institutions;
- High school students visited college facilities; and
- Higher education faculty members served as advisors to high school seniors completing Honors projects.



## Pilot Implementation Video

A video describing the project and featuring Pilot Implementers teaching paired courses and discussing their participation in the South Carolina Course Alignment Project is available at [www.epiconline.org/south\\_carolina/](http://www.epiconline.org/south_carolina/). We encourage you to watch this video to learn more about our ongoing efforts to improve college readiness in South Carolina.

## Selected Feedback from Pilot Implementers

The following quotations were received from faculty members at both the high school and college levels who participated in the South Carolina Course Alignment Project and show how they believe the project to be an extremely worthwhile endeavor.

### How to Get Involved

If you are interested in participating in the South Carolina Course Alignment Project, please contact Terri Ward ([terri\\_ward@epiconline.org](mailto:terri_ward@epiconline.org)) or Tina Kerrigan ([tina\\_kerrigan@epiconline.org](mailto:tina_kerrigan@epiconline.org)).

## About the paired course materials and training provided:

“The training and documents showed what I needed to teach my high school students to prepare them for next year.”

“I used the syllabus as is. It is rigorous and clearly written, and I think it was a major challenge for the students. I also liked the rubrics and assignments that were enclosed with the information. I really liked it all!”

## About the partnerships created:

“I think the conversations with the team members were the most beneficial part of this process. It was so nice to see what was really occurring in the high school as well as the liberal art colleges. It was through these conversations that I began to understand why students were having such difficulty taking their college exams when high school was ‘easy.’”

“I found the contact with cluster partners to be much more useful. The syllabus gave us the basics that we needed to cover, however, the one-on-one aspect of the cluster group or individual conversations allowed me to find out the depth that needed to be presented and allowed me to focus more on the level of understanding that needed to be reached.”

“I consulted a good bit with my partner, especially during the first part of the semester. She was able to make slight adjustments to her Precalculus syllabus so that she emphasized some topics that I said were typical weak points with Calculus I college students.”

“The biggest areas of modification I made in my classroom because of my partnership were in the areas of writing (especially research) and general college readiness information. We (other teachers in my department as well) moved from teaching one or two larger research papers to five (in my class) smaller documented papers. The professors said that our students would benefit from repetition of the process more so than length and number of sources. We also modified the content of the papers and the types of sources we allowed.”



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### About changes in student expectations:

“Students are given expectations of what they should already know: study skills, work habits, and academic integrity. They are also told what skills they will develop during the year: analysis and reasoning, intellectual openness, and research techniques.”

“One of the most significant things in English is that the students now truly believe that revision of writing is the key to success in college. They also have a much deeper understanding of what the expectations of a professor are. It has been powerful to have others at the college level reinforcing what I have said all along.”

“I raised the level of expectations for my students and myself and taught a topic I have avoided before (fluids).”

### About the benefits of the South Carolina Course Alignment Project:

“I can't see any way this could not help our students. They are now being taught the skills they will need to be successful next year in college. I think the algebra 2 curriculum [in the revised Math Tech 4 course] is harder than probability and statistics [the course's previous focus], but it is what the students need to be ready for college.”

“As a result of this project...my students have done more research, more multi-drafting, more reading, and been tested on more college level materials than in my previous four semesters of teaching this course.”

“I expect that students will be more successful than in prior years because more rigorous expectations have been vocalized with regard to our participation in the SC Course Alignment Project.”

“The paired course project is one of the best ideas that SC has had during my 31 years of teaching. I hope the economic trend does not hamper the ability for the project to form lasting roots on the education of our students.”

### Did You Know?

The Pickens County School District expressed interest in extending the modified curriculum of the South Carolina Course Alignment Project to potentially all high schools in the district. As a result, the South Carolina Department of Education extended a waiver for all Math Tech 4 courses taught across high schools in that district for the next two academic years.

For more information about the project, please visit [www.epiconline.org/south\\_carolina](http://www.epiconline.org/south_carolina).

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