Practical Steps and Extraordinary Measures: How Colleges Can Accurately Place Students in English and Math Courses

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Objectives for today’s discussion

• Highlight findings from current studies on the state of assessment

• Discuss specific examples of states and individual colleges’ work in implementing multiple measures

• Engage participants in examining a spectrum of possibilities to consider implementing at their campus
The Student Perspective

I got my placement test results and I thought...

How come I placed in this class? I was placed in Math 840.

$x + y = y + x$

I felt like I learned it in kindergarten.
They did a poor job of preparing students for placement tests in general.
I got placed in the wrong class. It was too easy for me.
I got my test results and I cried.

It was going to take me years to get through math alone.

I thought to myself—

Will I ever graduate from community college?
Why are students saying this?

HERE. LEARN THIS AND YOU'LL DO GREAT IN COLLEGE.

WAIT! I DIDN'T LEARN THIS IN HIGH SCHOOL?
A National Problem

- Nationally (and in CA) about two thirds of community college students enroll in one or more developmental education course (Federal BPS data from 2009 indicate that 68 percent of students beginning at public two-year colleges took one or more remedial courses in the 6 years after their initial entry.)

- Only 33% of students referred to math remediation and 46% referred to English remediation finish their remedial sequence. (Bailey, Jeong & Cho 2008)

- Many assigned to remediation would have succeeded in college level courses if directly placed. (Scott Clayton, Crosta, and Belfield 2012)
How accurately are we placing students?

- Inexpensive to purchase and grade-consistent measure.

- Inaccurately place a third to a fourth of students (mostly placed too low) Scott-Calyton, Crosta & Belfield 2012

- Using GPA can substantially improve placement accuracy e.g. cut sever error rate by half (Crosta & Belfield 2012)

- 5 to 6 times as many students are severely underplaced
Assignment to Remedial Courses - An Equity Issue

Questions so far?
Outlining the Problem

In dyads:

• How familiar are you with this issue on your college or district?

• Have there been efforts to examine or address this issue on your college?

• How can you get engaged to help address the issue?
Promising Practices from other colleges: San Francisco

Up to 93% of SFUSD graduates who attend City College of San Francisco were placed into remedial math or English based on CCSF’s placement exam.
Promising Practices from other colleges: San Francisco

Policy change

- “Stop pointing the fingers dinners”
- English and Math Bump Up:
  - English: GPA 2.7 or higher in English, Junior year CST (California Standards Test) rating of Proficient, overall GPA 2.5
  - Math: GPA of 2.7 or higher in math, Junior year of CST, (California Standards Test) rating of Proficient, attendance rate of 90% or higher
- Survey– Students who participated in the bump up:
  - English - 60% of students indicated their class was easier than expected
  - Math – 67% of students indicated their class was too easy
Promising Practices from other colleges: San Francisco

Students Support Systems - Critical

- SFUSD were given priority registration dates to access Math/English courses
- SFUSD counselor outreach – importance of taking the placement test seriously
- Matriculation process was brought into the high schools
- Frisco day – final steps of matriculation process completed
- Math/English faculty meet to discuss aligning instructional approaches
Promising Practices from other colleges: San Francisco

Policy change

• CCSF changed policy to shorten time to re-take tests to 2 weeks rather than 3 months

• Results:
  -57% resulted in higher placement in English
  -40% resulted in higher placement in Math
Questions?
Promising Practices from other states: North Carolina

- Statewide multiple measures policy - 2015
- Students with GPA of 2.6 or higher are exempted from remediation
- Applies to all students who have graduated from an NC high school within five years
- If students do not meet the GPA threshold, then SAT/ACT is used, and after that a diagnostic test is given to students
- 2010 - statewide faculty convening
Promising Practices from other states: Washington

“Washington's public four-year universities and community colleges have agreed to place students who score a 3 or higher on the Smarter Balanced Assessment into college-level math and English courses.

That means they won't have to take placement tests as other new college students have had to do every fall before starting classes.”
California Policy Context Supporting Multiple Measures

- Title 5 requires the use of multiple measures (MALDEF)

- Student success act requiring common assessment; multiple measures working group:
  - common assessment will be developed in next several years
  - validating multiple measures

- Academic senate’s resolution supporting the use of multiple measures:

  “Using placement exam scores as the sole determinant of college access simply for the sake of consistence and efficiency may not be justified”
Questions?
How to implement alternative measures – Removing Barriers

In groups, work through each of the problems presented:

• A: You are a faculty member, charged with leading the effort to pilot an alternative to the placement exam but your Math department chair is against this effort. She prefers to keep the placement exam because she to maintain the integrity and rigor of her math department. How will you move it forward?

• B: You are the dean of counseling at your college. Your counselors are aware of multiple measures but prefer to stick to the standard way of creating education plans for students based on their placement test results. It’s the easiest way and they’ve done it that way for many years. They only have 20 min appointments with each student and looking up their GPA, etc, is too many extra steps. What strategies will you implement to move past this barrier?

• C: Your college has succeeded in implementing a plan for alternative measures and although 270 students were identified as eligible to be placed into a college level course, only 25 students were placed in college level courses because they were not informed of this option. What can the high school and college do in the future to prevent this from happening again?
Tips for how to make it happen on your college

- Regular meetings that include K-12 and college faculty and staff (math and English teams)
- Input from counseling, matriculation
- Examine historical data to understand accuracy of placement and remediation outcomes
- Include Institutional research staff in meetings
- Close collaboration with K-12 around data sharing
- Pilot a change, present data, then policy change
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