Texas Toolbox: Placement

STUDENT SUCCESS SERIES: PLACEMENT

Texas is transforming higher education. Responding to critical needs and lofty goals for certificate and degree completion, practitioners are invited to use this Texas Toolbox: Placement to share research, best practices and resources.

Resources and Best Placement Practices

A wave of national attention has focused upon student placement, but this is nothing new in Texas. We all know that accurately placing students into classes that fit their skill levels is essential for not only their success but because students who succeed in their first semester tend to persist to achieve a credential.

Accurate placement is more than a score on a placement test. Many factors need to work in harmony to accurately assess student skills in mathematics, reading, and writing so that advisers can place students into the best options for each individual.

Some of these include creating great marketing and outreach, hosting winsome and informative mandatory orientations, preparing new students for the challenges of taking a computer adaptive placement test, and applying multiple indicators to the placement test scores to select the best classes for each person.

This first Texas Toolbox provides practical resources related to placement in the hopes that Texas practitioners will apply what works, will share their innovations in future issues, and will improve student success across our great state.
Placement Tests and Testing
A CASP and DEI Reading/Writing Leadership Team
Position Paper

Research shows that students who are successful their first semester in college tend to re-enroll and persist to earn a credential, certificate, or degree. Conversely, students who are misplaced tend to drop out. Accurately placing students into the college class that best matches their skill levels is essential to improving the numbers of students who achieve a credential, certificate, or degree. Achieving a credential impacts the economic health of not only the State of Texas but our country. This position paper represents research best-practices that should be implemented across Texas in order to improve student success as well as degree attainment. Position points are presented first, followed by discussion and a bibliography.

Position Points

1. Accurate placement is a result of applying placement assessment instrument(s) and institutional placement policies.

2. State-of-the-art placement is 80% accuracy or better, and that should be the target of every higher education institution in the State of Texas.

3. Placement instruments measure skill levels on the day and time of testing. They do not predict successful course outcomes or degree attainment; however, they do predict negative outcomes quite accurately, particularly when multiple measures are applied.

4. No student should be placed based upon one test score alone. Multiple measures improve placement accuracy.

5. Placement tests and policies efficacy should be assessed about a month into a semester. Best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey. Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys should be done annually until results achieve 80%, but at least once every three years afterwards to assess continued placement accuracy.

6. As long as the placement accuracy is 80% or better, it should be the institution’s decision about which placement strategy to employ. Institutions that achieve 80% or better accuracy as determined by a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey should share their placement strategies and policies with the state so that best practices can be quickly scaled up.

7. Preparing students to take a placement test is a best practice.

8. Placement instruments should not be used as course exit tests.
Position Paper: Discussion  (see Annotated Bibliography, p. 15)

1. **Accurate placement is a result of applying placement assessment instrument(s) and/or institutional placement policies.**

   In an ideal world, a student intake process would include an individual, lengthy interview to explore career or interest goals, selection of an appropriate course of study that directly leads to those goals, and assessment to accurately discern the best first classes. However, the reality is that most institutions are severely limited by the large numbers of first-time-in-college students, the short window of registration time, and the small numbers of advisors, counselors, and faculty who advise students. Placement has to be quick, timely, accurate, easy, and inexpensive for both the students and the institution.

   Most universities use the SAT or ACT to determine college entrance, but these assessments should not be used to place students into Developmental Studies classes because they are designed for a different purpose, namely admission decisions to more selective four-year institutions. As such, they contain a focus on questions that measure higher order skills more suitable for making decisions on admissions. In contrast, placement tests aim to make decisions about courses at and below college level and thus contain more questions from below college level skills (Morante). Most community college institutions in the country use a placement instrument like COMPASS or Accuplacer (Boylan).

   Some institutions who are achieving 80% or better placement accuracy take advantage of the placement instrument's ability to add several questions at the end of the test. Students' answers are used to refine the metrics and improve the final score accuracy. Questions may include perception of time management requirements, study attitudes, academic background, or current application of the discipline in addition to environmental issues such as having a place to study, employment issues, and family support (Gordon, Poggio). This use of multiple indicators may also be done in an advising appointment.

   Other institutions incorporate additional assessments like the LASSI, Learning and Study Skills Inventory, or they add a strategy like a faculty team which reads and scores student placement essays of students in a "gray zone" or "bubble zone," which is the SEM, or Standard Error of Measurement for the test. Few institutions have improved their placement accuracy through the use of a writing sample in addition to the adaptive placement exam.

2. **State-of-the-art placement is with 80% accuracy, and that should be the target of every higher education institution in the State of Texas.**

   Students are frustrated when they are unnecessarily placed into a developmental class. If they are placed too low, students become frustrated and drop out. If they are placed too high, they become frustrated and drop out. Faculty members are frustrated by the institutional pressure for student success when the skill level of their students varies widely and when some students do not have the entry level skills required to succeed. When students enter with a similar skill set range
CASP Position Paper—Discussion, continued

because they have been accurately placed, faculty can more effectively target interventions and teach the course learning outcomes. Accurate placement impacts morale, motivation, and persistence through the all-important first semester of higher education, and thus, accurate placement directly affects student success.

3. Placement instruments measure skill levels on the day and time of testing. They do not predict course outcomes or degree attainment, and they do not reflect the rigor of college-level skills. However, they do predict negative outcomes quite accurately, particularly when multiple measures are applied.

A large body of evidence shows a very poor correlation between a placement test score and end of course grades (Aligning Expectations, Clayton, Hughes & Clayton). However, expecting a test score to predict a course outcome defies common sense. Many factors other than skill levels impact a student's ability to complete a course successfully. Motivation, health of the student or a family member, number of employment hours, stability of the family, whether or not the student purchased course materials, time devoted to effective study and practice, and good teaching that wipes out deficits are only some factors. However, just because placement tests do not predict course outcomes or degree attainment, does not mean they are not useful indicators of skill levels. In fact, they do well, particularly when other metrics are added to the placement decision making (Gordon, Morante, Boylan).

Just because placement tests do not predict course outcomes or degree attainment, does not mean they are not useful indicators of skill levels. In fact, they do well, particularly when other metrics are added to the placement decision making (Gordon, Morante, Boylan).

Another criticism leveled at placement tests is that test questions do not reflect the rigor of college level work. However, because a placement test is used to identify skills at the point between college level and developmental level, a large proportion of the total question pool is at below college level. Since placement tests should not be used for advanced placement, fewer questions are above college level. The test need only identify skills at the entry level and below level, and that is the way they are designed.

4. No student should be placed based upon one test score alone. Multiple measures improve placement accuracy.

Studies show that the use of multiple variables adds significantly to the accuracy of placement decisions. No one score on any test should be used alone to make a placement decision. Adding additional metrics to the decision making process improves placement accuracy. (see p. 8)

One example is the use of an essay to complement multiple choice questions, and many Texas portion of a placement test in their placement deci-
(4. Multiple measures, cont.)

Institutions incorporate the machine scored essay. Current scoring algorithms have become more sophisticated and also analyze sentence complexity, grammar, and organization (Gordon). Student essays scored at the far ranges accurately measure writing ability, but essays in the middle range sometimes are penalized for creative answers outside of the assessment programming, or they are scored higher because the student used lots of transition words.

Austin Community College is one institution which works with essays in the “gray zone” SEM, or Standard Error of Measurement immediately above and below a cut score. A team of trained, calibrated adjunct and full-time instructors read and score these essays using a rubric in order to refine placement. Some students are sent to credit level classes, and some are sent to Developmental or English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. This is one example of a relatively inexpensive, scalable placement strategy that improves placement accuracy.

In California, all community colleges are required to use a variety of variables outside the test in making placement decisions. Used as an integral part of a counseling/advising model, these additional variables ranging from high school grades, to motivation, to years out of school, can add significantly to the accuracy of placement decisions when used appropriately by trained advisors (Morante, Poggio, Belfield & Crosta). *(See page 8, Texas Toolbox: Placement)*

5. **Placement tests and policies efficacy should be assessed about a month into a semester – early enough so that students have taken one or more first tests but before significant interventions have altered entry skill levels. Best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey.**

Placement accuracy should be assessed about a month into the semester or term. Psychometrics experts like Dr. Edward Morante, Dr. Ron Gordon, and Dr. Paul Nolting recommend assessing placement at this time because it is late enough so that students have taken one or more first tests in the course, but early enough so that interventions have not wiped out deficits. Researchers at the National Center for Developmental Education concur with these experts that best practice is to employ a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey (Boylan). The expert assessors are the faculty members who are teaching and assessing the students. Nearly 100% of California institutions evaluate placement using this method (Poggio).

This type of survey is simple and inexpensive for most institutions to set up and administer, easy for instructors to complete, and quick to tally. Instructors are given an electronic roster for each of their first-time-in-college classes. They are asked to identify whether or not each student entered the class with the necessary skill level to succeed. The radio button answer option is either “Yes” or “No.” Institutional researchers remove the students who transferred from another institution and those whose placement was overridden. The total “Yes - accurately placed students” are compared with the “No – entered without the appropriate skill levels students” in a simple, easily analyzed percentage.

Based on the data from the Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey, institutional stakeholders can examine their placement policies and test score cut zone decisions with the aim of improving accuracy to at least 80%.
(5. Placement tests and policies efficacy should be assessed (cont.))

Researchers who use the “consequential” research model, which is the popular name for this method, complete this model by comparing the survey results with the course grades at the end of the term. They have found that 80% to 90% of the students who were rated as Under Prepared either failed or dropped the course. This indicates that the faculty surveys were predictive of successful course completion – unlike the placement test scores (Gordon).

John Pogio at the University of Kansas Center for the Study of the Community College, when working as a consultant for the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, endorsed this method as the preferred method for validating cut scores. The reasoning is that although the faculty results are somewhat subjective, they bear a much closer relationship with students’ abilities to meet the course requirements for two reasons. First, test scores only account for less than 16% of the variance in course grades. Faculty grading policies account for considerably more. Second, by the time grades are available, many of the students who were least well prepared have dropped the course, as have some students who were adequately prepared, thus forcing researchers to eliminate “W” grades from the sample. This method disproportionately removes many of the students whom faculty would rate Under Prepared, thus artificially raising the cut scores (Gordon).

This method is part of a placement strategy that produces a solid placement system that works for students and their educational goals.

Achieving 80% placement accuracy may take a few years for some institutions. For example, as simple a change as requiring prerequisite control may mean significant programming changes with online registration. Furthermore, placement testing companies periodically revise their question pools and update electronic essay scoring. Every decision affects the accuracy of student placements. Therefore, we recommend that Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys be done annually until results achieve 80% or greater. Thereafter, the survey should be done at least once every three years.

Evaluating the results of the Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys should be done at many levels since there are many stakeholders. Faculty curriculum teams, advisors and Student Service personnel, test center personnel, and administrators should discuss the results both individually and corporately.

6. As long as the placement accuracy is 80% or better, it should be the institution’s decision about which strategy or alternative instrument to employ. Institutions that achieve 80% or better accuracy as determined by a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey should share their placement strategies, policies, and/or additional test questions with the state so that best practices can be quickly scaled up.
6. Placement accuracy and scaling (cont.)

There may be many ways to achieve 80% or better placement accuracy. Allowing institutions to experiment and pilot with policies and alternative instruments may result in better, less expensive, and highly scalable methods. Institutions should be allowed freedom in this process. After all, it is in the best interest of each institution that their first-time-in-college students are accurately placed. These students are more likely to succeed in that important first semester, more likely to re-enroll for the next semester, and more likely to persist to a credential, certificate, or degree. Student success directly impacts the financial health of any higher education institution.

Institutions that achieve 80% or better accuracy should share their placement strategies, policies, and/or testing instrument cut scores with the State of Texas so that best practices can be quickly scaled up. This should be a priority initiative at all levels: faculty, administrative, institutional, state, and legislative. The practical result of such an initiative is that best practices will be implemented quickly and will eventually become more uniform across the state. State-wide increased student success should be the result, but the process will take time.

7. Preparing students to take a placement test is a best practice.

The most popular placement tests are adaptive. Both Compass and Accuplacer begin each test at the middle of the difficulty range and move as required by the student’s responses. Accuplacer administers the entire test content structure at the appropriate difficulty level for each item. Compass may abort some content if the student answers incorrectly more than once. This style of testing is new for most entering students. For example, students who have successfully completed high school calculus occasionally are placed into developmental math because their basic arithmetic skills are rusty. Other students report not taking the test seriously. Still others report that by the time they figured out how the test worked, it was over.

Assisting students in understanding the purpose of the test and the kinds of questions asked, and giving them an opportunity to take some practice questions and review the materials covered, especially in mathematics, can greatly assist the accuracy of the results and the efficacy of the placement decisions that need to be made. Some institutions have students read and sign an information page before taking a placement test. Many offer quick review sessions or online practice testing opportunities. These best practices should be identified and scaled up across the State of Texas. (See p. 20)

8. Placement instruments should not be used as course exit assessments.

Accurate measures of learning begin with establishing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which are specific and measurable. SLOs take into account the entry level skill set of the course(s) at the next level so that learning articulates smoothly from one level to the next.

While a placement test measures skill levels, it does not closely measure attainment of SLOs. The best assessments of learning outcomes are designed by an institutional team of faculty who are trained to create appropriate assessments. Best practice assessment is distributed throughout the semester. Employing distributed assessment, appropriate interventions and teaching can be implemented in a timely way that enables students to master course content.

Gateway testing or high stakes testing, which is the practice of employing one test to determine whether or not a student advances, is a poor practice. Research demonstrates that many factors interfere with the accuracy of gateway high stakes testing including anxiety, race, and whether or not the student is female. Practice should be influenced by this data.
Multiple Measures for Student Placement
2012 THECB Advisory Committee Report

In summer 2012, a small group of Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Advisory Committee members surveyed the literature and interviewed practitioners to identify significant multiple measures that should be used in college placement. Certainly, the most important element is identifying skills and proficiencies as measured by a TSI placement test. However, accurate placement is more than a placement test score. It is the combination of many factors such as the application process, orientation, practicing for placement testing, testing, advising that includes a personal conversation and application of multiple measures into the placement decision, and enrollment. It involves every aspect of the experience a student has before he or she ever walks into a classroom door on the first day.

Because the practice of applying multiple measures into the placement decision takes place in this larger context, an outline of best practices frames this discussion.

There are currently no multiple measures matrices in the literature, and in fact, there is no consensus of what should be included in a matrix except considering a high school rank and GPA if it is recent. This is because community college students have a wide range of skills, experience, and needs, and a large percentage of students have gaps of time between high school graduation and college enrollment. However, as student services personnel apply various elements into the placement decision, collect data on the efficacy of placement, and continue professional development training, the efficiency and accuracy of placement should improve.

At first glance, this multiple measures list appears too detailed, too time-consuming, and too subjective. However, institutions have been achieving high levels of placement accuracy (above 80% accuracy as measured by Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys) for many years by adding multiple measures to the placement test score as they make placement decisions. Trained advisers and counselors are able to do this quickly, efficiently and effectively. Placement experts recommend scenarios training where a case is read and the placement decision is discussed until calibration is achieved; in other words, until all personnel are making similar placement decisions.

BEST PRACTICE: Gather data as part of the application process

As soon as possible after the computer generated admissions application, a letter is sent to the student welcoming him/her to the college and outlining the next steps including:

- The pathway of enrollment: practicing for the TSI Assessment, taking the placement test, advising/counseling, orientation, and registration.
- A short statement about the importance of each step in order to enroll in best courses and to be a successful student
- The details/schedules, etc. that need to be followed.
- Information about the placement test is very important including: purpose and use of the test, sample questions, consequences, cost, assessment center hours, and opportunities to practice and review materials. (This can be in a brief pamphlet, an online review, or an invitation to a summer bridge program or non-course based option. The testing companies have examples of these on their websites.)
Advising after the test (cont.)

(Optional) Some institutions will ask students to take a formal inventory measuring discipline and non-cognitive skills as a part of the application process, Orientation, or time before registration. Instruments like the LASSI, MSLQ, and MARS are well validated as is the Felder. The Felder is online and free to students. A list and description of options may be found in the literature (Levine-Brown, Bonham, Saxon & Boylan 2008; Saxon, Levine-Brown & Boylan 2008).

(Optional) Some institutions will have students go through a career component as a part of the application process. ***We need institutions to share resources that would comprise a bank of appropriate career components.

(Strongly recommended best practice) Nothing is more frustrating for classroom instructors than to realize the first week of classes that students have been placed who do not possess the entry level skills required for success in their course. Nothing is sadder for a student than to waste a semester and experience failure because he/she was misplaced. A comprehensive training program needs to be built for counselors, advisers, and faculty doing placement that takes into consideration test scores and other measures of skill levels, multiple measures, student population, and institutional resources. One best practice is scenario training, where different cases are presented followed by discussion until there is agreement upon the best placement for the individual.

***We need institutions to share resources for training that would include a bank of appropriate scenarios. Placement experts consulted for this report are practitioners that have many years of experience in student services as well as in training advisers and counselors to understand and apply multiple measures.

DRAFT 3: Matrix For Placement Using Multiple Indicators

Note from the THECB Advisory Committee: We were unable to find a matrix for placement using multiple measures in the literature. Although helpful, these measures found in the literature are open to interpretation and are implemented in different ways by institutions with high rates of successful student placement (above 80% as measured by Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys and evaluated using the consequential method). We will need the expertise of consultants, counselors and advisers to refine this list and to refine ways to implement these measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possible open-ended questions/Comments</th>
<th>What to listen for</th>
<th>Research support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm welcome by letter, Orientation, and/or personal appointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morante (2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advising BEFORE taking the placement test: Which test to take? Where and how to practice?

- **ESOL Students** - Most Texas institutions need to quickly identify non-English proficient students (English for Speakers of Other Languages, ESOL; ELL, L2 students, etc.) so that they can be guided to first take the TSI Assessment, and for those below college level, take an ESL placement assessment that can identify ESL levels. Some open-ended questions that the institution enrollment form or that first-contact people and/or assessment center personnel could ask are in the chart below. IHEs should discuss and refine this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where did you go to high school?</th>
<th>4 years in the United States</th>
<th>Take the TSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other country*</td>
<td>Take the TSI + ESOL placement test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(*whose primary language is non-English speaking and writing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long have you lived in the United States</th>
<th>More than 5 years</th>
<th>Take the TSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>Take the TSI + ESOL placement test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your visa status?</th>
<th>U.S. Citizen</th>
<th>Take the TSI placement test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F-1 Visa</td>
<td>Take the TSI + ESOL placement test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advising AFTER taking a placement test and before registering for classes:

Collect information during admissions/application process as well as part of the placement testing that can be useful for placement (as well as for internal data collection, grant writing, etc.). Make this data easily available to the counselors and advisers.

This could be a student survey with similar questions to those asked in the following pages of the multiple measures matrix. Students could fill out the questionnaire either as part of the application process, during Orientation (before seeing an adviser/counselor), or before seeing the adviser/counselor. (IHEs need to be sure that the processing of this background information is integrated with the new TSI Assessment testing system in a comprehensive computerized module for easy access by counselors and advisers.)

(Optional) Some institutions will ask students to take a formal inventory measuring discipline and non-cognitive skills as a part of the application process, orientation, or time before registration. Instruments like the LASSI, MSLQ, and MARS are well validated as is the Felder. The Felder is online and free to students. A list and description of options may be found in the literature (Levine-Brown, Bonham, Saxon & Boylan 2008; Saxon, Levine-Brown & Boylan 2008).
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<th>What to look/listen for</th>
<th>Research support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Discern educational levels   | Have you ever attended college before? Where? How long? Where did you attend high school? Type of degree? (home-school, GED, Regular diploma, Dual-credit, etc.) | *Clearly above highest cut score*—possibly ready to enroll in credit classes; use multiple measures to quickly confirm the score and determine placement  
*Immediately above or below the cut score (within the SEM, Standard Error of Measurement)— Carefully examine other measures to determine placement  
Below cut score—Carefully examine other measures to confirm the need for developmental or ESOL classes and to determine the appropriate level  
*************  
*English Reading and Writing scores are at a similar level—expected  
*R/W scores are dissimilar —ask the student why this might be the case.  
*A low reading score may impact the math score — This is a clue the student needs to build reading skills first or concurrently with entry level math course | Recommendation from Rebecca Goosen, San Jacinto College; President, National Association for Developmental Education |
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<th>Research support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess motivation, the most important non-cognitive factor of student success (indicates planning &amp; goal-setting because he/she had to think ahead and make an effort)</td>
<td>Do you have SAT or ACT scores&lt;br&gt;(Not common for community college students)</td>
<td>The placement test score should align with the SAT/ACT scores. If not, ask why not.&lt;br&gt;If the SAT/ACT score is above cut offs, place into credit level classes before Fall 2013. After that date, retest. If SAT/ACT score is below level, use the placement test scores, which more accurately assess developmental skill levels.</td>
<td>Morante (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition to the placement test score, the most accurate cognitive multiple measure... What kind of academic preparation has the student gained?</td>
<td>What was your high school rank?&lt;br&gt;(Research is needed to determine if HS rank is valid 2-3 years after graduation)</td>
<td>Research will be needed to determine the correlation between rank and readiness, which may vary by high school and courses selected.&lt;br&gt;Institutions will need to require students to bring this information to the advising appointment.</td>
<td>Boylan (2009)&lt;br&gt;Belfield &amp; Crosta (2012)&lt;br&gt;Conley (2005)&lt;br&gt;Gordon (1999)&lt;br&gt;Hughes &amp; Scott-Clayton (2011)&lt;br&gt;Morante (1987, 1989, 2012)&lt;br&gt;Scott-Clayton (2012)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(continued)</td>
<td>encourage them to do some significant practice and retest if there is time. May be a good candidate for a non-course based remediation option. <em>Course grade and variations in high school standards will be part of the mix.</em> If the courses are computational or business math in nature, they will most likely test into Developmental Math. Give them encouragement to do well there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation, will, study skills, navigating the system</td>
<td>Did you take a study skills type of class in high school or on your own?</td>
<td>Yes – What did you learn or remember? How have you used what you learned?</td>
<td>Conley (2005) Morante (2012) Sedlacek (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
<td>What do your family members think about you going to college? What potential barriers may limit your success? (transportation, child care, other?)</td>
<td>Listen for possible barriers to success as well as responsibilities with children or other family members. Use the conversation as an opportunity to connect the student with a campus mentor and/or recommend campus support. Take responsibilities and barriers into consideration when discussing how many classes to attempt.</td>
<td>Boylan (2009) Conley (2005) Morante (2012) Sedlacek (2004)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Work responsibilities                         | Do you have a job? Are you planning to seek employment this semester? If so, how many hours do you work? How steady and dependable is your work schedule?                                                                                                                                            | *Listen for possible barriers to success. Is he/she working to buy an iPhone or to pay for a mortgage or support self or family? *Get a feel for the commitment of hours, especially when discussing how many classes to attempt.  
*Consider hybrid or online options for those with variable schedules, taking into consideration access to computer and Internet, computing skills, learning style, self-motivation, etc. | Morante (2012)  
Sedlacek (2004)                                                                                                  |
| Veteran’s issues and responsibilities         | Have you ever served in the armed forces?  
Are you the spouse of a veteran?                                                                                                                                                                                                       | If “yes,” discover if the student has any special needs, and refer to a mentor and/or institutional veteran support.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Recommendation from Rebecca Goosen, SJC                                                                 |
| Maturity and motivation                       | How willing are you to take advantage of campus support like advising, tutoring, SI, etc. When do you plan to use them?                                                                                                                  | Willing – indicates maturity and motivation  
Not willing or doubtful of need – may indicate selecting classes with embedded interventions will be the best option                                                                                                                                                                                | Boylan (2009)  
Conley (2005)  
Sedlacek (2004)                                                                                                      |
| Motivation and goals                          | Have you selected a career and a major? What was your thinking and discovery process? How long will it take to completion and what is your plan to complete? Do you have work experience in that field?                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Morante (2012)  
Recommendation from Rebecca Goosen, SJC  
Sedlacek (2004)                                                                                                        |
### Objective

#### Related academic skill levels

- Do you have access to a computer? How often do you use a computer? What is your experience with the Internet? How do you use media to contact friends? (Facebook, etc.)

- Listen for access, skills, barriers


#### Other factors

- Do you have any other factors that we need to take into consideration for placement?

- Listen for any special needs or accommodations.

Recommendation from Rebecca Goosen, SJC

### Matrices for Placement: Ideas from briefly annotated literature

**Note from THECB Advisory Committee: Matrices for Placement** – While there is general agreement in the literature that multiple measures should be used for placement as a best practice, we could find no published matrix. However, since large numbers of institutions report high levels of placement efficacy (i.e. 80% or greater placement accuracy as reported on Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Surveys in an application of the consequential method of validity [Venezia, Bracco & Nodine 2010]), we assume that training for advisers and counselors is available and effective in conjunction with mandatory placement testing. There may be many ways to do this. However, we hold to the principle that the important decision about student placement should always take into account multiple measures.


**Boylan recommends mandatory testing and placement.**

Boylan (2009). *Targeted intervention for developmental students (T.I.D.E.S.).* Journal of Developmental Education, 32(3), 14-23. *The author “calls for a holistic process that will use both cognitive and affective assessments to target remedial courses and other services.” “Multiple measures [including academic, diagnostic, and affective domains] could be useful in referring students to interventions likely to improve outcomes.” “Assessing skills and characteristics, plus high quality advising can guide appropriate interventions.” Assessing placement efficacy should be done with a faculty survey of student placement.*
Annotated Bibliography (cont.)

College Board recommends using the new Diagnostics instrument in high school to assess progress, indicate a need for remediation, and prepare for the placement test.


Gordon, R.J. (1999, January). Using computer testing and multiple measures to ensure that students are placed in courses appropriate for their skills. Paper presented at the North American Conference on the Learning Paradigm, San Diego, CA. Gordon advocates adding non-cognitive questions to the computer test itself, and some questions ask about history in high school including GPA, class rank, and course lists.


Morante, E.A. (1987). A Primer on Placement Testing. New Directions for Community Colleges. Fall 1987, p.53-67. Defines which tests should be used, how they should be administered, and how they should be used.


Venezia, A., Bracco, K. R., & Nodine, T. (2010). One shot deal? Students’ perceptions of assessment and course placement in California’s community colleges. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. California is required by law to use multiple measures. 85% of institutions surveyed use questions embedded within the testing instrument. Placement accuracy is evaluated using faculty surveys of student placement in most institutions
How to Do a Faculty Assessment of Student Placement Survey

1. Notify instructors and stakeholders about the survey along with a brief explanation of the purpose, aim, questions that will be asked, and due dates. (samples are included)

2. Prepare the survey means (electronic, or scantron, or paper), list of faculty to be surveyed, and class rosters as of the institution’s Day of Record.

If the survey is electronic, the instructor will click a link to each of their rosters. A brief explanation of the survey is at the top. Under that is a list of students in the class section. Next to each name, there are two options:

Yes – the student was accurately placed
No – the student was not accurately placed

If the answer is “No,” a menu pops up asking:
No – the student should have been placed up one level
No – the student should have been placed down one level

Institutions may choose to follow up with a second menu option:
-Should have been placed in an ESOL section

3. At the beginning of Week 4 of the semester, distribute the survey instructions and rosters to Developmental English and Reading, Developmental Math, Freshman Composition, and College Algebra instructors if College Algebra is the first credit-level math course.

4. Faculty members complete the survey and return it by the end of Week 5 of the semester.

5. Institutional research or staff remove the students who are not first semester, first time in college students (such as repeaters, transfers, dual-credit, second/third semester students, and students who were shifted to other classes after first week in-class assessment, etc.). The tally is a simple percentage.

% placed correctly in each Developmental English class
% placed correctly in each Freshman Composition class
% placed correctly in Developmental Math
% placed correctly in College Algebra

Note: Students in the lowest levels of Developmental English and Developmental Math who are rated “Should have been placed down one level” are judged as “accurately placed” because there is no lower class available.

College systems should report their individual campus results as well as the aggregate results.
Accurate placement is important in all semesters. This easily scaled idea from Pamelyn Reed, Lone Star College-CyFair, has scaled up to many classes at all levels at campuses like University Park in the college system. Faculty use this handout to spend five minutes or more of class time immediately before the start of registration. They talk to students about the next class in their discipline, course delivery options, college/work/family balance issues, and answer questions. It’s a great idea that would benefit Texas students, but the power of this results when ALL faculty participate!

Get a JUMP-START on ADVISING!

Faculty want to help you get your BEST START with these helpful hints.

Summer classes at University Park fill quickly with students coming home from their other schools. Register early for your best selection of classes!

16-Week Classes: Morning? Afternoon? Evening? MWF or TTh?
When is your learning capability at its best? Early morning? After 3 pm? Learning takes concentration and focus. Think about how you are as a learner, and create a schedule that maximizes your abilities for success!

Online Classes
Rigorous content, homework, exams, and quizzes are done online
Course content requires dependable Internet, online reading and time online
Exams must be taken in a proctored location like our campus Assessment Center or a center at another campus or library.
Perfect for students who like to learn independently and who read well

Hybrid Classes
Combination of faculty-led instruction and online learning
Perfect for students who can learn independently but would benefit from regular face-to-face contact with an instructor and classmates

Summer Classes, Fast Track Classes, Mini-mester classes
All classes cover the same material as Fall and Spring semesters, but these classes are taught with an accelerated pace.
Plan to spend between 4 – 10 hours per week to study and complete homework.
Students who failed the class before should carefully consider the speed & time
Math students tend to do better in summer because they are immersed.

Note: If you pre-register but withdraw or make a grade of IP or F in your current class, it is your responsibility to drop the class you pre-registered for and re-take your current class. Pre-requisites are checked and enforced immediately before classes start.

College vs. Job Responsibilities

Full Time load:
Mini-mester – one course
Summer I & Summer II – two courses
Fall Semester (Aug-Dec) & Spring Semester (Jan-May) - four courses

Balance your time! Recommendations:

- 40 hour job – attempt one class
- 30 hour job – attempt two classes
- 20 hour job – attempt three classes

Register at My.LoneStar.edu
http://lonestar.edu/registration.htm

More Information:
UPAdvising@lonestar.edu
281-401-5370
After his April 19, 2012 webinar on placement, which is now posted on The Texas Network, www.TheTexasNetwork.org, Dr. Edward Morante expanded his presentation by saying that in his opinion, student enrollment should go in the following order. (“IHE” is Institution of Higher Education.)

Suggested Order of Student Enrollment
Dr. Edward Morante

Student fills out an application (IHE collects important data at this time such as race & ethnicity, age, dependent children, veteran, non-native speaker, number of hours working, etc.)

Electronic response from IHE: Welcome, encouragement, strong advice to practice for the placement test + online practice + campus practice (insert non-course-based refreshers here), ticket to take a placement test along with hours, map, etc. This is the time to tell students about balancing college and job/family/other responsibilities, provide links to financial aid, etc. This is a good time to advise students to make arrangements to take any additional instrument that will be added to registration as a multiple variable.

Student practices for the TSI Assessment (placement test).

Student takes a placement test (Scores are handed out at mandatory Orientation; that will ensure orientation is mandatory!)

Response from IHE: Second welcome + thanks for choosing IHE, invitation to Orientation with days, times, place, map

Orientation – Campus tour, balance of college and real life Part 2, advice about selecting course days/times, course delivery options, explanation of scores.
Students whose scores placed them in credit classes have the option of:
* registering in a computer zone with roving helpers/advisers and a list of suggested courses generated from the list stated in the application
* meeting with an adviser or making an appointment to meet
* or they can go home to register online.

Those scoring below the cut score meet with an adviser, who considers the TSI Assessment scores, the TSI diagnostic information (Fall 2013), and multiple variables in a meeting with the student. ESOL students can be assisted. Developmental students can be assisted.

Student registers for classes. Under the general rubric that students don't do voluntary, all this is tied together into the computer registration system. Under this system, registration is permitted only if prerequisites are met. Prerequisites include mandatory testing, orientation, and placement with counseling/advising built into either placement and/or orientation. This is in addition to the reading, writing, math, etc. prerequisites needed for college courses.
College + ISD Cooperation Prepares Students for Placement

In Fall 2008, the NADE Digest article, *El Paso’s College Readiness Initiative: Cooperation at Work* by Dr. Kathy Stein described El Paso Community College’s outreach program to area high schools. The El Paso College Readiness Initiative model has subsequently been duplicated across the country as a wonderful strategy to prepare students for the rigors of college, for accurate placement testing, and to build reading, writing, and math skills to college level before students graduate from high school.

The group began with the aim of reducing the number of students whose first college classes were developmental education classes. It was decided to arrange for all the high school seniors in participating ISDs to take the ACCUPLACER. The project first gathered high school faculty, counselors, data specialists and curriculum directors to actually take the placement test, which Stein described as “an eye-opening experience.” After discussion, four task forces worked on student orientation to the ACCUPLACER, interventions, logistics for testing thousands of seniors, and the technology. Over 3,000 seniors took advantage of the early testing program that year, and by 2007, more than 9,000 students were testing before high school graduation. The El Paso College Readiness Initiative not only developed closer relationships between institutions, but it resulted in some transformation of initiatives to help students like Summer Bridge classes and review sessions integrated with college Orientation. High school instructors use the test results to intervene with students. In this model, everyone wins!


Math Pre-Assessment Study Guide:
Model, Scalable College + ISD Project

An outreach to local Independent School Districts (ISD) took place in Northwest Houston as an initiative led by Lone Star College-Kingwood in spring 2012. Beginning with a college system minigrant for the project, campus leaders met with the leaders of three feeder ISDs to discuss placement testing and college policies for placement. Soon after, high school math faculty members were invited to participate in further discussion, to take a placement test, and to work on a study guide that would prepare students to take the ACCUPLACER. Over a hundred high school and college math instructors enthusiastically embraced the project.

When instructors came together on a Saturday to take the placement test, some attempted to “ace” the test while some purposefully made errors to discover how the instrument worked. Everyone took notes about their experiences. Kingwood math professors John Reutter and Dr. Pat Echols surveyed the instructors and compiled a report, which was presented to the group. Using that information, various websites, and feedback from the interactive discussions, LSC-Kingwood Math Chair Dr. Stephanie Cockrell Doyen compiled a seven page math study guide for the ACCUPLACER, which includes links for practice and review. The study guide is unique because it begins with a brief rationale of why students should review and practice, but it also has a chart that correlates with the study guide:

If you can wait 5 minutes BEFORE taking the mathematics ACCUPLACER, then read the next 2 pages.
If you can wait 1 day BEFORE taking the mathematics ACCUPLACER, then read the next 3 pages.
If you can wait 1 week or longer BEFORE taking the mathematics ACCUPLACER, then read all the remaining pages!

Once the new TSI Assessment is available, this would be a great project to scale up across the state. For more information and to download a copy of the Lone Star College-Kingwood Study Guide, go to: http://www.appskc.lonestar.edu/programs/math/documents/ACCUPLACER.pdf.
# Texas Timeline for New Student Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2012</strong></td>
<td>Items developed and field tested for the new Texas Success Initiative, TSI Assessment, including items for Adult Basic Education (ABE). Analysis of scores, alignment with CCRS, cost effectiveness and efficiency (HB 3468)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2013</strong></td>
<td>Beginning in January--Information gathered by field testing used by teams of faculty experts as they review TSI Assessment questions. Field testing of ABE items continues. Additional teams of faculty experts will recommend standard cut scores between college ready, developmental education and ABE levels (HB 1244). Faculty expert teams also recommend standards for the diagnostic portion. April – Board review of recommended TSI Assessment cut scores May – Upon Board approval, training for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) personnel begins</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summer 2013</strong></td>
<td>IHE personnel training for test administration continues</td>
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<td><strong>Fall 2013</strong></td>
<td>New TSI Assessment, cut score standards, and rules apply to all Texas students effective the first day of IHE Fall semester classes IHEs must offer pre-assessment activity or activities to all incoming students to help prepare them to test (Rule 4.55) Placement decisions must include TSI Assessment scores and diagnostic profile; additional multiple measures recommended such as high school GPA, work hours, non-cognitive profile, etc. Placement includes a Plan for Academic Success (Rule 4.58) IHEs must determine college readiness by performance on one or more appropriate assessments, developmental coursework, or concluding assessment of an NCBO, Non-Course Based Option (Rule 4.59)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Year 2013-2014</strong></td>
<td>TSI Assessment results will be analyzed by THECB and IHEs IHEs report the required components of their Developmental Education Program to the THECB using the DEPS, Developmental Education Program Survey, or other reporting mechanism (Rule 4.62)</td>
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*TSI Assessment must not be used for admissions purposes

◊ Chart prepared with the assistance of Dr. Suzanne Morales-Vale, Texas Higher Education Board Director of Adult Basic and Developmental Education; Terri Daniels, THECB Assistant Director, Developmental Education December 2012
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Dr. Ronald Gordon, (www.docgordon.com) Gordon Associates, who offers expertise in research and assessment as well as conducting research to help set accurate test scores; former Director of Institutional Research, Tulsa Community College; former Director of Research and Assessment, Yuba Community College District, developer of the Placement Accuracy Model

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