



# EXPECTATIONS

*The Underprepared Student  
and Community Colleges*  
2016 National Report

meet

# REALITY



**Colleges in Action: Profiles From the Report**

## Implementation of Multiple Measures for Placement

In March 2013, **Davidson County Community College (NC)** adopted and began full-scale implementation of North Carolina's Multiple Measures for Placement policy. The college acted immediately after the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges approved the policy so it would be in place for students entering in summer and fall 2013.

Multiple Measures for Placement is a hierarchy of measures that colleges use to determine students' readiness for college-level gateway courses:

1. Students with high school transcripts from the last five years reflecting an unweighted GPA of 2.6 or higher and four years of high school mathematics, one of which is beyond the Algebra II level, will be exempt from diagnostic placement testing and will be considered college ready for gateway courses.
2. If a recent high school graduate does not meet the high school transcript criteria, the college will use specified ACT or SAT subject area test scores to determine placement. ACT scores must be at least 22 for reading, 18 for English, and 22 for math; and students must score at least 500 in writing, critical reading, and math on the SAT to be exempt from diagnostic placement testing.
3. New-to-the-college students may place into college-level courses if they have previous college credit indicating college-level readiness.
4. If a student does not meet any of the requirements above, the college will administer the diagnostic placement test to determine placement.

Data for the 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years show that students placed using high school transcript data succeeded in their gateway courses (earned a grade of C or better) at a higher rate in both English and math than did their peers placed into courses based on other criteria.

- Across the two years, 76% of students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=667$ ) successfully completed the English gateway course, compared with 59% of students placed based on other criteria ( $N=726$ ).

- Across the two years, 65% of students ( $N=531$ ) placed using high school transcript data successfully completed the math gateway course, compared with 48% of students placed based on other criteria ( $N=306$ ).

This same trend holds when disaggregating these data by race/ethnicity. In the English gateway course

- 78% of White students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=530$ ) succeeded, compared with 63% of White students placed based on other criteria ( $N=458$ );
- 65% of African American students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=40$ ) successfully completed the course, compared with 48% of African American students placed based on other criteria ( $N=189$ );
- 76% of Latino students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=49$ ) were successful, compared with 64% of Latino students placed based on other criteria ( $N=45$ ); and
- 71% of Other students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=48$ ) succeeded, compared with 59% of Other students placed based on other criteria ( $N=34$ ).

For the math gateway course

- 67% of White students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=382$ ) succeeded, compared with 58% of White students placed based on other criteria ( $N=175$ );
- 41% of African American students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=29$ ) succeeded, compared with 24% of African American students placed based on other criteria ( $N=83$ );
- 77% of Latino students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=35$ ) succeeded, compared with 63% of Latino students placed based on other criteria ( $N=16$ ); and
- 52% of Other students placed using high school transcript data ( $N=29$ ) succeeded, compared with 53% of Other students placed based on other criteria ( $N=15$ ).

## P-16 Collaboration Supports Students

**Gulf Coast Partners Achieving Student Success (GCPASS)** is a partnership between **Lee College (TX)** and **Goose Creek CISD (GCCISD)**. Launched in 2012, it is a strong P-16 collaboration that is improving student success.

Started with three of the five GCCISD high schools, the program has expanded into all five GCCISD high schools as well as other school districts in the college's service area. Today, GCPASS serves 16 high schools and works with nearly 3,000 seniors, more than 1,100 dual-credit students, and large numbers of underclassmen. The partnership provides wrap-around student support through eight separate inter-institutional teams that include educators, parents, professionals, and community leaders. One of the main priorities of the teams is building relationships and trust between college and high school faculty, college and high school counselors, and college and community stakeholders, particularly among the Hispanic population.

To increase college readiness among high school graduates and increase student success in developmental education, GCPASS also strives to closely align the curricula at the high schools and the college. This work includes identifying common course outcomes; establishing successful curriculum sequences; and developing common assignments, grading rubrics, and practices.

To evaluate the impact of this partnership, Lee College is examining the success of GCCISD students in gatekeeper English and math courses. Student success rates are tracked by their GCCISD graduating cohort, which means they could have taken the gatekeeper courses at any point after matriculation.

Successful completion rates for GCCISD students in gatekeeper English stayed relatively flat at approximately 61% for college-ready students from 2010 ( $N=225$ ) to 2014 ( $N=234$ ) but increased by 49 percentage points, from 31% ( $N=26$ ) to 80% ( $N=40$ ), for those requiring developmental education.

Successful completion rates increased by 9 percentage points, from 47% in 2010 ( $N=53$ ) to 56% in 2014 ( $N=149$ ), for college-ready students in college algebra and increased 12 percentage points, from 56% ( $N=50$ ) to 68% ( $N=40$ ), for students requiring developmental education.

One of the other goals of this partnership is to increase the number of students matriculating into higher education. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, high school graduate enrollment in higher education (whether at Lee College or elsewhere) increased 4 percentage points, from 46% to 50%, from 2013 to 2014.<sup>14</sup>

## Expanded Placement Policy Uses Multiple Measures

**Ivy Tech Community College (IN)** has been using a multiple measures placement policy for degree-seeking students since 2003. Students may submit any of the following documents to be used for placement: ACT, SAT, or PSAT scores for tests taken within the past four years or a high school transcript reflecting a 2.6 GPA or higher, earned within four years prior to entering Ivy Tech. The college added the acceptance of high school GPA to the policy for students entering the college in fall 2014. Students who do not have the above documentation are required to take the college's custom ACCUPLACER diagnostic assessment.

As a result of the expanded placement policy, the college now places 40% of incoming students based on measures other than ACCUPLACER. Analysis of the success rates of all fall 2014 first-time, degree-seeking students shows that students placed using multiple measures had greater success rates in their first college-level (gatekeeper) course than did students placed using ACCUPLACER.

In math, 68% of students placed using multiple measures ( $N=895$ ) passed the gatekeeper course, compared with 59% of students placed using ACCUPLACER ( $N=3,298$ ). In reading, 64% of students placed using multiple measures ( $N=2,300$ ) passed the gatekeeper course, compared with 57% of students placed using ACCUPLACER ( $N=6,460$ ). In writing, 64% of students placed using multiple measures ( $N=1,633$ ) passed the gatekeeper course, compared with 57% of students placed using ACCUPLACER ( $N=8,060$ ).

## Sample Online Placement Test Aims to Reduce Time to Completion

Responding to students' reports that they do not prepare for placement tests, **Passaic County Community College (NJ)** developed a sample online placement test as a tool for incoming students. The practice placement test, along with linked videos describing how to approach each item, serves as a refresher for students. It aims to ensure that all students are placed at the appropriate levels and not in lower levels due to lack of preparation, therefore reducing their time to completion. Passaic began offering this tool to students in October 2012.

Data from the first three years of implementation indicate that, overall, students who used the tool were less likely to place into the lowest level of developmental education in both English and math than were students who did not use the tool. Moreover, placement into the lowest levels of developmental math and English decreased slightly among students who used the tool, while it held steady or increased among students who did not use the tool.

For students who used the practice tool, placement into the lowest level of developmental math was 19% ( $N=163$ ) in 2012–13, 16% ( $N=153$ ) in 2013–14, and 15% ( $N=145$ ) in 2014–15. Among students who did not use the practice tool, placement into the lowest level of developmental math was 17% ( $N=281$ ) in 2012–13, 18% ( $N=286$ ) in 2013–14, and 19% ( $N=263$ ) in 2014–15.

For students who used the practice tool, placement into the lowest level of developmental English was 30% ( $N=252$ ) in 2012–13, 29% ( $N=288$ ) in 2013–14, and 27% ( $N=266$ ) in 2014–15. Among students who did not use the practice tool, placement into the lowest level of developmental English was 31% ( $N=512$ ) in 2012–13, 30% ( $N=472$ ) in 2013–14, and 33% ( $N=468$ ) in 2014–15.

In addition, the percentage of incoming students using the tool increased from 24% in fall 2012 to 45% in summer 2015. Moreover, while the college's target audience is its own students, an analysis of web analytics shows that other colleges and high schools refer their students to the online tool.

## Mandatory Brush-Up Helps Students Improve Placement

Despite efforts to encourage new students to prepare for placement tests, **Washington State Community College (OH)** found that most students did not take time to refresh their English or math skills and that students were often surprised by and disappointed with results that were lower than what they expected. Moreover, students would schedule a retest and expect that by simply taking the test again their scores would increase. Recognizing that it should require preparation, the college introduced a mandatory brush-up prior to retesting. The new policy, introduced in April 2014, requires students to complete a brush-up workshop in English/writing and/or math before retaking the relevant section of the Compass test.

This brief, two-hour brush-up workshop presented by college faculty provides reviews of basic concepts that students may not have used recently. These sessions, available to any student, are held once a month throughout the year and more frequently in the ramp up to registration at the beginning of the term.

However, two-hour brush-up sessions are unlikely to be enough for some students. Institutional data show that students testing below a ninth-grade level in math are unsuccessful even at the lowest level of developmental courses at the college. For these students, the college offers a second, more intensive option: a free 10-week course taught in collaboration with the ABLE (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) program. This course, ACES (ABLE + College Equals Success), focuses on fundamental math content and college success skills.

Based on pre- and post-intervention assessment (students' placement scores before and after the brush-up workshop), 27% of students who initially tested into developmental math ( $N=147$ ) increased their placement by one class level, and 5% tested out of developmental math altogether. In English, 56% of 135 students who initially placed into developmental English increased their placement level by one class level, while 33% tested into Freshman Composition. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of students who placed into the lowest level of developmental math or the ACES course dropped from 58% to 48%.

WSCC President Bradley Ebersole says, "The college is doing everything possible to help students move more quickly through their educational path. This best practice created by the faculty and staff is one that helps to enhance student success."

## Bringing a Successful Corequisite Model to Scale

In fall 2016, **Butler Community College (KS)** plans to launch full-scale implementation of its English corequisite model, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). Data show that with the ALP, first piloted in spring 2013, more students complete developmental courses, and they do so more quickly. The college developed the model after faculty expressed concern over lagging developmental English success.

The ALP consists of two course pairings. The first corequisite requires students who placed into the lower level of developmental English to simultaneously enroll in the higher level of developmental English. The second corequisite requires students who placed into the higher level of developmental English to also enroll in college-level Composition I. Both corequisites are rigorous programs that involve extensive writing and college-level reading. Students who pass both classes in a corequisite pairing earn six credit hours, three for each class.

In five semesters, two ALP pilots on two Butler campuses have grown to 17 corequisite offerings at three Butler sites. When the college enacts full-scale implementation across all six campuses in fall 2016, it plans to also launch online ALP classes.

Data show that ALP students move through the developmental sequence faster and are consistently more successful than are conventional developmental English students. Analysis of data from the ongoing pilot study examined pass rates for the higher-level developmental English class among three groups:

1. Students who took the first corequisite pairing (the lower-level developmental course and the higher-level developmental course)
2. Students who placed directly into the higher-level developmental course and took it without a corequisite

3. Students who took the lower-level developmental course and the higher-level developmental course in the traditional two-course sequence prior to the pilot study (baseline comparison group)

Butler compared pass rates in two semesters: spring 2014, with 28 ALP students; and fall 2014, with 39 ALP students. The pass rates for group 2 (students who placed directly into the higher-level developmental course) were slightly higher than the pass rates for students in the corequisite class; however, the pass rates for the corequisite pairing (spring 2014, 65%; fall 2014, 69%) were almost double the pass rate for the baseline group (37%).

Analyses revealed a similar pattern of success for the college-level course among the following three groups:

4. Students who took the second corequisite pairing (the higher-level developmental course and the college-level course)
5. Students who placed directly into the college-level course and took it without a corequisite
6. Students who took the higher-level developmental course and the college-level course in the traditional two-course sequence prior to the pilot study (baseline comparison group)

The pass rates for group 4 (the ALP participants in the second corequisite pairing) in spring 2014, fall 2014, and spring 2015 (65% [ $N=65$ ], 69% [ $N=81$ ], and 67% [ $N=33$ ], respectively) were lower than the corresponding pass rates for students who placed directly into college-level Composition I (69% [ $N=894$ ], 74% [ $N=1,498$ ], and 67% [ $N=867$ ]). However, the pass rates for these ALP students were much higher (at least 25 percentage points higher) than the pass rate for the baseline group (39%).