

Assessment Review Taskforce

Spring 2012

Objective:

Implement improvements to current incoming student assessment process.

Goals:

Review current process of student assessment for placement in English and math and determine additional means of assessment to be used.

Members:

Steve Ashpole (chair), Jim Carroll, Meg Estep Woolf, Ken Fox, Kathryn Held, Blaine Hunt, Rebecca Jayasundara, Laura Koval, Meredith LaFlesh, Angela Spoja, Kim Ward

Current Situation:

TCC currently administers the Accuplacer test for placement into English and math courses. Cut off scores are determined by the instructional department to place students into pre-college or college-level courses. Students that have attended other colleges may use transcripts to determine placement in lieu of Accuplacer testing. Students may also use Accuplacer or Compass test scores from other schools if they were taken within the past two years. Additionally, the math department has determined high school course work that may be used in addition to the Accuplacer test for recent high school graduates (no more than two years removed) from the Tacoma and Peninsula School Districts.

Taskforce Recommendations:

Recommendations from the taskforce fall under three areas; methods, process and physical environment.

Assessment Methods – The taskforce recommends that **Writeplacer be incorporated into the assessment process**. Students meeting a certain threshold on the Writeplacer test would be placed into ENGL 101 and would not take the sentence and reading skills test. Scores that don't place a student directly into ENGL 101 would lead a student into those other tests for further evaluation and cut scores that match our current placement levels. Students scoring into an ENGL 085 placement will be encouraged to take the Accuplacer diagnostic test to determine areas of deficiency for review and retest.

The group also recommends **incorporating weighted measures into the testing process** as a way to determine outside influences that will impact the ability of the student to succeed. Taking work schedule, study habits and other outside influences into account is an important part of student success.

Using SAT scores to determine college level readiness has been documented as a strong way to determine the ability of a student to complete college level work. A sub-group will be formed to determine specific scores that can be used by the college for placement starting during fall of 2012 for winter placement. We will work directly with the College Board to determine appropriate SAT scores for math placement.

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The taskforce recognizes the value of offering the Accuplacer test off campus and using it as an outreach tool and method of early assessment. The positive feedback we have received from high schools and other community organizations shows the value of this tool. The schools and organizations are using the test to determine the readiness of their students. The taskforce recommends **expanding the use of Accuplacer in the community.**

Finally, the group commends the Math Department for developing a method for transitioning Tacoma and Peninsula School District students directly into the math curriculum based on their high school course work. We recommend they **continue to develop these agreements with other districts and increase the availability of this information through advising after the Accuplacer.**

Assessment Processes – The taskforce looked closely at our entry services process and are impressed with the information provided to students at our Admissions Information Sessions. This information is vital to the early success of students, including how to get the most out of the Accuplacer test. **We recommend an increase in admissions information sessions and hiring an additional full-time outreach staff member.** The increase in sessions is needed because we also recommend we require admissions information sessions for first time college students. This additional staff member would also have a focus on developing additional relationships in high schools to increase the use of the Accuplacer test to determine college readiness. All students attending Admissions Information Sessions and Accuplacer Workshops will be coded into SMS so we can track the impact of these services.

The English Department has received positive feedback on their Accuplacer workshops. These **workshops need to be expanded to include math sessions.** The college should provide release time for math faculty as is done with English.

Currently the front counter in the Assessment Department is staffed by work-study students and HSP interns. To develop a consistent message and serve students to the best of our ability we recommend the **hiring full-time front counter position in assessment.**

One area of improvement noted from the SENSE survey was students did not feel they had the chance to meet with and advisor prior to registering for their first quarter at the college. The connection between student and advisor needs to be made early in the entry process. We recommend providing **students access to an admissions advisor directly after assessment testing.** This will allow students to understand their placement results, what classes are available based on their scores and pathway, and what options they have to improve their placement.

To provide this access to an admissions advisor we need increased staffing in advising. We recommend the **addition of two full-time admissions advisors** with the focus of providing support to students after assessment sessions. The admissions advisors would also meet with students needing help navigating the college entry process. We also recommend a **part-time placement specialist** to assist with heavy assessment traffic periods. This will provide a high level of service to students after completion of their testing.

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With the elimination of Math 075 we will have students completing the Accuplacer test that need to understand their choices: the self-discipline needed to succeed in a computer-based math course and the impact that choosing ABE math can have on their financial aid and college pathway. Therefore we recommend the **addition of a part-time ABE advisor/navigator to assist students testing into ABE math and/or reading and writing.**

Physical Environment – Improvements are needed in the Assessment Center physical environment to help provide better service to students on a daily basis. The first recommendation is to **build a permanent check-in desk at the entrance to the testing room.** This will give a presence to the department and allow students to easily find the center when they get to building 7.

We also recommend a **change in the configuration of Basic Skills and Access Services desks** to eliminate noise outside the testing center that can disrupt students in the center as they test. Developing a Basic Skills desk that faces the main lobby in the building will also give Basic Skills more visibility. Creating an Access Services desk in front of Kathryn Held's office will allow students talk with staff about accommodations in a space that offers privacy.

Finally, we need to update our monitoring system in the assessment center. Currently we have an outdated system that needs updating. An updated system will allow monitoring from outside the room and allow us to review and questionable activity. We recommend a **new camera system** to monitor students as they take the assessment test.

Benefits:

Implementation of this strategy is an important piece to moving the college forward. Improving the methods and process in which we assess students will allow for better placement, help students move through developmental studies more quickly, and save students time and money. New Federal limitations on financial aid make it imperative that we do all we can to move students through this as quickly as possible. Changes in the physical environment of the Assessment Center will also improve our service to students and give them a better experience as we determine appropriate placement.

Cost:

- Development and implementation of weighted measures - \$5000
- Full-time admissions staff focused on information sessions and high school testing - \$40,000
- Math Accuplacer Prep Workshop – Release time equivalent to that of English faculty member
- Part-time transitional studies advisor - \$16,000
- Build new front counter in advising lobby and change ABE and Access Services front counters - \$25,000
- Full-time front counter staff in Assessment - \$40,000
- Two full-time admissions advisors - \$50,000 each
- Part-time placement specialist - \$20,000
- Camera system for assessment room - \$5000