

Good morning

For the Record...My name is Hilda Rosselli and I serve as the College and Career Readiness Director at the Oregon Education Investment Board. The issue of placement tests has been of deep concern to many educational leaders in Oregon.

Research conducted by Judith Scott-Clayton (2012) for the Community College Research Center Teachers College, Columbia University found that:

- Vast majority (92 percent) of community colleges use placement exams to screen entrants for access to college-level coursework
- Majority of tested students are referred to remediation as a result
  - Bailey, Jeong, & Cho found in their 2010 study of over 250,000 students at 57 community colleges across the country that 59% percent were referred to developmental math and 33 percent were referred to developmental English.
  - Students must pay tuition for remedial courses, but the credits they earn do not count toward graduation requirements.
  - The cost to schools of providing this remedial instruction has been estimated at \$1 billion or more (Noble, Schiel, & Sawyer, 2004).
- Yet very little research has been done regarding the validity of these exams as a screening tool
- Students themselves often unaware of the importance of these exams (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010)

#### JUDITH SCOTT CLAYTON'S STUDY SET OUT TO

- Describe the relationship between placement exam scores and grades in relevant college-level courses
- Examine the practical tradeoffs involved in raising or lowering cutoffs
- Explore whether the use of additional measures could improve placement outcomes

## STUDY PARAMETERS

- 4 cohorts of degree-seeking entrants at Large, Urban Comm. College System (LUCCS)
- Success criteria: – Grades in first college-level course in relevant subject

## FINDINGS

- Placement test scores are more predictive in math than English
- System appears willing to tolerate high rates of under-placement in order to minimize over-placements – Whether this is optimal depends on relative costs of different mistakes – Over-placement mistakes may be more salient: parallels to over-screening in medicine – May indicate a “standards spiral” in which faculty dissatisfied with student preparation lobby for higher cutoffs, but if test is only weak predictor, will never be able to raise cutoff enough...
- Alternative measures do as good or better job at sorting students:
  - Using HS background measures alone to determine placement does as well in math and better in English than test scores alone
  - Combining test scores and HS measures could reduce severe placement errors by 12% while also improving college-level success rates by 10-15%.
  - But no combination of measures will eliminate mistakes completely
- Allowing students to test out of remediation based on “best of” either high school index or test score cutoff: – Would reduce remediation rates by 8 to 12 percentage points – While increasing college-level success rates – Generating large increases in percent succeeding at

college-level in first semester

- Findings suggest that multiple measures should be used where possible and schools should retain flexibility to override score-based placements

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Unlike other high-stakes exams such as the ACT and SAT, no significant test-preparation market has developed around college placement exams, even though hundreds of thousands of students take them each year.

Many students are not even aware of these exams and their consequences until after admission.

A study by Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine in 2010 found that test preparation resources varied from college to college, that staff sometimes downplayed the consequences of the exams, and that some students even thought it would be “cheating” to prepare.

The authors quote one student who reported, “[The woman at the test center] said, ‘It doesn’t matter how you place. It’s just to see where you are.’ Looking back, that’s not true. It’s really important” (Venezia et al., 2010, p. 10).

## OREGON SPECIFICS

In 2012, an analysis of Placement Tests conducted by CCWD found that currently six different placement tests are used in community colleges and six different placement tests are used in four-year institutions.

Furthermore the analysis reported 15 different cut off scores used in Reading alone. This certainly has the potential for some level of confusion for students and their families as well as those who advise students.

**Language suggested for a possible amendment would direct the HECC and State Board of Ed to identify up to four placement tests with common cut scores accepted by all institutions;**

**It would further direct ODE to develop a crosswalk or alignment between SBAC, ACT, SAT, and other standardized tests that are currently used for placement and direct the State Board of Education and HECC to adopt SBAC cut scores that waive placement tests;**

Currently a group composed of faculty, staff, and administrators from both community colleges and four year institutions has been working on a proposal to waive placement tests for high school students who score a 3 or 4 on the SBAC if they successfully complete the next content class offered in high school and if they move directly into postsecondary education and take the next class in the sequence. There is strong support for this proposal by the Council of Instructional Administrators and the Provosts Council.

In order to improve the practices surrounding the administration of placement tests for students in high school, suggested amendment language would:

- **Direct ODE to disseminate best practices from districts that provide students and their families with information on placement test preparation,**
- **Direct districts to provide improved access to placement testing at the local high schools;**
- **Directs districts to use assessment results to provide feedback to students to help them determine their level of college and career readiness, including on track status towards graduation, and additional skills and coursework needed to be college ready**

This is based in part on a number of findings from a large school district in Texas that Deputy Superintendent Rob Saxton, superintendents, legislators, and Salam Noor and I visited in December that had these notable results:

- Drop out rate went from 18.7% in 2006 to 3.2% in 2013
- Four year Graduation Rates last year was 90.1%
- Dramatic decrease in rates of remediation at CC level—from 60% to 18%
- Early college programs--most students leave with between 32 and 70 college semester hours

One of the key strategies implemented in the **Pharr-San Juan Alamo Independent School District** is the use college placement tests to predict what college courses need to be offered and what supports students need.

Starts in 8<sup>th</sup> grade with class on Texas Success Initiative class and use of college placement test (Texas version of 24 item Accu-placer reading test) to help students and teachers identify and address needs.

The High Schools are recognized as approved placement test sites and students take a practice test as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade to give them a sense of their college readiness. Students cant retake the placement test in high school until qualified to take college courses (must take tutorials after school or on weekends)

**Lastly, the amendment encourages approaches to developmental education that accelerate students' entry into college credit-bearing courses**