

SUCCESS STORY

Corequisite Reform at a Rural College: Piedmont Technical College Nearly Doubled Gateway Math and English Completions

How a seven-county rural college replaced standalone developmental courses with corequisite support, lifting gateway math completion rates from 52% to 74% and English from 51% to 76%.



Executive Summary

Like many rural colleges, Piedmont Technical College (PTC) was losing students it had already helped succeed. They finished their program coursework, then failed the general education math or English that stood between them and the credential, and left without it.

Math was the course students most often deferred, through a developmental sequence long enough and crowded enough with options that it was not always clear who belonged in which course. Developmental English delayed students differently, slowing their path through a subject nearly every course required. Course success rates trailed both state and national comparisons.

PTC partnered with Almy Education for a “done with you” implementation. Together they removed nearly all standalone developmental math, moved students directly into college-level courses with corequisite support, and rebuilt placement, advising and scheduling around that decision.

Measured in fall terms from 2021 to 2025:

Higher gateway completion rates.

Math rose from 52% to 74%. English rose from 51% to 76%.

More students through the gateway courses.

The number of students passing a gateway math or English course in a single fall term nearly doubled, from 501 to 968.

Fewer students leaving mid-course.

Withdrawal rates in math fell from 13% to 5%, and in English from 12% to 8%.

Introduction

Piedmont Technical College serves seven counties in South Carolina and keeps a location in each one, enrolling roughly 6,000 students across that footprint. The geography shapes what is possible operationally. When a student's realistic options come down to one or two sections of a course, the schedule stops being an administrative matter and starts deciding whether that student can take the class at all.

Budget shaped the plan too. PTC had enough funding to redesign one discipline properly and not enough to redesign everything at once. Rather than treat that as a reason to wait, the college treated it as a reason to sequence, and started where the losses were largest. Nearly every associate's degree PTC awards requires math.



The Problem

PTC's developmental sequence was not stopping students at the start of their programs. It was catching them at the very end, after they had done nearly everything else right.

Students were completing their programs and stalling on general education.

Students finished their technical and career coursework, then vanished in their final semester. They had saved math or English for last, had not passed, and did not come back. The pattern showed up first in the industrial programs, and when the college looked wider, the same thing was happening in business.

"They had all of their program courses. They were lacking general education courses, and they disappeared on us."

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College

These were not students who struggled from day one. They were students who had already proven they could do the work, losing momentum and credit within sight of the finish.

The developmental sequence was long, and the route through it was unclear.

Too many courses stood between placement and a credit-bearing class, and it was not obvious which of them a given student actually needed. Students got bogged down in the sequence, accumulating terms without accumulating college credit.

Internal efforts had stalled.

PTC reviewed curriculum, analyzed success rates and convened faculty to identify what needed to change, and the outcome did not move. The prevailing assumption at the time was that the results reflected the students rather than the design of the courses. What opened room to act was a period of change in the math department. Two retirements came at once, new hires brought new energy, and rather than run another internal review, PTC looked outside for help.

“We tried internally and it wasn’t working.”

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College



The Solution

PTC partnered with Almy Education for a “done with you” gateway course redesign implementation built on the Gateway Success at Scale framework. Culture first, then systems, then classroom, with iteration running through all three.

This order of operations is based on the most effective path to results and impact. Systems changes revert when the people responsible for them were never aligned, and no classroom, however well designed, can rescue a student who was routed into the wrong course.

Ownership extended well beyond the math department.

The cross-functional team included student affairs, financial aid, advising, registration and program faculty. Program faculty were asked directly what their students needed to be able to do, and those answers shaped the design.

That is what turned a math department project into a college commitment. It also gave the college accountability across divisions and a shared language for the work.

Faculty were partners in the design rather than recipients of a mandate. Opposition was real early on, and some of it lasted. What moved the department in the end was not argument, and it was not the framework. It was watching students who would have been placed in developmental courses pass college-level math.

“We went from way too many developmental courses to a corequisite model, where they began to see students succeed even when they thought they wouldn’t.”

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College

Placement, advising and scheduling were rebuilt to match.

Standalone developmental math nearly disappeared from the flowchart. In its place, students entered college-level math with corequisite support attached.

Placement moved to multiple measures, with grade point average (GPA) as the primary signal and very little use of placement tests.

■ Placement stopped deciding whether a student could begin college-level work and started deciding how much support came with it.

Advising and registration defaults changed in step, so the supported gateway course became the normal route rather than an exception a student had to request.

The schedule was rebuilt as well. PTC was carrying more online sections than it had before 2020, and those sections had lower pass rates. The college kept online sections as an option and flipped the balance toward in-person offerings.

Corequisite support was built against the college-level outcomes.

Support was designed after the gateway course outcomes were clarified, not alongside them. The order matters. Support designed independently of the parent course becomes a second lecture instead of a bridge to the outcomes students are actually assessed against.

Professional development happened on campus, with the faculty who would teach the courses. Consistency across sections came from shared outlines, pacing guides and small common assessments, aiming at consistent outcomes rather than identical teaching.

The First Term at Scale

Corequisite support reached scale in math in spring 2024. In the fall term before it, the numbers got worse.

Enrollment in college-level math jumped as students moved out of developmental courses and into the gateway. Success dropped to 41%. Withdrawal climbed to 21%.

The cause was structural, not instructional. Corequisite sections were not yet paired with specific college-level sections, so a student could combine any support section with any parent section, and the two instructors were often working from different plans. The support existed. The alignment did not yet.

The fix was the schedule. Sections were rebuilt so that pairs were coded, findable and available across campuses, online, day and night. That is where the significant improvement starts.

English reached scale a year later and had a hard first term of its own. Withdrawal rates in its corequisite sections ran at 25% in fall 2024 and fell to 10% the following fall. Twice, the term that looked like failure was the term the model was being built. Iteration is not a weakness in the design. It is the part of the work most institutions skip. It is also the work that results in true gateway success at scale.



The Results

The PTC institutional data speaks for itself. What changed the conversation inside the college, though, was not the percentage.

“I can give them course success percentages, but the thing that resonated is when I said the number of students that meant. That was like a moment.”

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College

In fall 2021, 202 students passed a gateway math course at PTC. In fall 2025, 484 did. English went from 299 to 483. Across both disciplines, the number of students clearing a gateway course in a single fall term went from 501 to 968.

Math Course Results

Fall Term	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Students Enrolled	386	517	718	702	653
Students Passed	202	265	293	422	484
Pass rate	52%	51%	41%	60%	74%
Withdrawal	13%	11%	21%	12%	5%

English Course Results

Fall Term	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Students Enrolled	592	666	702	610	636
Students Passed	299	406	436	385	483
Pass rate	51%	61%	62%	63%	76%
Withdrawal	12%	9%	10%	14%	8%

Gateway course success and withdrawal, fall terms. All college-level math and english sections, including corequisite support.
Source: Piedmont Technical College institutional data.

Enrollment in those college-level courses grew by roughly a third over the same period, from 978 to 1,289, as students who would previously have been in developmental courses entered the gateway directly. More students are in the college-level course, and a higher share of them are passing it.

“309 students completed a gateway math or English course who would have been in developmental courses before the redesign.”

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College



What Came Next

The math redesign began as a direct engagement with Almy Education. When PTC was ready to extend the work into English, and later into the biology department, Almy Education worked with the college to fund that next phase with Complete College America's Accelerator program. Almy Education provided the technical assistance throughout.

English moved faster, because the problem was less severe and the hard cultural work had already been done. The work has not stopped since. As each discipline reached scale, the college moved to the next one, and the biology department is underway now, starting with anatomy and physiology.

"We're back with English, and now we're back with biology. That should speak volumes."

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College



Conclusion

PTC's results show that scale is not a function of budget or size.
It is a function of sequence and commitment.

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The college did not wait for conditions to be right. It named a term and planned backward from it. Four years on, the number of students clearing gateway math and English in a fall term has nearly doubled, and the model has held across two disciplines with a third underway.

A lean team and a small number of sections are not barriers to this work. Fewer sections make consistency easier to reach, not harder, once the outcomes are defined first. A small number of sections makes consistency more reachable, not less, once the outcomes are defined first.

And the constraint at colleges like this one is rarely intent. It is budget, and it comes back at the start of every new phase. Part of the work is helping a college find the funding for the next discipline, not only delivering the current one.

What she has valued most from the partnership:

"Being able to have someone come along beside you who is skilled in what they do... for folks in my role, you're supposed to have all the answers, and sometimes we just don't have the answers."

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College

What she would say to another college considering this work:

"I would strongly encourage them to choose Almy Education. But I would also encourage them to figure out what it is they want to do, and what they need help with, before they even reach out."

Keli Fewox, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Piedmont Technical College

Four years in, across three disciplines, the goal at PTC is the one every gateway redesign is really after. Student success as the default outcome, not the exception.



**Want to see what Gateway
Success at Scale could look
like at your institution?**

Let's build a realistic plan for
your scale semester.

 almyeducation.com/getstarted

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