HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

HOUSE BILL 2681:
Final Report
September 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Report on House Bill 2681 (2015) was prepared by agency staff of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) with the consultation and contributions of many others. The House Bill 2681 workgroup, coordinated by HECC and ODE staff in collaboration with the Developmental Education Redesign: Placement (Dev Ed Placement) workgroup convened by Elizabeth Cox Brand at the Oregon Community Colleges Association (OCCA), provided forward thinking, research questions, recommendations, and a wealth of perspectives and insight on improvements to traditional approaches to community college placement.

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Special thanks to Michelle Hodara, Senior Researcher at Education Northwest, and HECC staff including Dana Richardson, Laurie Roe, and Betsy Simpkins, who contributed data or other information to this report.

Special thanks also to Elizabeth Cox Brand, the participants of the Dev Ed Placement Workgroup, and Phil Gonring, Senior Fellow at Education First; their recommendations, collaboration with the HB 2681 Workgroup, and contributions to its charge were invaluable.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final report in response to the requirements of House Bill 2681 (2015) advances the preliminary HB 2681 report through an overview and compilation of the activities undertaken and information gathered by the HB 2681 workgroup and agency staff to examine and recommend effective processes and strategies for placing students in community colleges. To underscore the equity imperative that undergirds placement reform, the report provides demographic data on student enrollment in developmental education and a spotlight focus on English Language Learners.

Results of a survey administered to community colleges in May 2016 are included; these results demonstrate that colleges have already begun to implement the primary recommendation of the HB 2681 workgroup that colleges move toward a system of multiple measures rather than using only a standardized assessment as the default placement tool for all students. It is noted that the academic achievement measures of high school course grades and cumulative grade point average are unreported at the state level, limiting the ability to research the predictive validity of these measures as placement indicators or to provide them for direct placement consideration; however, there appears to be widespread interest in the use of both self-reported and official grade information to support students' seamless transition from high school into college courses. Systematic test preparation, review, and study materials are encouraged as a means to establish a strong foundation of support for those students who do take college placement tests.

Consistent with the intent of HB 2681 in its emphasis on the statewide summative assessment within the consideration of effective processes and strategies for student placement in community college courses, implementation of the 2015 community college agreements to incorporate use of the state's summative assessment in placement processes is discussed; the first cohort of students entering community colleges with scores on the Smarter Balanced assessment will begin in Fall 2016. The report observes the need for ongoing research to monitor and evaluate the impact and costs of a multiple measures approach.

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION: HB 2681 ACTIVITY REPORT

The HB 2681 workgroup held its last meeting in March 2016, following the submission of the preliminary HB 2681 report (Appendix A) to: focus directly on some of the specific recommended measures to be incorporated into a multiple-measures approach; advise agency staff on research needed to identify changing

placement practices and equity considerations in placement for this final report; and provide direction on messaging with high schools and other stakeholders regarding the use of Smarter Balanced in placement. Information gathered subsequent to the meeting is included throughout the body of this report and further detailed in Appendix B, a Chronicle of the Work of the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group, and Appendix C, a research Memorandum on Community College Assessment and Placement provided to the HB 2681 workgroup by Education Northwest.

In addition to gathering information, in 2016 the HB 2681 workgroup sought to broaden the state's conversation on community college placement to include additional stakeholders beyond the HB 2681 and Dev Ed Placement workgroups. In April 2016 three of the workgroup members—Derek Brown, ODE; John Hamblin, MHCC; and Lisa Reynolds, HECC—collaborated on a presentation for the annual conference of the Oregon Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (OrACRAO), an association which includes administrators and staff from all postsecondary sectors in Oregon. The presentation began with a focus on the postsecondary Smarter Balanced agreements, then widened its scope to include an overview of the HB 2681 charge, the recommendations which emerged regarding the use of multiple measures, and the redesigns underway in community college placement. In July 2016, Lisa Reynolds gave a similar presentation at the Reach Higher Oregon summit to expand the conversation with K-12 stakeholders as well as postsecondary audiences, including advisors, counselors, and other high school and school district staff and administrators. HECC Executive Director Ben Cannon further ensured widespread awareness of the state's placement reform approaches and activities through his emphasis on the postsecondary use of the summative assessment as a means to support student transitions and strengthen the consistency in messages students receive about their readiness for college in his plenary remarks at the Reach Higher Summit. His July 2016 memo on the postsecondary use of Smarter Balanced scores, along with 12th grade coursework, is included as Appendix D; further discussion on the work underway to use these measures is provided in the report below.

These primary efforts undertaken through the HB 2681 workgroup in the first half of 2016—to gather student and college-based information, expand stakeholder engagement, and prepare for the use of Smarter Balanced scores in placement for the first cohort of students entering community colleges in Fall 2016—are activities which will persist; even after this final report on the workgroup activities has been submitted, the work itself will continue. In collaboration with the community colleges and other partners, HECC will monitor the implementation of placement reform; together, we must study the new emerging approaches to placement community colleges are taking to understand the barriers that may impede implementation, including costs. We must analyze the impact of reform on improved equity in student access to, persistence in, and completion of postsecondary degrees and certificates so that evidence of effective policies and practices can be used to guide decision making.

The statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) currently in development through the Chief Education Office (CEdO) can be a vehicle to support the seamless flow of data across systems via a common student identifier; however, at present, the data collections upon which the SLDS depends do not systematically provide the evidence of prior academic achievement increasingly sought by colleges as part of a multiple measures approach to placement: high school course grades and cumulative high school grade point average (HS GPA). These measures and others will be discussed throughout this report; HECC and ODE are consulting with the CEdO regarding a potential legislative concept to improve data collection and better support state-level data sharing through the longitudinal data system.

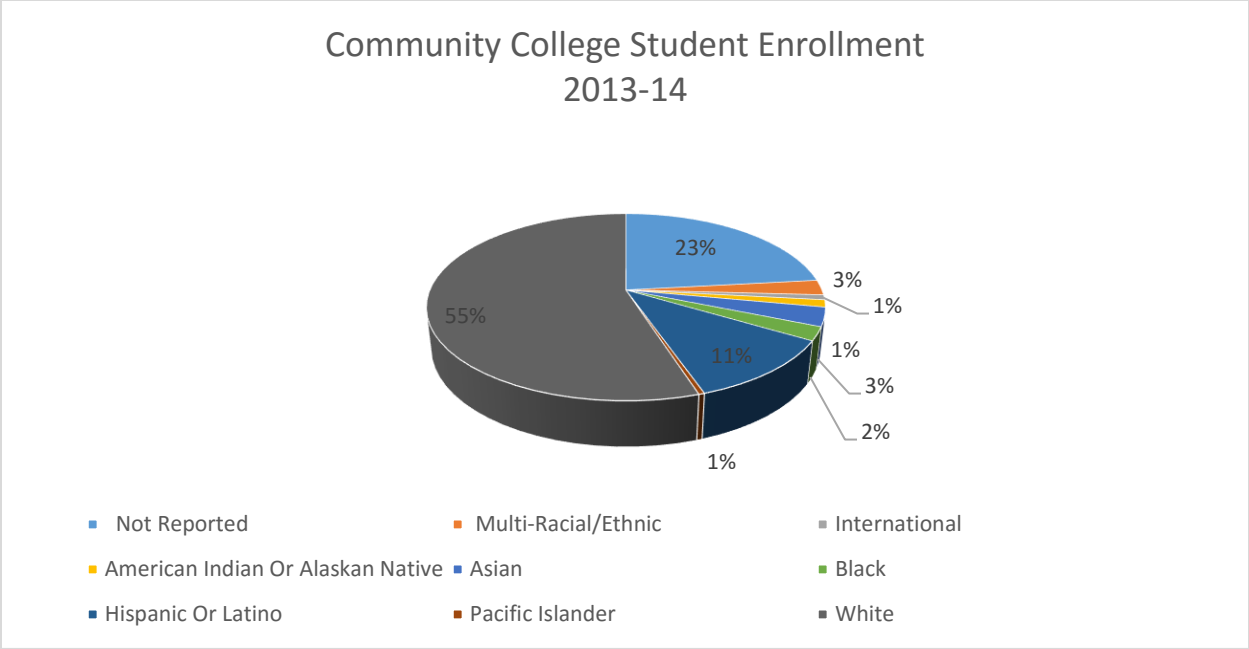
While a few community colleges in Oregon have adopted the ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) system as a placement and modularized remediation approach for mathematics, its cost of $15 per student is prohibitive for most institutions unless costs are passed on to students. If there is sufficient interest in the adoption of this system to be used as a common placement assessment in Oregon, it is recommended that the costs be shouldered through dedicated state funding.

Further policy considerations are provided in the Education Northwest memo, summarized in the body of this report and attached as Appendix C. Education Northwest gathered perspectives from community college stakeholders about supports most needed to successfully implement reform; responses highlighted the need for professional development, additional funding, and opportunities to collaborate (with other colleges and within a college).[1]

STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

The HB 2681 workgroup sought information to contextualize the scope of equity considerations for placement reform in Oregon Community Colleges; as discussed in the preliminary HB 2681 report, national research has consistently shown students of color are less likely to be placed into entry-level college courses than their white counterparts. Information on Oregon community college students was gathered from multiple sources, all of which included 2013-14 as the common most recent academic year for which data could be obtained. Figure 1 and Table 1 below provide the proportional enrollment and number of students from all identified race and ethnicity groups in the HECC's community college data system.

Figure 1: Community College Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2013-14



[1] Appendix C, p. 10.

Table 1: Community College Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2013-14

Not Reported	74,614
Multi-Racial/Ethnic	8,316
International	2,728
American Indian Or Alaskan Native	3,991
Asian	10,400
Black	7,494
Hispanic Or Latino	35,714
Pacific Islander	1,276
White	176,316
Total	**320,849**

(Source: D4A Data Mart, accessed July 24, 2016)

Next, we isolated proportional enrollment in developmental mathematics courses (Figure 2 and Table 2) and reading or writing courses (Figure 3 and Table 3). It should be noted that the reporting system for these categories includes required technical courses for CTE programs which may be below 100-level (e.g. program-specific applied mathematics courses), as well as the developmental course sequence leading to transferable, entry-level general education courses.

While the percentage of all enrolled students who did not provide demographic information shown above was 23%, the share of students enrolled in developmental courses who did not report this information was much lower: 7% in mathematics and 8% in reading/writing. As a result, we would expect to see some variability in the percentages of students enrolled in developmental education; the two identified demographic groups which showed significant differences between overall enrollment and developmental enrollment include Hispanic/Latino and white students. Students who identified as Hispanic/Latino comprised 11% of the total student enrollment, while students who identified as Hispanic/Latino made up 14% of those enrolled in developmental mathematics and 21% of those enrolled in developmental reading or writing. Students who identified as white comprised 55% of overall enrollment and developmental reading/writing, but 65% of students enrolled in developmental mathematics.

Figure 2: Student Enrollment in Developmental Mathematics, 2013-14

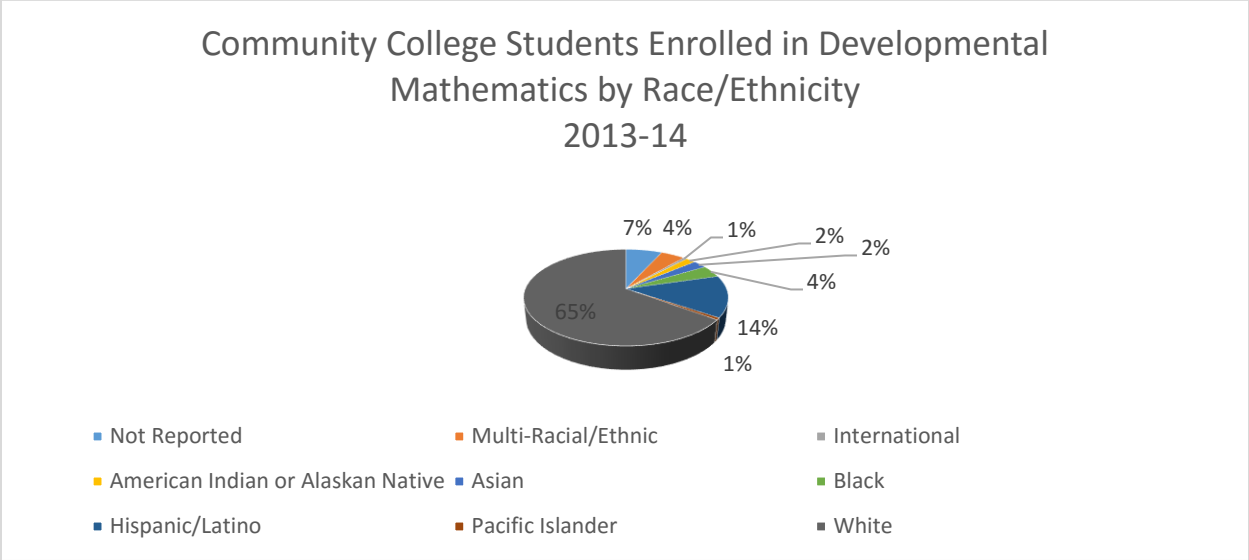


Table 2: Student Enrollment in Developmental Mathematics, 2013-14

Not Reported	3,473
Multi-Racial/Ethnic	2,321
International	345
American Indian or Alaskan Native	919
Asian	1,337
Black	2,062
Hispanic/Latino	7,126
Pacific Islander	338
White	33,097
Total	**51,018**

Source: D4A Data Mart, accessed July 24, 2016

Figure 3: Student Enrollment in Developmental Reading/Writing, 2013-14

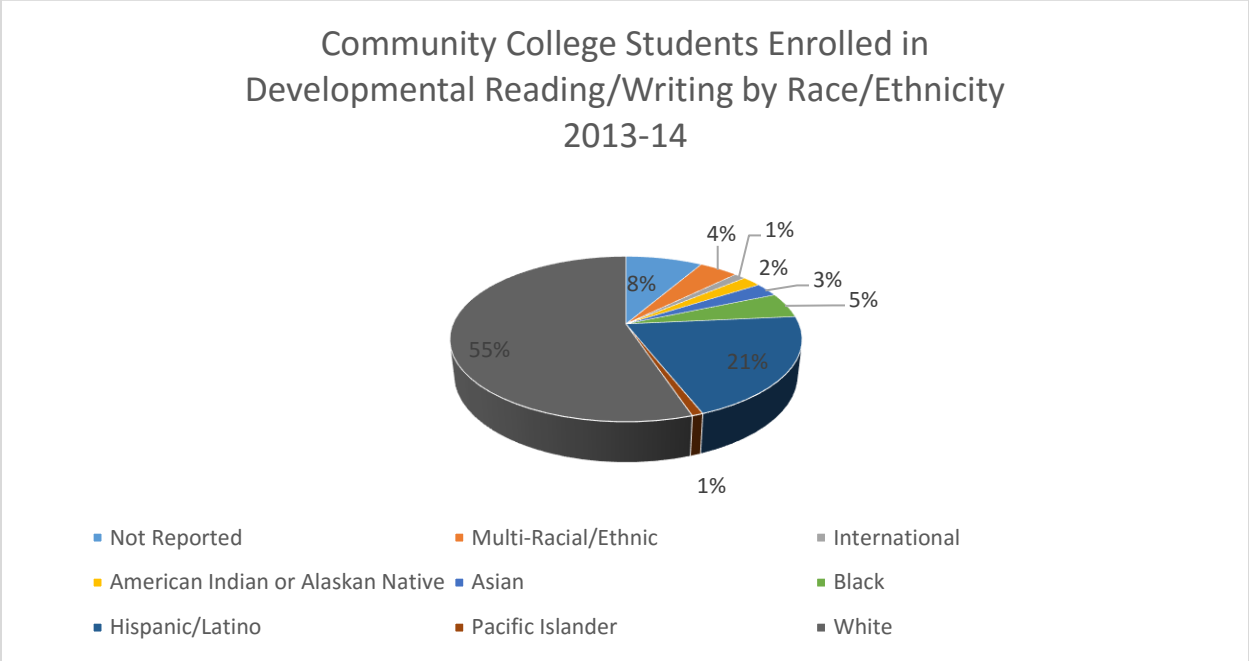


Table 3: Student Enrollment in Developmental Reading/Writing, 2013-14

Not Reported	1,940
Multi-Racial/Ethnic	987
International	283
American Indian or Alaskan Native	476
Asian	610
Black	1,124
Hispanic/Latino	4,725
Pacific Islander	201
White	12,702
Total	**23,048**

Source: D4A Data Mart, accessed July 24, 2016

In addition to identifying the demographic proportion of students within community colleges and within developmental education courses, we sought information on the percentage of students from each of the demographic groups who participated in developmental education. This data is provided in Table 4, and was compiled by Education Northwest in an analysis on D4A reporting categories.

Table 4: Percentage of Demographic Group Enrolled in Developmental Courses, 2013-14

Percentage of Demographic Group Enrolled in Community College Developmental Courses, 2013-14	Math	Writing	Reading
Not reported	20%	5%	1%
Multi-Racial/Ethnic	36%	10%	2%
International	14%	8%	5%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	35%	11%	3%
Asian	21%	6%	2%
Black	39%	15%	4%
Latino/Hispanic	37%	13%	4%
Pacific Islander	36%	11%	6%
White	29%	6%	2%

(Source: Michelle Hodara Memo to HECC Office of Research and Data, October 28, 2015)

SPOTLIGHT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In addition to the above information on students' enrollment in developmental education in Oregon, the HB 2681 workgroup sought greater information on the participation of English Language Learners in developmental education. Betsy Simpkins, Policy Analyst in the HECC Office of Research and Data, conducted a literature review, and found limited information on the impacts of placement practices on community college students who are English Language Learners (ELL). In an email on May 10, she explained, "A review of the literature regarding the impacts of placement practices specifically on ELL students, while sparse, is indicative of additional problems affecting this population of students, as opposed to their native English speaking peers. Issues such as the potential for cultural bias in the exam itself, the reliance on a single assessment, the great diversity within the ELL population, and the differences between developmental writing and ESL programs, including their length, all contribute to the difference in academic success among ELL students."[2]

Ms. Simpkins noted that students may indicate on their college admissions application that English is not their native language; identified students are generally required to take an English assessment to evaluate their

[2] Simpkins, Betsy. Email communication, May 10, 2016.

reading and writing skills. Students who do not score high enough on that exam may be referred to developmental writing or English as a Second Language (ESL) courses; the ESL course sequences generally do not provide college-level credit, although writing courses at the highest levels of the sequence, developed explicitly for non-native speakers, are offered at some community colleges as credit-bearing courses. Further research to isolate the impact of placement on the population of ELL students would be needed to understand the impact of placement on these students' college degree and certificate completion in Oregon.

Based on her thorough review of ACT bias research and ACT policy regarding the Compass test commonly used for placement, Simpkins drew the conclusion that a high number of placements into developmental or ESL courses "should not be attributed to a bias in the test itself"; instead, Simpkins highlighted the practice of reliance on a single standardized assessment, such as the Compass test, as the greater concern—a concern for all students, to be sure, and particularly so for English Language Learners: "In her [2012 dissertation] study of ELL students in New York's community colleges, Michelle Hodara found that large numbers of ELL students may be misplaced into ESL or developmental writing as a result of relying on "blunt assessment instruments that cannot account for the diverse language needs of this population." Simpkins' recommendations to improve access to credit-bearing courses for ELL students identified the use of multiple measures and self-directed placement as practices which "may allow more accurate placement of students and lead to higher rates of completion of college-level coursework for ELL students."

HECC Research Lead Laurie Roe provided further insight on the scope of English Language Learners in developmental reading and writing. As part of her work to improve the identity resolution between K-12 and HECC data systems, Roe examined the numbers of community college students in 2013-14 who had been identified as students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in a dataset of high school graduates provided by the Department of Education. As shown in Table 5, younger students who had more recently completed high school were more likely to be enrolled in developmental coursework than were their older LEP-identified peers.

Table 5: Students with Limited English Proficiency Enrolled in Developmental Courses, 2013-14

Age	Total Number of Enrolled Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students Matched	Total Matched Students Enrolled in Developmental Reading/Writing	Percent of Matched Students Enrolled in Developmental Reading/Writing
18	451	185	41%
19	391	125	32%
20	245	51	21%
21	98	21	21%

(Source: Data provided by Laurie Roe, HECC Office of Research and Data, May 2016)

MULTIPLE MEASURES FOR PLACEMENT

The April 2016 "Developmental Education Redesign in Oregon: Changing the Way We Place Students at Our Community Colleges – A Chronicle of the Work of the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group" report provided as Appendix B outlines the evolution of community college approaches to placement in 2015-16. Further, the report demonstrates the value of the HB 2681 workgroup's collaborative approach to join forces with the existing community college efforts to redesign developmental education and improve placement practices: in doing so, the HB 2681 workgroup invigorated the movement toward change while providing assurance to community college faculty and administrators that its recommendations would be based on what was learned and discussed together by both workgroups. Indeed, Elizabeth Cox Brand notes that the HB 2681 preliminary report's overarching recommendation—that community colleges move away from reliance on only a standardized assessment to determine entering students' capacity for success in college courses and toward a system of multiple measures for placement—was drawn directly from discussions with the Placement workgroup. And as noted above by HECC Researcher Betsy Simpkins and to the workgroups by John Hetts, Senior Director for Data Science at the Educational Results Partnership, the motivation for placement reform rests on a foundational commitment to improved equity in college access: "Standardized assessment as a standalone measure has led us to underestimate substantially the ability of students—particularly students of color and low-income and first generation college students—to do college-level work."[3]

From John Hetts, the Dev Ed Placement and HB 2681 workgroups learned about the role and value of high school grade point average (HS GPA) as a strong indicator of student readiness for college-level work. He surprised many of the participants with research demonstrating the predictive validity of HS GPA long after high school graduation, even when compared with placement tests given to the entering student 9 or 10 years later. Perhaps most surprising, Hetts cited research in the University of California system and by ACT showing that students tend to self-report their high school grades with a high degree of accuracy; when asked to provide their grades, students' responses were consistent with the data upon verification. As seen in the results of a college assessment and placement survey discussed below and included as Appendix C, this was welcome news for several Oregon community colleges. Interest in pilot-testing approaches to incorporate course grades and HS GPA into placement processes has increased significantly in the past year, yet many colleges are stymied in their implementation by the lack of state-level data collections which could supply this information, confirm the validity of self-reported grades and HS GPA, and support this reform.

In addition to the use of high school course grades and cumulative GPA, the Chronicle report identifies other multiple measures discussed during the combined workgroup meetings in 2015-16. One of these is the use of writing Work Samples successfully completed as an alternative to the summative statewide assessment for students to demonstrate proficiency and meet the Essential Skill of writing required to earn a high school diploma; roughly 25% of Oregon high school graduates have produced these Work Samples. During the March 4 focus meeting, writing faculty from 7 community colleges expressed interest in the Work Samples, although they did not have much familiarity with them and expressed concern about the extent of alignment between the Work Samples and the Common Core State Standards. A webinar for community college and high school writing faculty was provided by Elizabeth Cox Brand and Ken Hermens, Language Arts Assessment Specialist in the Oregon Department of Education, in May, with ongoing pilot coordination

[3] Appendix B, p. 4.

expected in 2016-17 to support the faculty group's proposed actions to facilitate the use of writing Work Samples in placement. As shown in the next section, interest in this measure has increased among community colleges as well: while the March meeting included faculty from 7 community colleges with interest, the May survey revealed 12 community colleges who report that they are or will be incorporating writing work samples into their use of multiple measures for students to demonstrate their capacity for college-level writing coursework.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Education Northwest assisted the information-gathering efforts of the HB 2681 workgroup by providing a memorandum, included as Appendix C, which details the Oregon community college responses to a voluntary survey in May 2016 on the implementation of various assessment and placement approaches: placement test preparation practices, decision zones and directed self-placement approaches, and the use of standardized test scores, high school grades, and various "new measures." The survey was completed by 65 individuals across the 17 community colleges and included faculty, staff and administrators in instruction and student services.

There were some important limitations to the study, particularly in response consistency and survey completion. In cases where multiple respondents at a college provided information, responses were not always consistent; it is unclear whether this may be due to varying knowledge and roles, interpretation of the questions or response choices, or other reasons. The researchers compensated for the inconsistencies by prioritizing most-common answers and those provided by senior administrators.

Although the survey results include at least one respondent from every Oregon community college, it should also be noted that some questions did not receive responses from each college, perhaps due to the respondent's uncertainty, lack of knowledge, or inability to provide an accurate response. Despite these limitations, the survey demonstrates that the longstanding custom of reliance on a single measure to determine student capacity for success in college courses, the standardized placement test, has evolved. Since the memo is provided as an appendix to this report, only a few key findings on the use of multiple measures will be summarized below.

Regarding the use of typical standardized test scores in placement, the survey results show all 17 colleges using or planning to use a placement test, and a majority of colleges (10-14) using or planning to use AP exam, IB exam, SAT, and ACT results for mathematics and reading/writing placement.

The use of high school information in placement, while a new approach in Oregon, has gained significant momentum. 15-16 community colleges responded to the confidential survey with reports of using or planning to use official or self-reported high school grades, and 15-16 community colleges using official or self-reported high school GPA.

In addition to standardized test scores and high school information, the researchers also surveyed colleges on their current or intended use of a variety of new measures, including Smarter Balanced, the new GED, writing Work Samples, and noncognitive measures. Although not all colleges responded to the Smarter Balanced question for writing, all 17 reported use of Smarter Balanced for mathematics; 14-15 colleges emphasized the use of senior year coursework, along with achievement on the assessment, in their implementation of the Smarter Balanced agreement.

In Fall 2015, 5 colleges expressed to the HB 2681 workgroup their interest in piloting use of the 2014 GED test series in placement; by the May 2016 survey, all 17 colleges reported using or intending to use the new GED for writing, and 16 for math. The 2014 GED test series, like the Smarter Balanced assessment, is aligned to the Common Core State Standards; much like the use of the summative 11th grade assessment, use of this measure as an indicator of student readiness for placement into college courses helps to strengthen the alignment in expectations across an education continuum, send a clearer and more consistent message to students, and obviate the need for additional placement testing within the placement process.

Eleven colleges reported using or planning to use noncognitive measures in their placement processes for math and English. The Education Northwest survey included opportunity for open-ended responses regarding the use of measures, as well as the structured responses. The memo notes the ways in which this approach is currently being implemented by one college, and the considerations other colleges are taking, including the use of student interviews, assessing attitudes and confidence about math and writing, taking into consideration students' work schedules and course loads, and use of the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) tool. Nearly all of the community colleges reported use of course grades from other colleges (16) and placement results from other colleges (13) in their own placement of students. These approaches toward noncognitive measures and use of postsecondary success evidence may be especially effective in providing a multiple-measures placement approach for adult students.

The survey asked respondents to identify supports needed to implement placement reforms on their campuses. The majority of respondents identified the need for professional development and training, external funding, and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from other colleges. Lack of funding and challenges of collaboration within a college were prominent in the open-ended responses regarding supports.

Based on their findings, the researchers recommend for consideration the development of common placement test preparation materials, guidance, or standards; additional funding to promote the convening of college representatives to continue learning and sharing strategies together; facilitation of campus-wide communication on placement reform; and research to identify the effectiveness of new assessment and placement policies and practices.

SPOTLIGHT: SMARTER BALANCED

Oregon's first cohort of high school graduates entering community colleges with Smarter Balanced scores will begin in Fall 2016. In March, a data sharing agreement was finalized between ODE and HECC in order for HECC to provide a match process that could be implemented by community colleges. An "Anticipated Steps" document was subsequently drafted and provided to outline, from a student's perspective, how the process would flow:

- Step 1: Student applies to a community college. To optimize the identity resolution that matches college applicants with their Smarter Balanced achievement of Levels 3 or 4, colleges were advised to include an application question for a student to indicate the high school from which the student graduated.

- Step 2: Application data is sent to the state and validated. This is possible through an existing mechanism through which Institutional Researchers provide data.

- Step 3: State sees if there is a Smarter Balanced score match for the student. The data shared by ODE is matched through an algorithm with the entering student information to identify the entering student and the high school student as the same individual. There is no common student identifier in current state-level data.

- Step 4: College receives back a file indicating whether a match was made. The match code will indicate whether a valid match was made and whether the student met the Achievement Level 3 or higher threshold for English/language Arts and for Math.

- Step 5: College places the student in their system, if possible. If the student enrolled in an accelerated learning course offered through that college during 12th grade or has already sent the relevant AP or IB test scores to the college, the necessary information will be ready at hand. If not, the college may hold the placement determination to confirm 12th grade coursework, consistent with its use of multiple measures for placement. HECC cannot provide information to colleges on high school courses students have successfully completed during senior year, as that data is not systematically collected at the state level.

- Step 6: Student learns whether a placement determination has been made or if additional measures, including a placement test, are needed. Again, consistent with the college's use of multiple measures for placement.

It is important to note that this process provides a benefit to students who have demonstrated their academic achievement on the summative 11th grade assessment; achievement levels 1 and 2 will not be considered for placement. This means that a student is not harmed by lower performance on the assessment; it should not be inferred that a student would be placed into developmental education mathematics, reading or writing courses on the basis of scores below level 3. Community colleges will use other measures, which may include placement tests, for these students.

To date, the HECC Office of Research and Data is still working to provide an error-free identity resolution match process. It is anticipated that a process will be in place for colleges to either provide a batch file of multiple applicants in step 2, or perform an individual inquiry for student matches.

Information about the postsecondary Smarter Balanced agreements has been shared with multiple stakeholder audiences since the agreements were adopted in 2015; the agreements were announced in a HECC newsletter, and agency staff collaborated with Education First to develop an infographic, flyer, and sample school newsletter as communication resources for high schools and districts to share with staff, students and parents. These materials were provided to school administrators through an email from ODE, and posted online in a Back-to-School "toolkit" posted on the ODE website in Fall 2015.

In July 2016, HECC Executive Director Ben Cannon issued a memo restating the commitment of Oregon community colleges and public universities to incorporate Smarter Balanced test scores into their processes for placement of students into entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without need for additional placement testing for developmental education.[4] The memo directs any questions regarding college implementation of the agreements to the institutions themselves; and informs stakeholders of HECC's current efforts to compile detailed information on the implementation of the agreements, including colleges' specifications on 12th grade

[4] Appendix D

courses, placement policies, and points of contact for questions related to these approaches. HECC, ODE, and the Chief Education Office are collaborating to ensure that the memo is widely circulated so that all stakeholders are aware that the summative statewide assessment is valued by postsecondary institutions and can benefit students in their transition to college.

NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

As documented throughout this report, it is clear that community colleges have already begun to implement the HB 2681 workgroup's recommendation that colleges move from using only a standardized placement assessment as the default placement tool for all students and toward a system of multiple measures to increase the accuracy of placement decisions. This is vital not only to increase access to college coursework for all students, but especially for students whose progression toward postsecondary certificates and degrees is compromised by underplacement into developmental education courses if they have demonstrated a capacity for success in entry level mathematics and writing. Acknowledging the equity imperative, and the likelihood that underplacement significantly impacts college access for students of color, underscores the importance of this change. An improvement in postsecondary completion rates may rest, in part, on the improved foundation of placement practices to support a student's learning progression.

However, state-level data are incomplete. We need to know more about Oregon students who are referred to developmental education, especially first generation students and students of color. Due to data limitations we are unable to clearly understand the relationship between an Oregon student's high school academic performance and subsequent placement into developmental education coursework. Limited demographic information, as well as longitudinal information, constrains our understanding of the placement, outcomes, and potential interventions to better support our student populations in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

As HECC tracks the changes and outcomes produced by a shift to multiple measures, this information must become a permanent part of the agency's reporting and research. A research agenda which provides evidence for decision-making on the use of various measures will be vital to evaluate the impact of reform efforts on increasing access and success of all community college students. Research questions to consider include:

- What is the predictive validity of various measures on students' college performance? How might predictive validity vary by student characteristics that have implications for equity?
- Do changes in placement policy increase college access and success? What are the equity implications of the changes?

Costs associated with the shift toward multiple measures must also be better understood so that any fiscal barriers to community college implementation of placement reform can be mitigated. As noted above, responses to the Education Northwest assessment and funding survey indicated that additional funding, professional development, and opportunities to collaborate within and across institutions are the supports most needed by community colleges to successfully implement reform. While there appears to be widespread interest among community college mathematics departments in the use of ALEKS, and some community colleges have already begun using or planning to use ALEKS for placement when an assessment is needed, state funding should be assured prior to any proposal for adoption of this system throughout Oregon.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

HB 2681 PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

HOUSE BILL 2681:
February 2016 Preliminary Report

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DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

This preliminary report on the efforts of the House Bill 2681[1] (HB 2681) work group is divided into two primary sections: a context-setting background section followed by a progress report section on the activity of the HB 2681 work group in Fall 2015.

The background section begins with some foundational information on the topic of student readiness for entry-level college courses and placement testing in community colleges. An overview of common placement tests and approaches is provided, with descriptions of the American Council on Education (ACE) recommendation on use of the GED® for placement purposes and the 2015 Oregon community college agreement to pilot use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment in placement. Finally, descriptions of Oregon's ongoing Developmental Education Redesign (Dev Ed Redesign) project and its subsequent work group focused on Assessment and Placement (Dev Ed Placement) frame the landscape in which the HB 2681 work group is situated.

The progress report section focuses squarely on the HB 2681 work group's efforts, including recommendations to community colleges regarding placement and initial recommendations to the Oregon legislature, Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and State Board of Education (SBE) to improve community college placement practices.

The HB 2681 work group will continue to meet in 2016 in order to meet its charge of preparing a final report with recommendations for legislation based on its efforts.

BACKGROUND

BILL OVERVIEW

House Bill 2681 (2015) directs the HECC and SBE to convene a work group of stakeholders to "recommend effective processes and strategies for placing students in community college, including consideration of whether to use a statewide summative assessment for students who are entering a community college directly after high school." The legislation requires the HECC and SBE to jointly submit to the interim legislative committees on education a preliminary report on February 1, 2016 and a final report on September 15, 2016.

CONTEXT ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLACEMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Concerns about student readiness upon entering community colleges are well known; nationwide, about two-thirds of students are enrolled into at least one developmental education course in math, reading, or writing (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Radford & Horn, 2012 as cited in Hodara, 2015). In Oregon, the percentage of students referred to developmental education is similarly high; a contemporary study on participation in

[1] https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2681/Enrolled

developmental education among recent high school graduates found that nearly 75% of those students took at least one developmental course upon enrolling in an Oregon community college (Hodara, 2015).[2]

Placement testing is a common feature in community colleges' intake processes for students, the majority of whom are above "traditional" age.[3] The tests are designed to determine students' knowledge and skill levels in reading, writing, and mathematics. The placement tests used may be locally created or nationally developed (Accuplacer, administered by College Board, or Compass, administered by ACT).[4] Students who demonstrate the need for additional skills in one of the subject areas in order to be successful in a college's entry-level, transferable, college-credit-bearing courses may be referred to courses within that college's developmental education sequence. The degree of reliance on test scores in placement practices determining whether and to which developmental courses students are referred varies across community colleges.

Community colleges currently have limited access to information about students' prior academic achievement while in high school. In light of the Oregon Promise, Dev Ed Redesign project, Core to College initiative, 40-40-20 academic attainment goal, and other factors there is considerable interest in the potential of such information to support students' seamless transition to, and success in, postsecondary education. For example, research demonstrates that high school grade point average (HS GPA) is often a greater predictor of college outcomes than standardized tests, although this could increase referral to developmental education for some students (Scott-Clayton & Stacey, 2015). Multiple measures of student readiness have been shown to result in greater placement accuracy and thus increased rates of success.

There are several reasons to be concerned about the percentage of Oregon students referred to developmental education, including issues of

- Equity: Current placement practices are likely to underestimate student potential, particularly for women, students of color, low income students and first generation college students (Hetts, 2015);

- Costs: The cost of remediation is high—for students, as well as for institutions and states. Nationwide, the direct cost at community colleges alone for providing developmental education is estimated to be as much as $4 billion annually (Rodriguez, Bowden, Belfield & Scott-Clayton, 2015);

- Misplacement: A recent study found that one in four test-takers in math and one in three test-takers in English were severely misplaced using current test-based policies, with underplacements being much more common than overplacements (Rodriguez, Bowden, Belfield & Scott-Clayton, 2015);

- Completion: The percentage of students who complete a postsecondary degree or certificate is significantly lower for those who take developmental education—and rates of completion plummet the further back in a remedial sequence the students begin. This is seen both in national research (Bailey & Cho, 2010) and in Oregon (Hodara, 2015).

The Oregon-specific Hodara study found that individual academic achievement in high school has a significant influence on participation in developmental education for recent high school graduates. The predictive power

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[2] https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2015081.pdf

[3] In 2013-14, 29% of Oregon community college students fit the "traditional age" definition (18-24).

[4] ACT announced in June 2015 that the Compass test will be phased out in 2016, with all versions of the test eliminated by the end of the year.

of this information was determined on the basis of performance on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) for students in the selected sample, high school graduates from 2004-05 to 2006-07. Unfortunately, high school transcript information was unavailable for this study; the study was unable to capture factors such as cumulative high school grade point average or highest courses and grades earned in mathematics and English/language arts as evidence of prior academic achievement. Yet this research suggests that looking to a student's academic background may be a useful tool for informing the placement of a student who matriculates to an Oregon community college immediately after graduation from high school.

Students enter community colleges from a variety of backgrounds: although some enroll directly after completion of high school, the majority do not. For those students who enter a community college as returning adults—as high school graduates, as GED® passers, through the doors of Adult Basic Education, after other educational, work, or life experiences—as well as for recent high school graduates, there may be benefits to adjustments in community college placement practices. Might such adjustments increase the numbers of students who are referred to entry-level courses, courses higher in a developmental education sequence, or co-requisite support courses designed to increase their success? Can Oregon positively impact the academic outcomes for all students by approaching the determination of college readiness with an attention to the demonstration of student potential to succeed in college courses?

These important questions reflect the principles established by the Oregon Equity Lens, which reminds us that "equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalized some and perpetuate disparities."[5]

THE 2014 GED® HONORS LEVEL AND ACE RECOMMENDATION FOR PLACEMENT

The GED® program provides a bridge to higher education, trade schools, apprenticeship programs and employment opportunities for Oregonians who have not yet earned a high school diploma. The Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) works in partnership with GED® Testing Service (GEDTS) and the 17 community colleges to provide testing, preparation and instruction across the state. Through the State GED office, 17 community college and over 70 test sites across Oregon receive technical assistance, training and guidance in support of the new 2014 GED® test series.

The program provides the GED® test to adults without a high school credential. Sixteen and 17 year olds may test if they are enrolled in an approved Oregon Option program or exempted from compulsory attendance by a school district. There is no residency requirement in the State of Oregon. The GED® tests in Oregon are available in Spanish and English. Accommodations are approved through the official accommodations department with GED® Testing Service.

The 2014 GED® test series measures important knowledge and skills that are usually acquired during a regular program of study in high school. However, in the new 2014 GED® test series there is an increased emphasis on testing knowledge and skills needed for the workplace and for higher education. The 2014 GED® test series covers four academic areas: Reasoning through Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematical

[5] http://education.oregon.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Final_Equity_Lens_Adopted.pdf

Reasoning. In addition to subject knowledge, the tests are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Career and College Ready Standards (CCR).

In 2014, the American Council on Education (ACE) formed a group of independent college faculty to review, assess and validate whether the tests have the appropriate content, scope, and rigor for college credit recommendations. Per their review, ACE made the following recommendations for those individuals who score at the GED® with Honors level on the new 2014 GED® test series:

- Bypass placement exams for postsecondary programs;
- Exemption from developmental level courses at the postsecondary level;
- Enrollment in credit-bearing courses at the postsecondary level.

THE 2015 OREGON SMARTER BALANCED POLICY AGREEMENTS

The legislative charge of HB 2681 calls for consideration of the use of a statewide summative assessment for students who are entering a community college directly after high school. The Smarter Balanced Assessment is the statewide assessment for English/language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and high school; it replaced the OAKS assessment in 2015. The assessment is administered online in Oregon public schools. The test coordinator for the school district receives training and guidance in support of the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The high school Smarter Balanced Assessment is administered to students in grade 11. The test includes extensive accessibility features, including translations.

The Smarter Balanced Assessments are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Achievement level thresholds for the assessment were established across the multistate consortium in 2014 using a bookmarking process which included five Oregon postsecondary faculty members as well as fifteen Oregon educators.

In February 2015, Oregon community college presidents collectively adopted a landmark placement test exemption policy to accept college-readiness scores demonstrated on the 11th grade Smarter Balanced Assessment, along with evidence of advanced learning in grade 12, for consideration in student course placement.[6] The agreement is intended as a pilot, with an anticipated review for effectiveness and impact in 2018.

The agreement depends upon breaking the high school information barrier by establishing a process at the state level for efficiently and effectively communicating test scores to community colleges for incoming students who have met the requirements and wish to apply the exemption. As the community college agreement to use the Smarter Balanced Assessment in placement illustrates, systemic changes to placement processes in order to adopt a multiple-measures approach depends upon the collection and transmission of information that will better enable community colleges to determine appropriate course placement and supports for students.

[6] http://oregoncoretocollege.org/sites/default/files/Letter%20from%20Presidents%20to%20Ben%20Cannon%20030415.pdf

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REDESIGN PROJECT, 2013-PRESENT

The convocation of the HB 2681 work group followed nearly two years of Dev Ed Redesign project work undertaken by all 17 Oregon community colleges, facilitated through the leadership of the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) and the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD). The Dev Ed Redesign project has advanced the effort for community colleges to rethink the way they operate developmental education in our state – including how students are placed into courses at the outset. Since the Dev Ed Redesign efforts included the core concern that the HB 2681 work group was charged to address, an intentional collaboration was forged in order to harness the momentum of an existing project, to ensure an alignment between the two efforts while avoiding duplication, and to enable the HB 2681 work group to fully benefit from a real-time understanding of placement changes already underway across all Oregon community colleges notwithstanding the legislative charge of HB 2681. The HB 2681 work has benefited from the addition of K-12 and university stakeholders in the statewide conversation regarding community college placement processes.

Recommendations for community colleges regarding developmental mathematics, reading and writing, student services, and assessment and placement practices were outlined in the Dev Ed Redesign project's August 2014 report.[7] Among those recommendations was a suggestion to create "a statewide system that uses effective placement processes and strategies that recognize students arrive at community colleges with different education backgrounds, life experiences, skills and goals, Oregon community colleges should consider strongly the creation of a set of common practices and commitments for the placement of students. These should be designed to more accurately place students and more intentionally err on the side of enrolling students into college-level courses or accelerated and co-requisite models." The Dev Ed Redesign work group held a special-focus placement meeting in April 2015 to launch a deeper statewide community college discussion on local and national research, current practices, and methods of advancing change; this meeting spurred the creation of the Dev Ed Placement group, again comprised of campus teams from each of the community colleges. The Dev Ed Placement group held webinar meetings in August 2015 and September 2015, which included presentations by Dr. Michelle Hodara of the Regional Education Laboratory at Education Northwest on the Oregon placement research, and Dr. John Hetts of the Educational Results Partnership on national placement research as well as research conducted at Long Beach City College in California.

The Dev Ed Placement group held in-person meetings in October 2015 and December 2015. These Fall 2015 meetings included members of the HB 2681 work group as well as the campus teams participating in the Dev Ed Placement group.

A table illustration of the distinctions between the groups is provided below.

[7] http://www.occa17.com/assets/documents/Reports/developmental%20education%20redesign-decreasing%20attrition%20and%20time%20to%20completion%20at%20oregons%20community%20colleges%208-2014.pdf

Statewide Community College Placement-Focused Groups

Group Name	Description	Start Date
Dev Ed Redesign	Examine developmental education practices throughout Oregon and the United States and make recommendations on the implementation of best practices that result in greater student success for students in Oregon.	November 2013
Dev Ed Placement	Review Dev Ed Redesign recommendations regarding assessment and placement; consider local and national research; provide updates and review recent changes in Oregon community college placement practices; consider the use and implementation of multiple measures and/or shared placement practices across campuses – with the ultimate goal of placing students in the highest possible class in which they are likely to be successful. Inform the HB 2681 work group with a set of community college recommendations for the redesign of placement practices in Oregon.	April 2015
HB 2681 work group	Recommend effective processes and strategies for placing students in community colleges.	October 2015

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FORMATION AND COMPOSITION OF HB 2681 WORK GROUP

HECC and ODE staff conducted outreach to collaboratively establish the roster of stakeholder representatives to participate on the HB 2681 work group. In order to strengthen its connection to the Dev Ed Placement group described above, steering committee members of the Dev Ed Placement group agreed to serve on the HB 2681 work group, and were joined by representatives of the additional stakeholder groups identified in the legislation. In addition, a deliberate outreach was made to ensure representation of GED®, Adult Basic Skills, and Academic Foundations leadership in the HB 2681 work group.

HB 2681 Participation Roster

Affiliation	Name	Role
• ABS/GED Rep	• Tanya Batazhan	• Director, ABS, PCC
• ODE Staff	• Holly Carter	• Director, Assessment
• OCCA	• Elizabeth Cox Brand	• Director, Student Success, OCCA
• ODE Staff	• Derek Brown	• Assessment

• Dev Ed Steering	• Stacey Donohue	• Interim Instructional Dean, COCC
• Dev Ed Steering	• Sydney Frost	• Manager, Student Recruitment, Orientation, Testing, MHCC
• Dev Ed Steering	• John Hamblin	• Director, Enrollment, MHCC
• ABS/GED Rep	• Phillip King	• Dean, Academic Foundations and Connections, Clackamas CC
• ABS/GED Rep	• Jason Kovac	• Dean, Academic Foundations, LBCC
• CC Student	• Andrew Kunzi	• Student, Chemeketa CC
• High School Rep	• Erik Lansdon	• Counselor, Springfield HS
• HECC Staff	• Teresa Alonso Leon	• GED Administrator, CCWD
• Dev Ed Steering	• Marie Maguire-Cook	• Faculty, English, RCC
• ODE Staff	• Cristen McLean	• Assessment
• Dev Ed Steering	• Doug Nelson	• Faculty, Math, COCC
• HECC Staff	• Sean Pollack	• Ed Specialist, University Coord
• HECC Staff	• Lisa Reynolds	• Ed Specialist, CCWD
• University Rep	• Lyn Riverstone	• Instructor and Academic Advisor, Math, OSU

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PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMARY OF FALL 2015 ACTIVITIES

The HB 2681 work group joined the October 23 and December 4 meetings of the Dev Ed Placement group; immediately after each of those meetings, the HB 2681 work group held standalone meetings to reflect on the information, discussion, feedback and recommendations provided by the larger group.

A significant portion of the Dev Ed Placement September webinar and the October 23 meeting were focused on research presentations from Dr. John Hetts, former Director of Institutional Research for Long Beach City College who currently serves as the Senior Director of Data Science for the Educational Results Partnership. Both the HB 2681 work group and the Dev Ed Placement group found several key points from his presentation compelling, including the observations that:

- Research increasingly questions effectiveness of standardized assessment for understanding student capacity;
- Standardized placement tests tend to have little relation to college course outcomes (e.g., Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Edgecombe, 2011; Scott-Clayton, 2012; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012: bit.ly/CCRCAssess);
- Standardized placement tests underestimate the capability of the majority of community college students: students of color, women, first generation college students, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Hiss & Franks, 2014; bit.ly/DefiningPromise);

- Placement tests do not yield strong predictions of how students will perform in college… more importantly, the tests do not have much explanatory power across a range of measures of performance including college GPA, credit accumulation, and success in gatekeeper English and math classes (Belfield & Crosta, 2012);

- Cumulative high school grade point average (HSGPA) is consistently shown to be a better predictor of first year college GPA, degree completion or transfer (Radunzel & Noble, 2012);

- There is incredible variability in cut scores; 2-year colleges often use higher cut scores than 4-year institutions (Fields & Parsad, 2012);

During its standalone meeting that followed, HB 2681 work group members expressed a strong conviction that reforms related to placement should be framed around the interest in improving equitable access to college courses for all students. The group reflected on the discussion Dr. Hetts led regarding the impact of placement testing on the mindset of entering students—effectively communicating to students that institutions are suspicious about whether or not they are "college material"— and observed that revising placement policies and practices to best support equity will result in a paradigm shift for faculty and administrators, as well as students. The HB 2681 work group affirmed the movement toward consistent approaches to placement at community colleges statewide, the use of multiple measures for placement, and use of standardized assessments as a last resort or in the case where insufficient evidence of student capacity for entry-level work is available. The role and value of placement tests may vary by subject area.

In November, 45 members of the Dev Ed Placement/HB 2681 work groups responded to a survey that asked them to identify whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were neutral regarding a series of statements related to Dr. Hetts' presentation and the work group discussions. Staff synthesized the survey results and aligned them with the original recommendations of the 2014 Dev Ed Redesign report, presenting the results to the two groups for discussion at the December 4 meetings.

The Dev Ed Placement work group used the synthesis document as a springboard for discussion and divided into smaller content-focused groups (reading and writing, mathematics, and administration of placement testing) in order to refine their recommendations for consideration by the HB 2681 work group. In its standalone meeting, the HB 2681 work group affirmed its shared principles and identified further areas to investigate following the presentation of this preliminary report.

<u>HB 2681 work group members support improvements to the way community colleges place students.</u> Workgroup participants are motivated by a desire to better understand and support all students in their success, and are concerned about the potential underplacement of students, especially students from historically underrepresented demographic groups, that inhibits successful transition to, persistence in, and completion of postsecondary education programs.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EFFECTIVE PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLACEMENT

The HB 2681 work group recommends the following actions for implementation directly by community colleges in accordance with their overall structure and capacity:

- Move from using only a standardized assessment as the default placement tool for all students and toward a system of multiple measures to increase the accuracy of placement decisions.

  As identified in the recommendations from the mathematics subcommittee of the Dev Ed Placement group, these additional measures may include: cumulative HS GPA; examination of last relevant content class taken, date of completion, and grade earned (high school transcripts); SAT/ACT scores; Smarter Balanced Assessment scores; relevant AP/IB test scores; GED scores; military training; admission letter to a university indicating proof of "college readiness"; high school teacher recommendations; non-cognitive measures; holistic review .

  It is recommended that each community college determine if and at what point during the placement process a standardized test is used to place students in courses. Each college must determine which of the above measures to use depending on the student, the subject area, the college's resources, and the district it serves.

- Find methods to easily and efficiently process placement indicators that a student does not require additional standardized testing and has demonstrated capacity to succeed in college-level courses.

- Use "decision zones" (a range of scores and non-cognitive measures) rather than strict cut scores alone to increase placement in college-level courses, when a standardized test is the primary method for a placement determination.

- Strengthen the college placement test/preparation program in order to decrease the possibility of underplacement.

- Seek to exchange information and honor other colleges' placement determinations for students who transfer between community colleges.

Initial recommendations to the Oregon legislature and state agencies:

- Ensure that data is available to support a multiple measures approach to placement. Address the systemic barriers (e.g. lack of a common student identifier across data systems; lack of data sharing across sectors; discrepant data systems within and between education sectors) that hinder community colleges' ability to obtain high school information and other relevant data to place students and to support their success.

- Provide opportunities for college instructors, particularly writing instructors, to collaborate with high school teachers and to examine the high school curriculum, assessments, and work samples to determine whether and how this information could contribute to placement determinations.

- Provide targeted twelfth grade learning opportunities and experiences for high school students who have not met the college content- readiness benchmarks of Smarter Balanced to increase their knowledge, skills, and capacity for postsecondary success during the twelfth grade. Ensure that the content of these experiences reflects best practices in developmental education.

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- Invest in the use of multiple measures by community colleges so that the costs of adding multiple measures to their placement processes do not hinder the adoption of this approach. Consider investments in personnel as well as in data systems, since a multiple measures approach requires more individualized student intake processes.

FUTURE WORK OR THE HB 2681 WORK GROUP

In Spring 2016, the HB 2681 work group intends to conduct further investigation on the concept of Directed Self-Placement, an approach recently implemented at some community colleges in the state of Washington which provides placement paths tailored to students' backgrounds.[8] In addition, the HB 2681 work group will seek the engagement of college Registrars, Institutional Researchers, and K-12 Information Technology Directors in the topic of community college placement. The work group will also seek to expand the involvement of high school educators, counselors, and students.

The HB 2681 work group will continue to monitor placement process changes at Oregon community colleges—these are expected as many of the Oregon community colleges will be determining their transition plans following the 2016 sunset of the Compass test (currently in use at 12 of 17 Oregon community colleges).

For the final report due September 2016, the HB 2681 work group have will identified those recommendations which require legislative direction to help ensure the successful placement of community college students.

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HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

APPENDIX B:

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REDESIGN IN OREGON: CHANGING THE WAY WE PLACE STUDENTS AT OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Developmental Education Redesign in Oregon: Changing the Way We Place Students at Our Community Colleges

A Chronicle of the Work of the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group

April 19, 2016

Letter from Elizabeth Cox Brand

Our nation's community colleges have a placement problem, and Oregon's community colleges know it. Nearly 98% of participants of a placement work group recently convened by the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) consisting of 17 campus teams agreed that the way their colleges place students can be improved.

Far too many community colleges use just a single measure – a standardized test – to determine whether students are ready for college-level classes. Though we're seeing campuses begin to move away from a single standardized measure, using a test to place students has been a common practice in Oregon for years.

Research on the connection between our placement practices and completion suggests that though our intentions are good, we are underestimating our students' capacity and failing far too many of them. The way we place students more often than not guarantees that a student enrolled into developmental education will not get a degree or certificate. We have to change.

Our higher education community has already demonstrated a willingness to tip over sacred cows. It saw the staggering number of community college students who never completed their course of study because they could not get through the **single** developmental education mathematics sequence requiring them to pass college-level algebra—even though their chosen careers do not require its use—and developed policies that permit rigorous multiple mathematics pathways. Now, most of our community college campuses have embraced the change and are either implementing or developing these new pathways.

I suspect the next big play to redesign developmental education will be to change community college placement practices. House Bill 2681 has already set the wheels for change in motion. The law requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish a committee to recommend to the legislature "effective processes and strategies for placing students in courses at community colleges." The HECC and the SBE have convened that committee and are in the process of preparing final recommendations to present to the legislature in September.

Those of us who have worked together the past three years—either through the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group or most recently as a member of one of the 17 college teams that constituted our own Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group—should take satisfaction in the work of the 2681 Committee. It met jointly with our Placement Work Group and used our recommendations to inform its preliminary recommendations to the legislature.

When they met together, the 2681 Committee and the Placement Work Group learned about and discussed important issues related to student placement: the future role of standardized testing, test preparation practices, cut scores versus decision zones, whether campuses should use ALEKS to support placement of students in mathematics, and whether writing samples students create in high school can be used to help place students in college writing courses. The groups, however, kept coming back to a single issue: the use of multiple measures—rather than a single measure—to place students into the right classes.

This document is less report than chronicle. It is an account of the Placement Work Group's efforts to rethink our reliance on a single measure and operationalize the use of multiple measures to more effectively place students into classes.

I believe it is important to note my sense that the vast majority of work group participants are ready to lead change on their campuses. Some remain skeptical about moving from a single measure to multiple measures—in particular about using high school grade point averages and last grades in high school language arts courses—to place students into community college writing courses. I also heard a little of the old refrain that "it is not our placement practices that are a problem; it is our students."

I'm not shy about saying that I think we're well on our way to changing that perception and tackling the real problem: placement practices that rely on a single measure and result in the placement of far too many students into development education—out of which the vast majority of them fail to advance. I have no doubt that soon we will do better by our students and far more of them will succeed.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cox Brand
Student Success and Assessment Director
Oregon Community College Association

Background

To address the placement recommendations of the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group, the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) convened in late summer 2016 a work group of teams from the state's 17 community colleges. Concurrently, the legislatively-charged 2681 Committee began meeting to discuss the process it would use to develop recommendations to the Oregon State Legislature to improve the process of placing students at community colleges.

To avoid duplicating efforts, the 2681 Committee and the Placement Work Group joined forces and began meeting with each other, following what has become the standard process for developmental education redesign work in Oregon: Learn about the issues, discuss the issues, and only then make decisions about the issues or pursue additional learning opportunities.

Both groups participated in two webinars and three day-long in-person meetings in Salem. They reviewed research presented by Michelle Hodara, a senior researcher from Education Northwest, and John Hetts, former Director of Institutional Research for Long Beach City College and now the Senior Director for Data Science for the Educational Results Partnership. At the first in-person meeting in October, members of each group had an extended opportunity to meet with Hetts. He focused participants on issues attendant to measures used to place students and argued for the use of multiple measures.

For those coming in to the developmental education redesign placement work already hoping to change the placement processes at their schools, Hetts's presentation was affirming. For some who joined the group not ready to make the move to multiple measures, his presentation was transformational. For others still not convinced after listening to him, Hetts provided information for ongoing consideration.

What we learned from John Hetts[1]

Standardized assessment as a standalone measure has led us to underestimate substantially the ability of students—particularly students of color and low-income and first generation college students—to do college-level work, Hetts began. Research has shown that there is not much of a relationship between college course outcomes and student performance on standardized tests. Further, there is extraordinary

[1] Hetts presentation with citations is available here. For information on increases in IQ, 18-24 year-old high school degree attainment and NAEP scores, see bit.ly/FlynnEffectIQ; bit.ly/2014HS18-24; and bit.ly/NAEPInfo. For research questioning the effectiveness of standardized measures to assess student capacity adequately, see bit.ly/CCRCAssess; bit.ly/NAGB2012; and bit.ly/DefiningPromise. For resources on improving placement through the use of multiple measures, see http://www.lbcc.edu/PromisePathways; http://bit.ly/MMAP2015; http://bit.ly/RPSTEPS; http://bit.ly/RPMultipleMeasures; and http://cccassess.org. For information on reducing error and increasing placement success rates, see http://bit.ly/CCRCPlacementAccuracy. For self-reported HSGPA, see, ttp://bit.ly/UCSelfReportGPA and bit.ly/ACTSelf-ReportedGPA. Research showing students have greater capacity than we often think can be found at http://bit.ly/CAPEval and http://bit.ly/2015ALP.

variability in cut scores across two-year institutions, which often establish higher cut scores for college readiness than four-year colleges.

Hetts suggested that standardized assessments dominate the placement landscape in part because of our belief that "today's students are simply unprepared for college," a notion belied by the fact that there has been a substantial long-term increase in IQ and that today's students are smarter than ever.

Ninety-one percent of 18–24 year-olds have high school diplomas—the highest ever, he told the group—and, he pointed out, the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows American students scoring at or near all-time highs across virtually every demographic. Hetts concluded that responsibility for the high failure rate of students placing into developmental education may not be with our students but the way we have been assessing their capacity.

There is substantial evidence of systematic and severe under placement, he suggested. He cited research from the Community College Research Center demonstrating that 36% of students placed into developmental English and 25% of students placed into developmental math could earn a B or better in a transfer level course.

The goal of assessment should be to accurately assess student capacity—to predict how students will perform at the institutions in which they enroll, Hetts reminded the group. Standardized tests by themselves do not do that. His research at Long Beach City College—where he was previously Director of Institutional Research—demonstrates that standardized tests predict how well students will do on later standardized tests, while measures of classroom performance ultimately predict subsequent classroom performance. He pointed to high school grade point average (HSGPA) as a measure of classroom performance that assesses capacity across content domains, numerous instructors and time, while combining thousands of an incredible variety of assessments of a student's academic performance. HSGPA also continues to predict student performance in college up to 9 –10 years after graduation, continuing to outperform standardized tests given to students at college entry, he explained, citing research from the Multiple Measures Assessment Project in California and by ACT.

Hetts noted that last grade in course—like HSGPA—is a powerful predictor of student success in mathematics and writing and that this information is something institutions should collect. As open access institutions, community colleges frequently may not have access to either transcripts or last grade in course (though arranging access would not necessarily be more expensive than testing); however, Hetts cited research showing that students self-report their grades accurately. For example, he told the group, the University of California system uses self-reported high school grades for admissions and then verifies those self-reports afterwards. In 2008, across 9 campuses enrolling 60,000 students, the system found that no campus had more than five discrepancies

Important Takeaways from Hetts's Presentation

- Community college placement processes are substantially underestimating student capacity.
- Actual measures of student performance—high school GPA and last grade in course—more accurately predict college performance than do standardized assessments.
- Since community colleges are open access institutions, it may be difficult to get high school transcripts; however, self-reported GPA may be a better indicator of future success than an actual score on a standardized test.
- The more measures the greater the accuracy of the placement decision.
- A standardized test such as Accuplacer can be one of those measures.

between reported grades and student transcripts. ACT research also uses self-reported GPA and finds that it is highly correlated with students' actual GPA, so much so that it is impossible to tell if differences are a result of student misreporting or differences in when students are asked for their GPAs and their final official calculations. As a result, Hetts said, given the far stronger predictive utility of HSGPA, self-reported HSGPA will be a far better window into students' actual capacity than the more weakly predictive standardized tests.

Although suggesting that HSGPA and last grade in course are more accurate predictors of eventual student performance, Hetts did not argue for the elimination of standardized tests. He did suggest that the more measures the better: "The gold standard of placement would require the triangulation of multiple measures across methods, content domains, evaluators and time."

Recommending Multiple Measures and Developing a Menu of Them

Hetts inspired the Placement Work Group and changed minds. Dr. Verne Underwood from Rogue Community College noted the change in his own perceptions: "Hetts's presentation really changed my thinking. I didn't believe in using some of the potential placement measures he was advocating for, such as use of high school GPA, before. But, he made a strong case that placement tests are good at showing if students are good at tests, not which class they belong in. Now I think there's a broad zone of measures we might use."

Following his presentation, 45 of the work group participants completed a survey to determine the degree to which participants agreed with the research Hetts presented and the conclusions he drew. The results indicate that Oregon is ready for change:

- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that the use of standardized tests has led us to systematically and substantially underestimate student capacity.
- 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that current placement practices are a significant barrier to success and completion and too many students are being placed into developmental education.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that multiple measures reduce error and have the potential to increase success rates and sequence completion.
- 91% agreed or strongly agreed that their campuses can use multiple measures.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that campuses should default to measures that are most predictive of classroom success: HSGPA and last grade in class.
- 56% agreed or strongly agreed that self-reported GPA is a more powerful predictor of student performance than standardized tests.

Using Multiple Measures for Placement in Writing and Mathematics.

The Placement Work Group decided at its January in-person meeting to recommend to the 2681 Committee that colleges should "move from using only a standardized assessment as the default placement tool for all students and toward a system of multiple measures to increase the accuracy of

placement decisions." That recommendation appears verbatim in the 2681 Committee's interim report to the legislature.

During the December meeting, math faculty and administrators and staff with an interest in how campuses place students in mathematics and writing faculty and administrators and staff with an interest in how campuses place students in writing met in separate groups to discuss multiple measures they might use to place students. The math group decided that campuses should use multiple measures when placing them in their first college course and that a score from a standardized test can be one of the measures. Each school should decide if and at what point during the placement process it should employ a standardized test to place students in a math course, the group decided. Other measures can include high school transcripts or HSGPA; grade in last math class taken; Smarter Balanced, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or GED examination scores; non-cognitive measures or military experience. Each school, the group affirmed, must determine what measures to use depending on the student, the school's resources, and the community it serves.

During discussions, the math group weighed the pros and cons of relying on measures generated by high schools. Doug Nelson of Central Oregon Community College captured the spirit of those discussions: "As community colleges continue to improve communication with their partner high schools, helping them better align their curriculum to that of higher education, it makes perfect sense to trust that high school teachers are preparing their students well, and we can use this preparation to directly place students into our courses."

The writing group had similar discussions over the course of its meeting in December and then again in March. Among members of that group, there was general agreement that it is better to use multiple measures than a single one. However, participants raised questions about specific multiple measures, particularly those generated by high schools: HSGPA, last grade in course and writing samples:

- **What are final acceptable courses in 12th grade?** Participants agreed that grades in dual credit, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate (or any honors English class) courses would be appropriate measures. However, most members of the group were unsure about the range of classes seniors are taking in Oregon schools, particularly students who scored a one or two on the Smarter Balanced exam. One faculty member suggested that he had "more knowledge of the weather on Mars" than he did about what courses students are taking at schools local to his campus.

Oregon's High School Writing Samples

To earn a diploma, students must demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Students can demonstrate proficiency in three ways: the Smarter Balanced assessment, another standardized test, such as the ACT or SAT, or work samples scored against the state scoring guide.

If students demonstrate Essential Skills through work samples, two passing work samples are required: One must be expository or persuasive; the other may be in any of the state-approved modes (expository, persuasive, personal or fictional narrative).

Examples of student work reflecting various levels of student performance with extended commentary are available at: http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=527

- **What about the use of state-level writing work samples as a multiple measure?** Staff from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) presented information on writing work samples produced by 25% of all of Oregon's high school students. Some participants wondered whether the prompt and the standards for assessing them are consistent with the requirements of college-level writing. Some participants suggested they were not. State Department of Education staff explained that the state is revising the prompts and rubrics to be more consistent with the instructional shifts required by new state standards, though the State Board of Education will ultimately have to act on them on a date yet to be determined. Group members offered to provide feedback during the revision process and most agreed that individual campuses should decide whether to use the writing samples as a multiple measure.

  At a follow-up meeting on March 4, the writing group met to continue discussions on the use of writing samples. This time, the group took for granted that for the time being the writing sample would not reflect Oregon's new K-12 standards for writing. Most hands were raised when the facilitator asked whether participants would as a result still consider using the samples as a potential measure for placement. Participants then debated what could be done to increase their confidence in the scores attached to samples. At issue, for many, is the fact that the state does not mandate a scoring process and therefore at many schools language arts teachers score their own students' work, though other schools might use a more rigorous process requiring multiple reviewers and/or excluding the authors' teachers. Writing group members also noted that although the state requires raters to be trained to use the scoring guide to a high degree of proficiency, there is local variability on the content and frequency of training.

  Nevertheless, the group arrived at consensus that the samples show promise as one of the multiple measures campuses can use for placement. There was variation in the amount of evidence community colleges thought they should receive, however. Some faculty stated they would not only like to see students' scores but also the actual writing samples—with the hope being that college faculty would grow to trust the scores over time. In the end, representatives from Blue Mountain, Central Oregon, Clackamas, Oregon Coast, Portland, Rogue and Southwestern agreed that in the next year or two they would like to pilot the use of writing samples as a measure for placement.

Proposed Steps to Remedy Faculty Concerns about the Accuracy of Scoring

The Writing Group proposed to ODE representatives several actions that would facilitate the use of writing samples as a measure for placement:

- Writing faculty often do not know what college preparatory classes students are taking, a fact that could be remedied by a study that provides an overview of what English language arts college-preparatory classes students are taking.
- To create greater trust, establish common expectations for college-ready writing and greater understanding of the content of high school curriculum, community college and high school faculties in the same communities might engage in facilitated conversations.

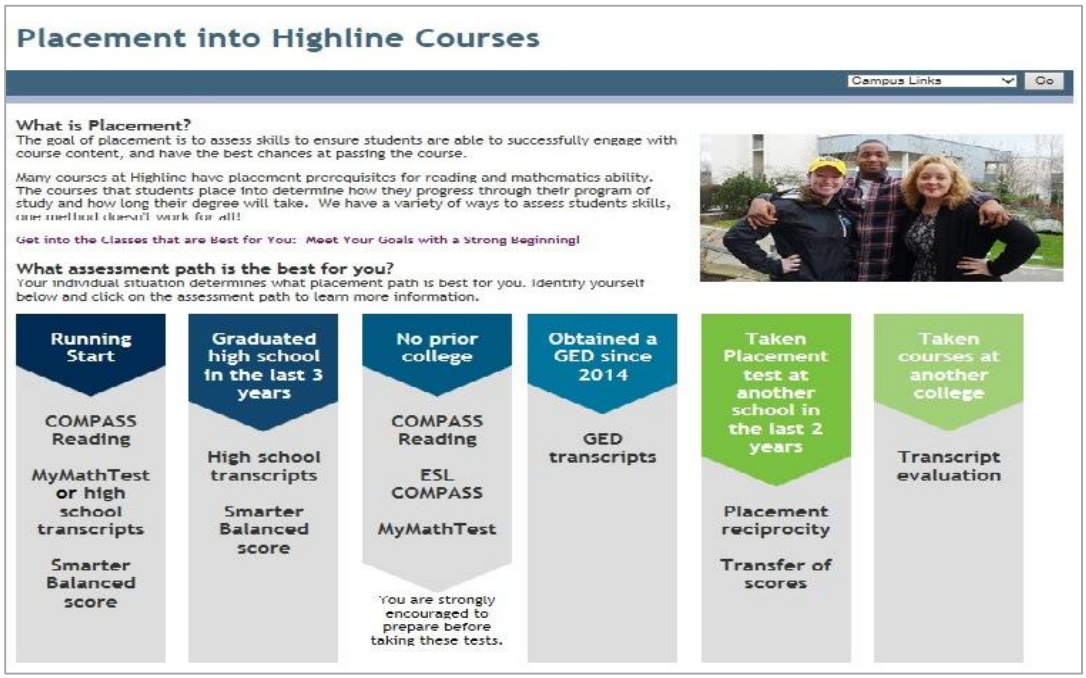
- To increase confidence in scoring, community colleges can engage in scoring guide trainings with their high school colleagues.
- High school staff, community colleges, and ODE should identify policies that will increase confidence in scores generated by high schools.

Combining Multiple Measures

The Placement Work Group and the 2681 Committee learned that identifying multiple measures is one thing; combining them to effectively place students is another. What's more, placing recent high school graduates may require a different process than placing those who graduated many years—perhaps decades—ago. The two groups spent a large portion of their final joint meeting discussing these differences and thinking about how to combine measures for distinct groups. The groups reviewed national examples of placement matrices, flowcharts and grids and emerging practices in Oregon. Finally, taking what they learned, participants broke up into teams to practice creating placement systems that use multiple measures.

The groups began by examining two examples from Washington State: placement grids from Highline College and Bellevue College. As Figure 1 suggests, Highline College does not employ a one-size fits all placement system. The school uses high school transcripts and Smarter Balanced scores to place some students. It uses GED transcripts for recent takers of the GED examination to place others. For those who have taken courses at another college, it uses college transcripts. And it employs standardized assessments for non-recent graduates of high school who have never taken a college course.

Figure 1: Highline College[2]



[2] Highline College, "Placement into Highline Courses," accessed March 24, 2016, https://placement.highline.edu/.

Figure 2: Bellevue College English Composition Placement Grid for BSD Students[3]

BELLEVUE COLLEGE

BELLEVUE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ENGLISH COMPOSITION PLACEMENT GRID FOR BSD STUDENTS

Bellevue School District and Bellevue College agree that realistic placement is critical for student success.

As an alternative or in addition to placement via a standardized placement test, students entering Bellevue College from the Bellevue School District may be placed in English according to the following chart. In order to place by transcript, students must have earned a C or better in their most recent English course.

Placement by this method **expires two academic years** after the student graduates from high school.

COURSE PLACEMENT TABLE		
HIGH SCHOOL COURSE	HIGH SCHOOL GRADE	PLACEMENT AT BC
AP LIT/COMP OR IB ENGL II	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
AP LANG/COMP OR IB ENGL I OR AP US HIST & AP LANG/COMP	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
SENIOR ENG	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
AMER LIT/COMP	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
HON SOPH COMP OR HON HUM WORLD 1 & 2	C OR BETTER	PLACEMENT TEST

AP AND IB TEST PLACEMENT TABLE (MINIMUM SCORE OF 3)		
TEST	SCORE	PLACEMENT AT BC
AP ENG LANG/COMP	3	ENGL&101
	4 OR 5	ENGL&101 CREDIT/ 201 PLACEMENT
AP ENG LIT/COMP	3	ENGL&101
	4 OR 5	ENGL&101 AND ENGL&111 CREDIT/ 201 PLACEMENT
IB ENGLISH A	4	ENGL&101
	5 OR HIGHER	ENGL&101 CREDIT/ 201 PLACEMENT

Bellevue College uses a matrix to place students in English and math courses (it has gone through the additional process of developing matrices for each of the school districts whose graduates enroll in the college). The college uses last grade in course, cumulative GPA, Smarter Balanced or standardized examinations to place students in English. To be placed by transcript, students must have earned a C or better in their most recent high school English class. Students with Bs or better in college-preparatory classes are placed automatically into a credit-bearing college-level class. The college uses additional measures for students with Cs in those same classes: potentially HSGPA, Smarter Balanced or placement test examination scores.

[3] Bellevue College, *English Composition Placement Grid for BSD Students*, accessed March 24, 2016, https://s.bellevuecollege.edu/wp/sites/143/2016/01/BSD-grid-for-website.pdf.

Clackamas: A Case Study for the Use of Multiple Measures

The Placement Work Group and the 2681 Committee learned that new placement practices that rely on multiple measures are emerging in Oregon's community colleges. Clackamas is leading the way. It has developed a variety of tools to place students, minimizing the importance of a standardized assessment.

Those newly enrolling at Clackamas complete an intake tool (see Figure 3) that not only allows for self-reported HSGPA and last grades in math and English courses, it relies on perceptual measures: how students "feel" about math, reading and writing. The intake tool also asks students to consider what courses seem to be the best fit for them. Additional tools support this self-directed placement process: flow charts that guide students and teachers through placement in math and writing (see Figure 4) and a draft self-directed placement advising statement. The math and writing placement guides rely on specific course grades, HSGPA, commitments outside of school and previous academic experience (whether students have written a three-page essay or a research paper).

Figure 3: Clackamas Math & Writing Course Placement Intake Tool

Clackamas Community College

Math & Writing Course Placement

NAME: _____ **CCC ID#:** _____ **Date:** _____
Last First MI (or Date of Birth)

H.S. Graduation Year_____ **H.S. GPA**_____ **Did you complete the Compass test?** *yes* *no*

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Circle the most accurate answer.

Where are you going?

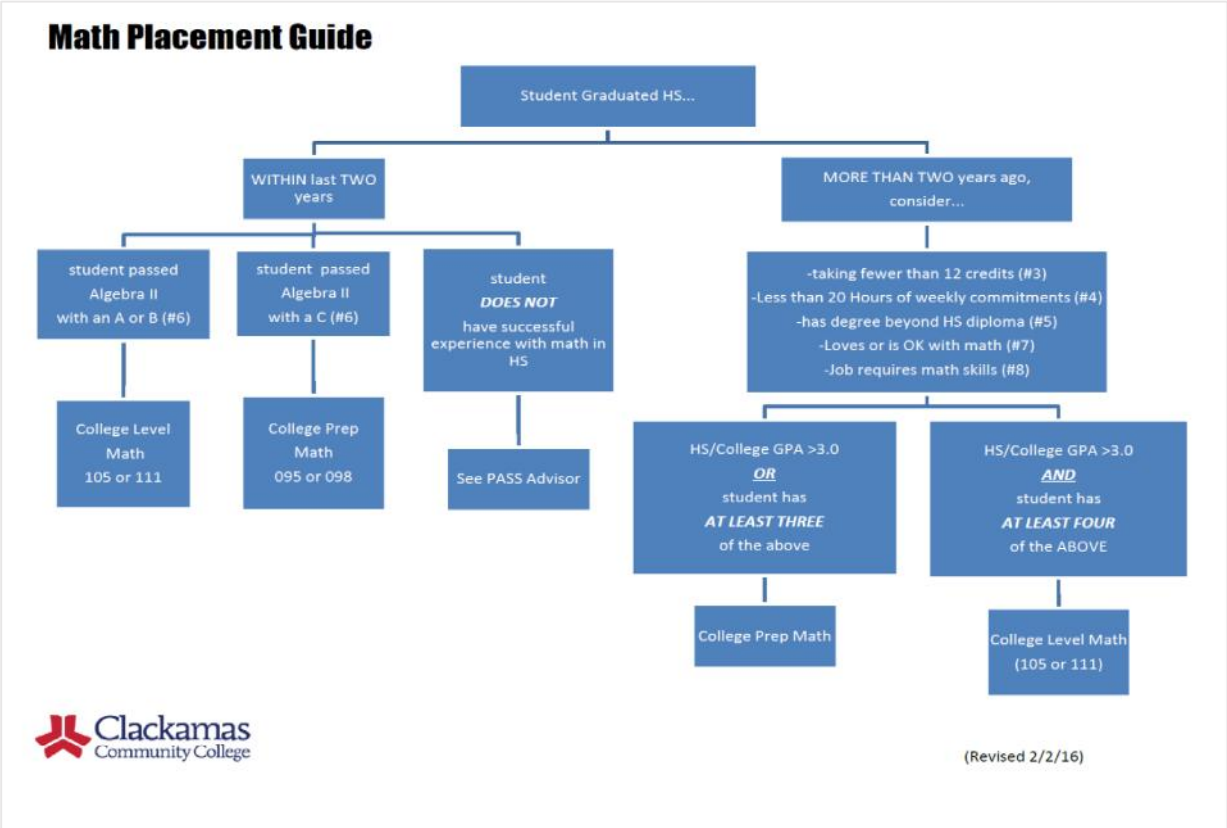
1. Do you plan to transfer to a four-year university? *Yes* *No* *Not sure*
2. When do you anticipate starting classes at CCC? *Fall* *Winter* *Spring* *Summer*
3. How many credit hours will you take in your first term? *0-11 credits* *12 credits (or more)*
4. What is the total of your weekly commitments outside of school? *Less than 20 hrs per wk* *More than 20 hrs per wk*
5. Do you already have a degree or certificate (beyond high school)? *Yes* *No*

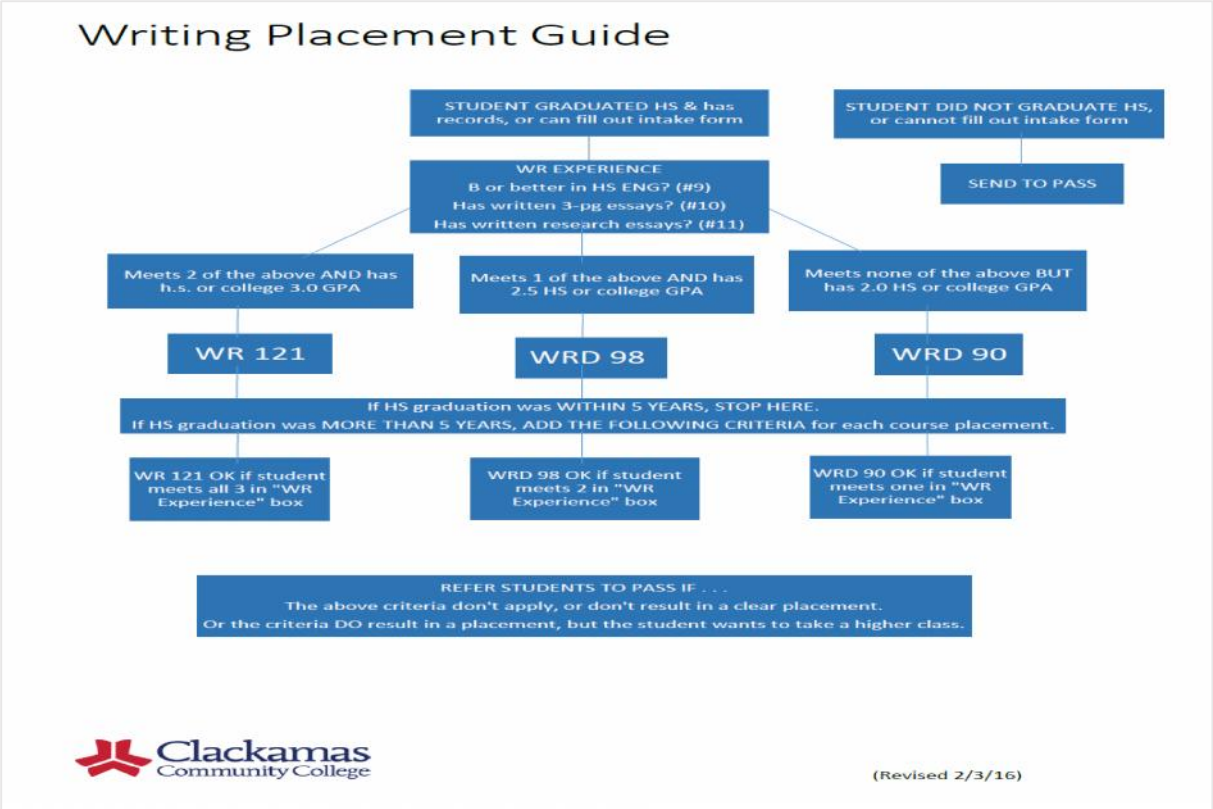
Where have you been?

MATH	WRITING
6. List the last two math courses you completed: Course_____year_____letter grade_____ Course_____year_____letter grade_____ 7. How do you feel about math? *Love it.* *It's OK.* *I don't like it.* *It scares me.* 8. Does your current job require math skills? *Yes* *No*	9. Did you get a B or better in your most recent English class? *Yes* *No* 10. Have you ever written an essay longer than 3 pages? *Yes* *No* 11. Have you ever written an essay that used research, quotes, and references? *Yes* *No* 12. How do you feel about reading? *Love it.* *It's OK.* *I don't like it.* 13. How do you feel about writing? *Love it.* *It's OK.* *I don't like it.*
14. Which CCC courses seem like the best fit for you? Math_____ Writing_____	

For staff use only: Math _____ or PASS / Writing_____ or PASS / Init_____ *(Revised 2/2/16)*

Figure 4: Clackamas Community College Math and Writing Placement Guides





PASS advisors and college support staff, which includes testing center employees, the advising team and the high school partnership office currently use the intake form and flow charts. If placement is still uncertain after the college support staff considers students' intake information, they refer students to Placement Advising for Student Success, or the PASS Program. Here, students meet one-on-one with a mathematics and/or writing faculty member for further advising. If necessary, students go on to take the standardized test(s) to secure final, solid placement recommendations.

To support its new way of placing students, the campus has drafted a groundbreaking self-directed placement advising statement that is under review by Clackamas staff and has yet to be finalized:

> *There is a wide range of acceptable practice for determining which entry-level math and writing courses are right for you. At Clackamas Community College we want you to choose the course that can give you the best chance at success so we prefer to use multiple measures as part of the placement recommendations. Using the PASS tools that have been developed as a guide, your placement may be straight-forward; however, knowing the options that work best for your academic path often requires a conversation with an adviser. The recommendations made are based on the best information available, this may come from your high school experiences, standardized test scores, and even your academic confidence and/or work or military experience. After you have taken time to learn the detailed expectations of your course options, identify the courses that fit best with your academic goals and consider the multiple measures that can lead to success, the choice is ultimately yours.*

Associate Dean Darlene Geiger describes the Clackamas' statement as an attempt to provide faculty, staff and students the opportunity to discuss the cultural shift required to view placement in a different way. In other words, she notes, "The degree of perceived certainty with a test score conversion is more effective if we engage the individual student in a more subjective conversation that includes multiple measures. The conversation is shifting from 'prove to us' what you can do, student, to tell us what 'you're capable' of doing."

Other campuses are also experimenting with multiple measures. Staff from Klamath presented to the Work Group and 2681 Committee a draft guide for placement in mathematics that relies on grades in the highest math classes taken gauged against time that has elapsed since students earned those grades. Students receive points based on responses to questions. For instance, if a student's grade in his or her last math class was an A, he or she receives one point. A grade of C earns three points. Classes taken within the last year produce an additional score of one; classes taken within the past two years, produce scores of two and so on. The points are added up and final scores used to determine what course the students should take. If a student scores two points, for example, and his or her last course was calculus, he or she enrolls in math 251. If that same student scored three points, he or she would take a class one step below math 251, in this case math 112. Finally, students who place into Math 20 or 70 must solve two math problems. If they struggle, the college may decide to give them a lower placement.

The March 4 meeting concluded with two hours of practice—based on what participants had learned from both national and local examples. Teams of participants generated and presented their own placement systems using multiple measures. Some, as Figure 5 suggests, didn't shy away from using a standardized assessment as a prominent measure.

Figure 5: Placement grid created by small cross-college group at March 4 Placement Work Group/2681 Committee joint meeting

For those graduating in last five years	Placement	For students with GED Score 2014 or earlier*	Placement
Smarter Balance score of 3 or 4	WR 121	Score of 170 or higher	WR 121
HSGPA of 3.0 or better	WR 121	Score of 145-169 + meeting with advisor, which might include Acccuplacer,	Placement TBD
HSGPA of 2.5-2.9 + B or better in senior English	WR 121		
HSGPA below 2.5	Take Accuplacer for additional placement information		

*Students who took GED examination before 2014 must take the Accuplacer.

Conclusion

The Developmental Education Work Group and the 2681 Committee covered a lot of ground the past few months. Together they learned how Oregon can increase student success by eliminating placement practices that rely on a single measure: a standardized test. Both groups proposed that community colleges begin relying on multiple measures to place students in math and writing. Soon Oregon's legislature will debate this recommendation and decide what it might do to encourage proliferation of this practice.

The groups also developed a menu of potential measures from which campuses can choose and then learned how campuses might combine the measures in a system that consigns far fewer students to the developmental education classes that Complete College America calls the Bermuda Triangle of higher education. Many students go in, but few ever come out.

So what's next?

Follow-through. Neither this chronicle nor the new ideas the Work Group and the 2681 Committee generated should gather dust. Campus representatives from the two groups and developmental education redesign campus team leads must lead change on their campuses and rely on each other for support and ongoing learning. Taking a few steps will go a long way toward ensuring that more of our students succeed:

- **Writing.** Seven campus representatives raised their hands to volunteer to participate in a pilot that will test the use of high school writing samples as a placement measure. ODE will lead the pilot, which will include efforts to build confidence in how high school teachers rate the samples. This can include ODE working with appropriate parties to bring greater rigor to scoring

practices, such as requiring multiple raters and training all those who score samples. Further, community college writing faculty were clear that campuses need to meet with local high school faculties to reach consensus on what constitutes college-level writing and what high school courses are college-preparatory—so that if a campus uses last grade in course as a measure, it knows which courses are college-preparatory and which are not. Finally, building trust between the two faculties will go a long way toward increasing confidence in the decisions high schools make about the quality and college-readiness of student writing. College writing teams should start meeting with high school language arts teachers as soon as possible.

- **Mathematics**. Cross-campus math faculty must back up its strong commitment to multiple measures and confidence in high school faculties with strong campus guidelines for placement. Math faculty have led the way in developmental education redesign, and we expect the same as campuses redesign their placement practices.

- **Ongoing research and development on the use of multiple measures**. Campuses cannot go it alone. OCCA, individual colleges, ODE and the HECC must support ongoing learning and development through professional learning communities for placement and admissions personnel as well as faculty so as campuses experiment with new placement processes that rely on multiple measures, they will learn from each other what works and what does not. These professional learning communities will require a commitment to data collection and analysis, much like the analysis Hetts conducted at Long Beach City College and shared with the 2681 Committee and Placement Work Group. Without data we will never know if students whom we might otherwise have placed in developmental education are succeeding in college-level courses.

While the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group is at the end of its journey and the 2681 Committee is nearing the end of its own, the work of redesigning our placement practices will not end for many years. As redesign heads toward 2020, more and more campuses will more accurately assess the capacity of women, minorities, first generation college students and others so that our placement processes no longer dash Oregon's students' dreams. They will set students on a course toward achieving them.

APPENDIX C:

ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT MEMORANDUM TO THE HB 2681 WORK GROUP

Memorandum
Assessment & Placement Survey Results

education northwest
CREATING STRONG SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES

Prepared for HB 2681 Work Group
July 22, 2016

Overview of survey

In May 2016 Education Northwest administered an online survey to faculty and administrators at Oregon's community colleges to gather descriptive information about developmental education reform implementation. The survey questions were designed to determine the extent to which each college implemented recommendations put forth by the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group (hereafter called "work group") and published in the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) August 2014 report "Developmental Education Redesign: Decreasing Attrition and Time to Completion at Oregon's Community Colleges."

The memo presents information about the number of community colleges (out of the 17 community colleges) implementing various assessment and placement policies and practices from a subset of survey questions about assessment and placement.

Background on survey content and administration

The survey was administered online to the Council of Instructional Administrators, developmental education redesign campus leads, and members of each campus' placement and developmental education redesign teams.

The survey asked respondents to answer only questions about the area(s) of reform—math, reading and writing, student services, assessment and placement—they had knowledge of; all respondents answered questions about needed supports and cultural changes that had taken place due to the redesign. The colleges completed the survey in different ways. At Portland Community College, the deans collectively responded to the survey, and submitted one survey. At other colleges, leaders of the math, English, student services, and assessment and placement reforms completed only the section(s) they felt most knowledgeable about.

Overall, sixty-five individuals completed the survey, for a response rate of 38 percent. Among the respondents were 17 math faculty, 10 English faculty, and 38 administrators, who included vice presidents and deans of academic and student services departments and divisions. At least one individual from each college completed the survey.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the survey is that for most colleges, more than one respondent from each college answered the questions in the assessment and placement section, and most

respondents from the same college did not answer the questions in the exact same way.[1] In contrast, many fewer respondents from the same college (typically only one or two) answered questions about math, reading/writing, and student services; thus there were few to no inconsistencies across answers in these sections. Inconsistencies across answers in the assessment and placement section may have occurred because individuals with a variety of different roles (math faculty, English faculty, administrators, etc.) had varying knowledge of what was happening on campus with assessment and placement; or, respondents may have interpreted the survey questions in different ways. To address the inconsistencies, we prioritized answers with majority responses. If no answer had a majority, we prioritized administrator responses.

A second limitation is that for some questions, no respondents from a college selected an answer—perhaps because they did not know the answer or they did not want to share the information. The letter introducing the survey explained that participating in the survey was voluntary, and the survey was designed so that respondents could skip answers and still move through all the questions. The letter also stated that findings would only be reported in the aggregate.

Survey Findings

This section presents four major sets of findings about assessment and placement reforms derived from our analysis of the survey data, followed by findings around needed supports and cultural change related to assessment and placement.

Assessment and Placement Reform

Test preparation practices

To help students prepare for high-stakes course placement exams, the work group recommended that colleges have test preparation practices that inform students about the content and purpose of placement exams and the appropriateness and importance of studying for them, and that colleges provide study materials that include guidance on how to review for the exams.

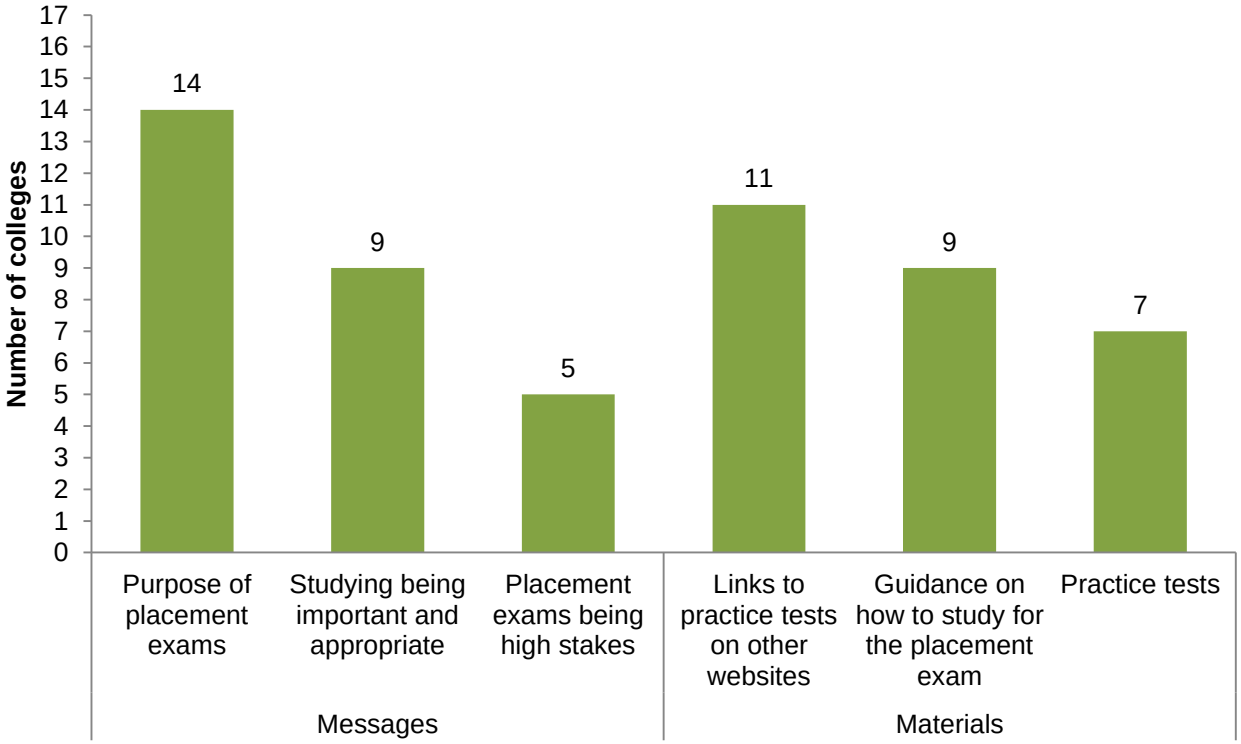
Figure 1 shows that most colleges (n=14) communicate the purpose of placement exams on their websites, nine colleges communicate the importance of studying for them, and five convey that placement exams are high-stakes. Only five colleges have all three of these messages on their website.

[1] To address this limitation in future survey administrations, we will ask colleges to *collectively* complete surveys asking about reform implementation.

Additionally, all colleges either provide links to other websites for practice tests (n=11) or provide practice tests directly on their websites (n=7). About half (n=9) share study tips on their website.

In response to open-ended survey questions, one respondent noted that his/her college did not have enough information on the website about placement exams (only just where and when tests should be taken); respondents from two different colleges reported that they currently have, or are planning to have, videos on their website that "explain the purpose of the test; provide practice with the test; and explain the impact of the test."

Figure 1. Messages and materials about placement exams included on college's website



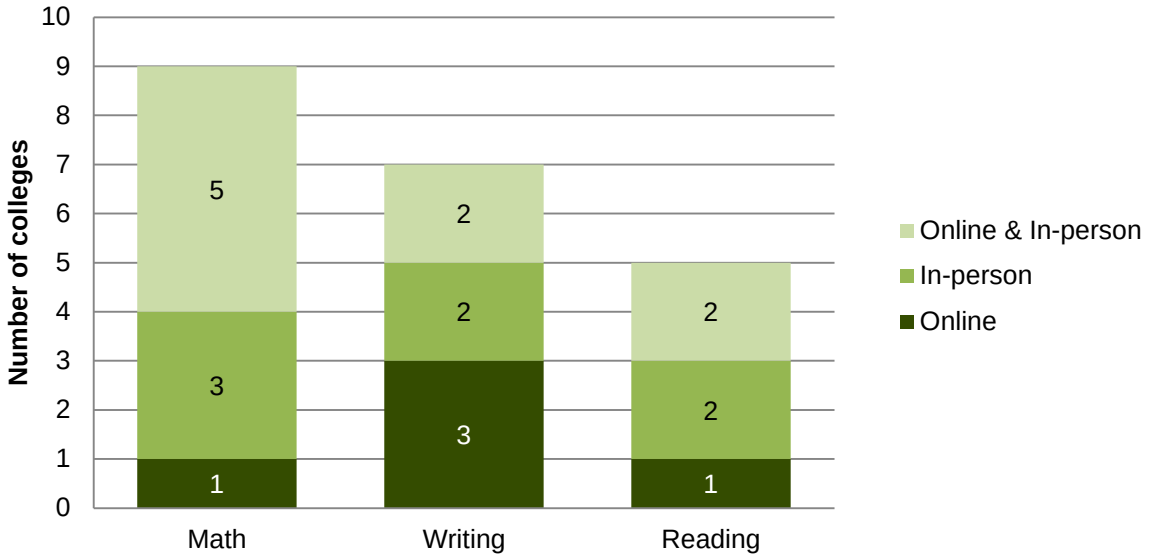
Placement exam preparation workshops

To further assist students with preparing for placement exams, the work group recommended colleges require students to review test preparation materials before taking the exam. Colleges could facilitate this by offering workshops such as bridge programs, boot camps, and/or online learning modules. Figure 2 shows that nine colleges offer some form of math exam preparation workshop for students; seven colleges offer writing; and five offer reading exam workshops either online, in-person, or both.

The survey also asked colleges that offer workshops the level at which they require students to participate. Only one college requires students to participate in workshops before taking the

placement exam, while other colleges either strongly encourage participation or keep it completely optional for students.

Figure 2. Types of placement exam-preparation workshops available



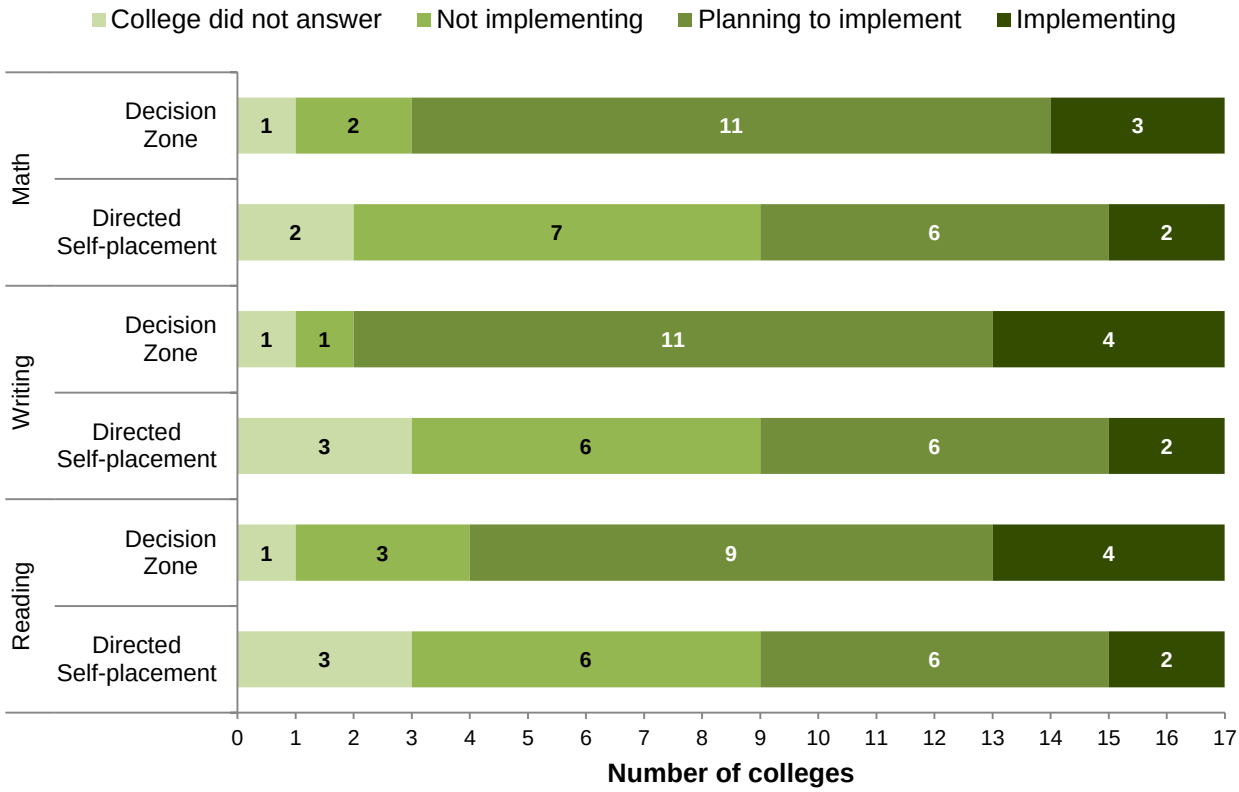
Decision zones and directed self-placement

To support a statewide system of common course placement practices, the work group recommended colleges use shared practices, such as decision zones—defined in the survey as a range of scores by which student placement is based on other measures, to determine student readiness for college-level math and English courses. Another assessment and placement reform that was not included in the recommendations, but is gaining ground, is directed self-placement. The April 2016 report "Developmental Education Redesign in Oregon: Changing the Way We Place Students at Our Community Colleges" chronicles the work of Oregon community colleges to implement multiple measures, and highlights the development of a self-directed placement process at Clackamas Community College.

Figure 3 shows that most colleges have implemented, or plan to implement, decision zones for math (n=14), writing (n=15), and reading (n=13). Fewer colleges (n=8) are implementing or planning to implement directed self-placement for each of the subjects. One college described the directed self-placement process they are developing:

> *Soon each student will start with a face-to-face meeting with an advisor who will use the multiple measures approach to placement. This will sometimes result in consultation with the math or writing faculty and only occasionally result in a standardized test being used.*

Figure 3. Number of colleges implementing or planning to implement decision zones and directed self-placement



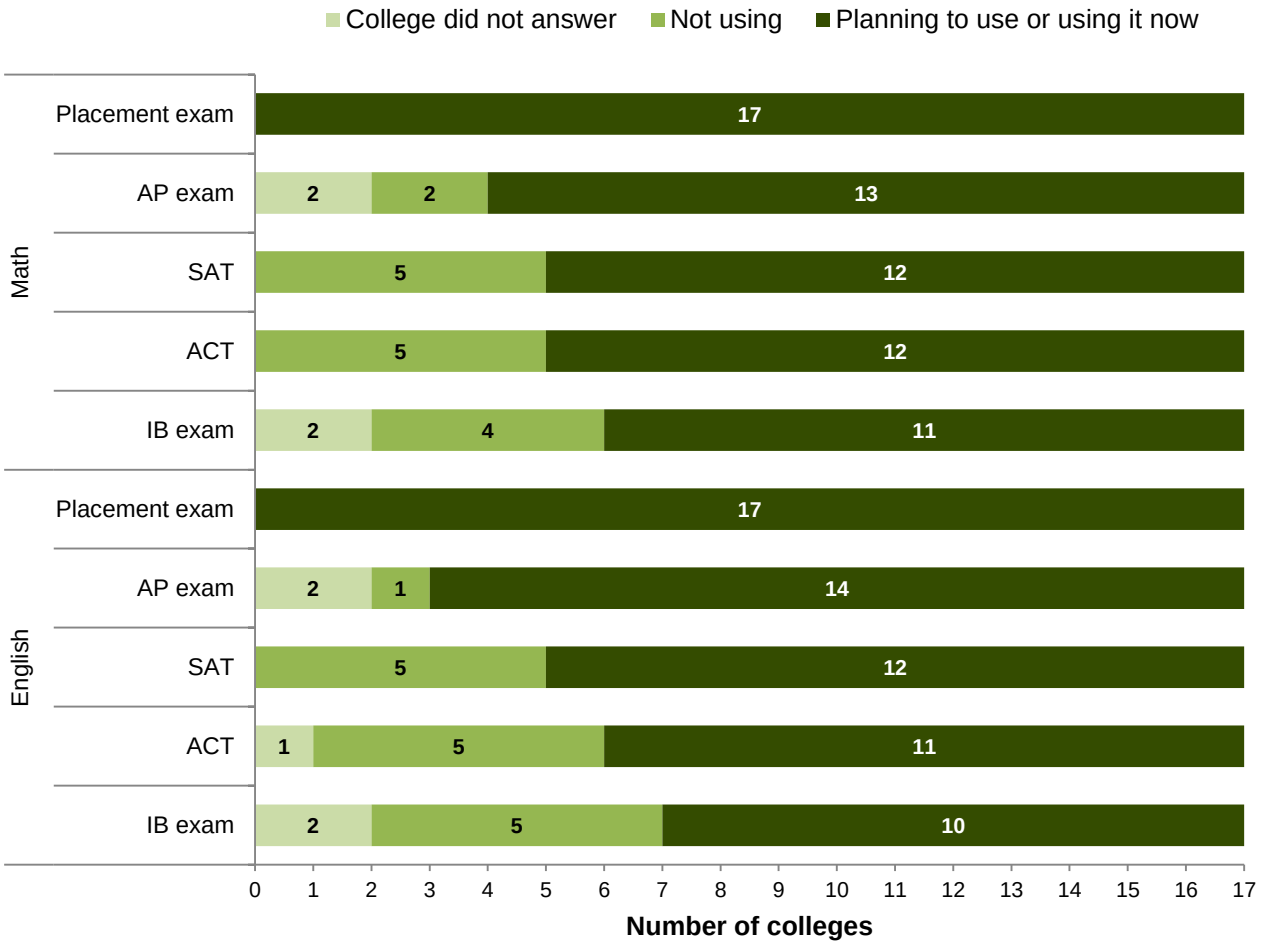
Measures of college readiness

Colleges have traditionally used scores from standardized tests, such as COMPASS and ACCUPLACER placement exams, SAT, and ACT, to determine students' readiness for college-level math and English courses. The work group's reform recommendations were informed by an emerging body of research showing limitations in the validity of such tests in predicting student success in college-level courses (e.g., see Scott-Clayton, Crosta, & Belfield, 2014; Hodara & Cox, 2016). Based on that evidence, the work group recommended the use of multiple measures to place students. Multiple measures provide students other opportunities to demonstrate readiness for college-level coursework.

There are many measures that can be used to assess college readiness. Below we categorize them into four sets of measures: standardized test scores, which include traditional measures of placement; high school grades; new measures, which include the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), General Education Development (GED) test, noncognitive measures, and a writing work sample; and scores and grades from other Oregon community colleges.

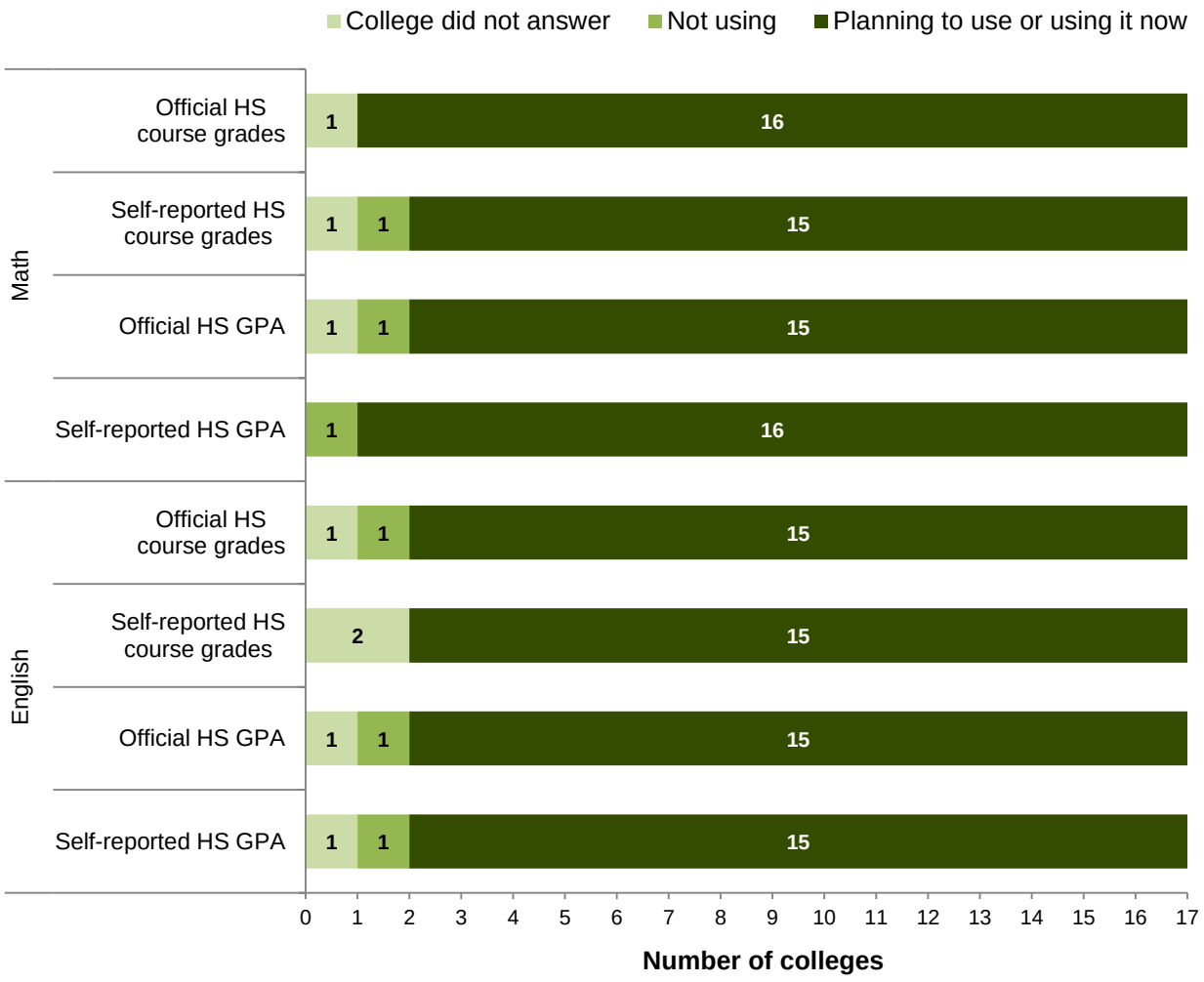
Overall, placement exams are the most common measure used for placement (Figure 4). All colleges reported they use placement exams to place students into math and English courses. The next most common standardized test that colleges use, or plan to use, is the Advanced Placement (AP) exam, followed by SAT, ACT, and then International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.

Figure 4. Number of colleges planning to use, or using, various *standardized test scores* to determine student readiness for college math and English



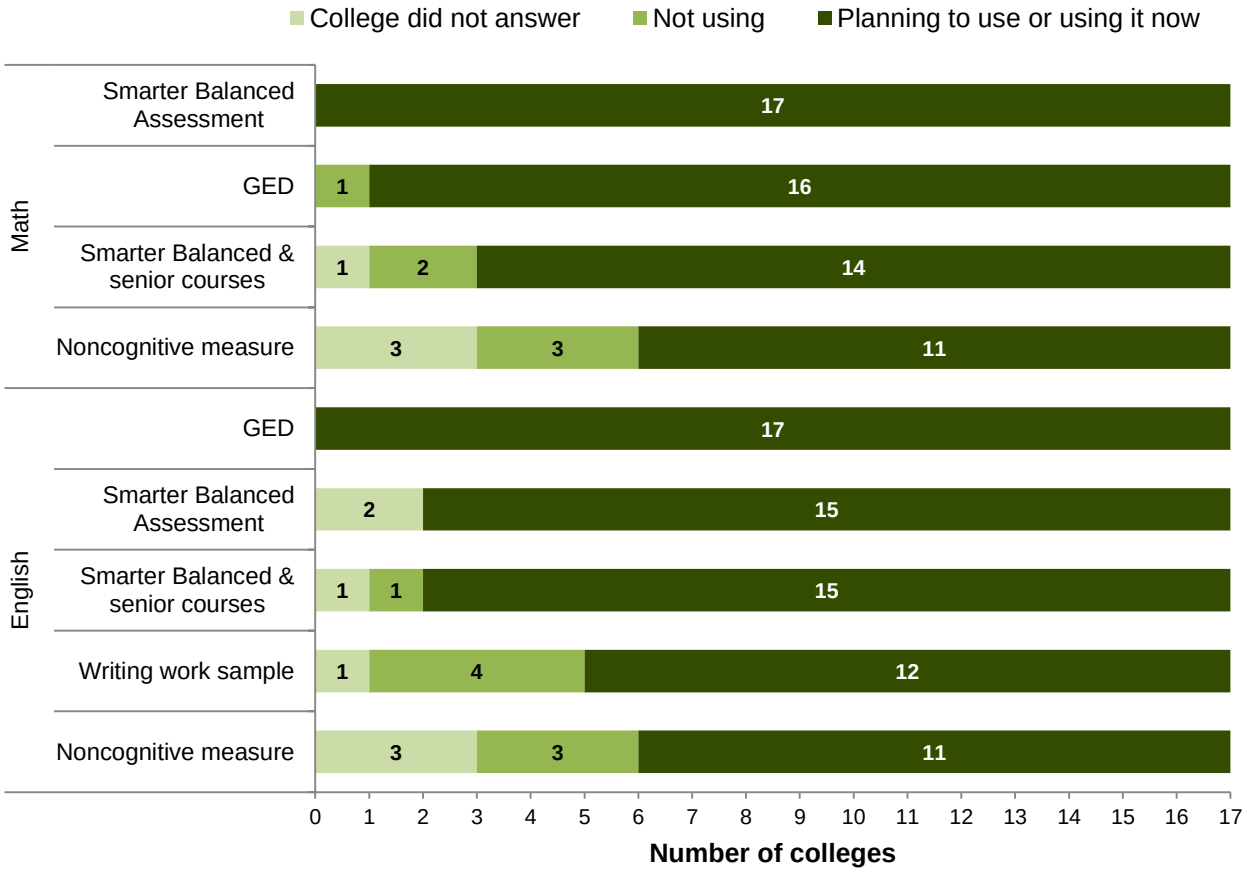
Fifteen or sixteen colleges are using, or planning to use, high school grades for placement (Figure 5). The momentum in Oregon around using high school grades for placement follows a national trend of states and institutions using high school grade-point average (GPA) and/or course grades to determine readiness for college English and math (Bracco et al., 2014)

Figure 5. Number of colleges planning to use or using *high school grades* to determine student readiness for college math and English



GED and SBAC are the most common new measures that colleges are planning to use or using now (Figure 6). The community colleges signed an agreement that, beginning with the graduating class of 2016, students with a "3" or "4" on the Smarter Balanced Assessment, and appropriate courses in grade 12, would be exempt from placement testing for developmental coursework. It appears that most colleges are planning to enact this policy this coming fall 2016. In English, the next most common new measure is a writing work sample (n=12 colleges). Additionally, eleven colleges are planning to use, or are now using, noncognitive measures for placement.

Figure 6. Use of *new measures* to determine student readiness for college math and English

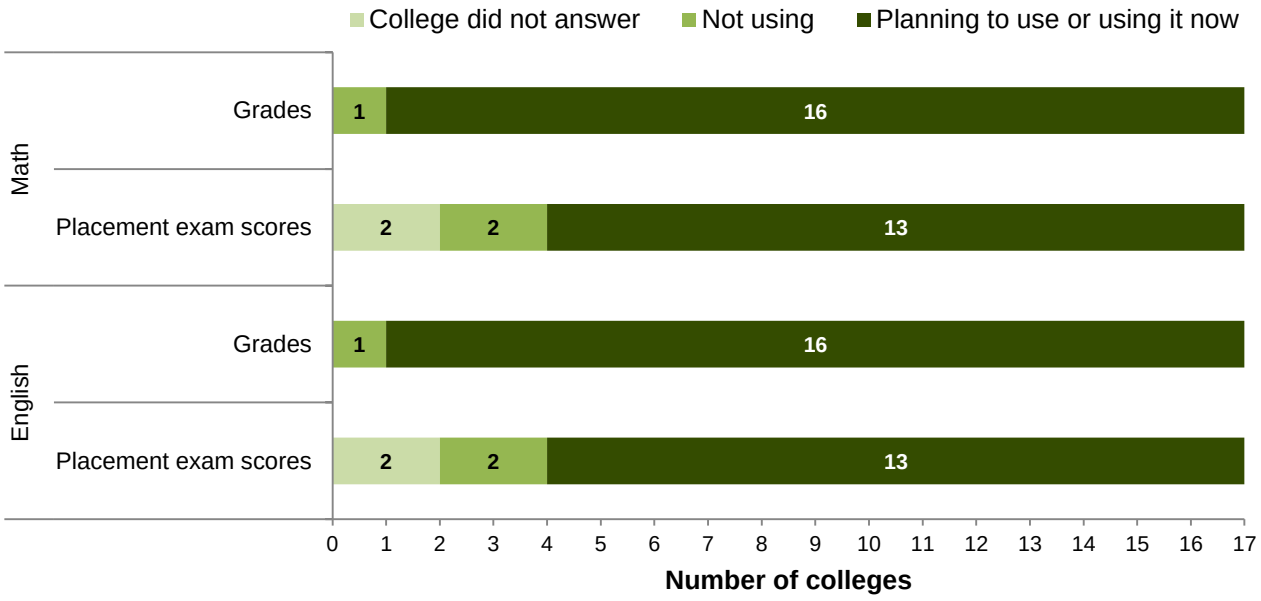


In their responses to open-ended questions about the use of non-cognitive measures, the college currently using noncognitive measures uses "feelings and attitudes about math and/or writing, motivation to succeed, work/family obligations, intended credit load to term, and educational goals" (for more details, see April 2016 report "Developmental Education Redesign in Oregon: Changing the Way We Place Students at Our Community Colleges"). Colleges in the planning stages are considering interviewing students, assessing student attitudes and confidence about math and writing, using the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) tool, and asking about students' work schedules and credit load. One respondent said the following:

We have a schematic of a tiered interview approach that asks about attitudes students have toward school, math, reading, and writing. This may spiral on to the questions underpinning Duckworth's "Grit Scale" as we brush up against resilience, bouncing back from setbacks, and preparation for issues of money, transportation, and child care.

Finally, all but one college accepts course grades from other Oregon community colleges, and 13 colleges accept placement exams from other colleges, reflecting considerable cooperation across the colleges, and recognition of different readiness standards (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Use of *other community college placement exam scores and grades* to determine student readiness for college math and English



Cultural Changes and Needed Supports

Overall, most colleges are implementing or planning to implement the work group's assessment and placement redesign recommendations. Furthermore, there seem to be some cultural shifts on campuses related to assessment and placement reform: 69 percent of respondents believe there have been small to large increases in "intentional collaboration between staff to discuss strategies to reduce developmental education referrals" and 72 percent of respondents believe there have been small to large increases in "intentional collaboration between faculty and student services staff."

The survey also asked college respondents what supports they needed to implement developmental education reforms; the more frequently selected supports were: professional development/training (65% of respondents), external funding (62%), and opportunities to collaborate with staff members at other community colleges (54%). In the open-ended responses about needed supports, the most common issue raised was about a lack of funding and the continuing challenges related to collaborating across the campus to enact change and campus buy-in for change.

Policy Considerations

We believe these findings raise four areas of support for consideration by the HB 2681 Work Group.

1. Develop statewide standards or guidance around test preparation and a set of preparation materials that all colleges can use

   Some colleges provide little support related to test preparation. Although the colleges are moving toward multiple measures, it is likely that placement exams will continue to be the primary measure used for many students, particularly older students with less recent high school transcripts and GED scores. The Developmental Education Redesign Work Group recommended a set of "standards" around test preparation that have yet to be developed, but may be beneficial to the colleges.

2. Provide funding to support reform and bring staff together across colleges to promote learning and share strategies

   Nearly all the colleges are planning to use decision zones and multiple measures, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Colleges would benefit from state-level support as they continue this important work through funding and/or continued efforts to convene representatives from each college.

3. Facilitate or encourage campus communication regarding assessment and placement reform

   There were inconsistencies in the answers that respondents within the same college provided about assessment and placement; and in the open-ended responses, respondents frequently discussed challenges related to cross-campus collaboration. Both findings signal a need for supporting campus communication regarding what colleges are doing or planning to do, particularly in regards to assessment and placement. Framing the need for changes with evidence that defines the problem—citing national, state, or institutional research—may help community college staff understand the need for reform and improve collaboration.

4. Conduct research to identify the effectiveness of new assessment and placement policies and practices

   Many of the assessment and placement reforms are breaking new ground, particularly those related to using self-reported grades, GED, SBAC, and non-cognitive measures for placement. Research and evaluation is important to determine the extent to which these innovative practices result in expanding access to college coursework and supporting student progression and college success. Results could inform continued reform efforts at community colleges in Oregon and across the country.

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APPENDIX D:

MEMORANDUM: HIGHER EDUCATION AND SMARTER BALANCED TESTING

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: **HIGHER EDUCATION AND SMARTER BALANCED TESTING**
TO: Superintendents, high school principals, counselors, students, and families
FROM: Ben Cannon, Executive Director, Higher Education Coordinating Commission
DATE: July 19, 2016

As full implementation of the Common Core becomes a reality in Oregon K-12 education, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is working with campuses and the Oregon Department of Education on connections and alignment with higher education. As a result of agreements approved in 2015 by Oregon's public colleges and universities, assessment of Common Core standards through Smarter Balanced (SBAC) testing can now help simplify student pathways once they get to college.

In 2015, Oregon Community College Presidents and University Provosts agreed to incorporate Smarter Balanced test scores into their processes for placement of students into entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without need for additional placement testing for developmental education. These agreements apply to high school students graduating in 2016, 2017, or 2018 and entering an Oregon community college or public university. **How the agreements are implemented at each community college or university may vary slightly from campus to campus, so please contact institutions for details on course placement.**

The agreements will be reviewed and renewed or revised in 2018 based on relevant data gathered on the Smarter Balanced assessment, such as (a) correlations with other assessment results, (b) grade 12 student performance, and (c) student performance in subsequent college courses.

How does it work?
A general description of the process is below, and students, families, and counselors should consult institutions directly to learn more about their placement processes.

- **At community colleges:** students will be exempt from developmental education coursework in the academic year immediately following high school completion if they have earned an Achievement Level 3 or 4 on the Smarter Balanced grade 11 assessment in Mathematics and/or English and have **successfully completed relevant accelerated college credit options in Mathematics and/or English, respectively, during their senior year**. Examples of acceptable accelerated credit courses include dual credit, early college, local accelerated credit models, and exam achievement in AP or IB courses. The HECC is currently compiling a more detailed list of acceptable 12th grade accelerated credit courses, specific placement policies for each community college and public university, and points of contact at the institutions for questions. The Smarter Balanced test scores for Oregon students who enroll in an Oregon community college will be made available to the college through the HECC's student information system.
- **At Oregon universities:** Smarter Balanced results and senior course work have been incorporated into each institution's multiple measures of college readiness for placement purposes.

Further information:
Oregon Department of Education (ODE) Smarter Balanced Communication Resources
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
ODE: Common Core Standards and Assessments

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION