THE DANGERS OF UNDERPLACEMENT: REDUCING THE RISK THROUGH INFORMED CONSENT AND GUIDED SELF-PLACEMENT

Strengthening Student Success Conference
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Erik Armstrong (College of the Sequoias)
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A Cautionary Tale from College of the Canyons

In 2016, 71% of students were eligible to enroll directly in college Statistics through multiple measures.

The college gave students two placement options and let them choose between Statistics and a below-transfer algebra course.

Students who chose Statistics passed at a rate of 66%.

But 80% of the eligible students placed themselves into remedial Algebra, even though the vast majority didn’t need it for their major.

Just 13% of these students completed transfer-level math that year – 188 out of 1,438 students.

If you offer developmental courses, they will come, and “Instead of a field of dreams, it’s a field of nightmares.”

– Sab Matsumoto, long-time chair of mathematics currently AB 705-coordinator
In 2016, 100% of students were eligible to enroll directly in college Statistics through multiple measures. Statistics will satisfy math requirements for degree and transfer for the vast majority of students.

But 43% of the students chose to enroll in the lowest level course (Intermediate Algebra) despite heroic efforts by the Math Department Chair and Counseling Department to get students into the right math pathway.

Of the students who chose to enroll in Statistics, 72% passed within one year, but only 32% of those starting in Intermediate Algebra completed transfer-level math in a year.
“Thus, within the timeframe of data availability and given the curricular design and support structures that existed systemwide at this time, we are unable to identify any group of students who complete transfer-level English, statistics, or pre-calculus courses at a lower rate when placed directly into those classes rather than one level below transfer” (4).

From “Comparative Throughput Analysis for AB 705 Compliance: Disaggregation by EOPS and DSPS Student Populations”
A study by the MMAP research team, October 2018
REASONS FOR CONFIDENCE
Citrus College

Students’ First Enrollment in English

Fall 2017

- Remedial: 47%
- Transfer-level: 53%

Fall 2018

- Remedial: 100%

Comparison between Fall 2017 and Fall 2018.
Completion of College Composition at Citrus College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Starting in Transfer-Level (1 term)</th>
<th>Starting in Remedial (1 year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early CA Implementers of Corequisite English 2016-17

Public Policy Institute of California
Completion of Transfer-Level English in One Year

Source: PPIC 2018
Early CA Implementers of Corequisite Math 2016-17

Public Policy Institute of California
Completion of Transfer-Level Math in One Year

Source: PPIC 2018
Completion of English Composition
Multiple Measures Assessment Project

Starting one course below college English (Statewide)

Enrolling directly in college English (Statewide)

Enrolling directly in college English with coreq support (13 colleges)
Completion of Transferable BSTEM Math
Multiple Measures Assessment Project

- **GPA≤2.6 and no precalculus**: 28%
- **GPA≤2.6 & enrolled in precalculus**: 34%
- **GPA≥3.4 or ≥2.6 & enrolled in precalculus**: 54%

**Starting one remedial course below transferable (Statewide)**: 95%

**Enrolling directly in transferable (Statewide)**: 75%

**Enrolling directly in transferable w/ coreq support (1 college)**: 76%
GUIDED SELF-PLACEMENT AT IRVINE VALLEY COLLEGE

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We started with the CTEP. This used to be our only placement tool

Sample Question 1 (Students choose the best sentence)

A. A course outline that can be had in each class.
B. Each of the classes have a course outline.
C. Each of the classes has a course outline.
D. Each of the classes have course outlines.

Sample Question 2 (Students fill in the blank)
Throughout African history, there are many examples of cultures advanced in art, science, and _______.
A. Dance and family structures.
B. government.
C. musical.
D. educating.

Sample Question 3 (Students fill in the appropriate words for the passage)
On June 16, 1934, promptly at three o’clock, the schooner Bowdoin steamed out of Portland Harbor. She was ________ by a large number of boats, ________ and little, power and sail, many ________ dressed with their signal flags flying ________, and all led by U.S. ________ Ossippee.

A. sailed
B. accompany
C. among
D. escorted
Then we went through several versions of GPA placement...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Spring 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer-Level Writing</td>
<td>Placement by test OR 3.0 HS GPA</td>
<td>Placement by test OR 2.6 HS GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Level-Below OR</td>
<td>Placement by test OR 2.6 HS GPA</td>
<td>Placement by test OR 2.3 HS GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer-Level + Coreq</td>
<td>Open access</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerated 1-Level-Below</td>
<td>Open access</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Then came AB 705...
IVC’s Guided Self-Placement Tool

**English**
- Guided Self-Placement Tool for English (Public Share Version)
- Decision Logic for English
- English Course Descriptions

**Math**
- Guided Self-Placement Tool for Math (Public Share Version)
- Decision Logic for Math
- Placement Letter for Math
Guided Self-Placement at IVC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Reported HS GPA</th>
<th>Placement Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.6 and above</td>
<td>Transfer-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.59 and below</td>
<td>Transfer-level with support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No HS GPA</td>
<td>Transfer-level with support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will ultimately decide which courses they will take:

- Transfer level (4 units)
- Transfer level (4 units) + Writing Center lab (.5 unit) = 4.5 units
- Transfer level (4 units) + corequisite support course (2 units) + Writing Center lab (.5 unit) = 6.5 units
What if students are routed to the ESL placement process?

■ Students who are routed to the ESL placement process take two assessments:
  – SLEP: Multiple choice test (125 questions in listening, reading, and writing)
  – Writing Sample: Students read a short paragraph (12-15 sentences) and answer a prompt. The writing sample is evaluated by ESL instructors.

■ Students must complete the ESL placement process or see a counselor if routed there by the guided self-placement process.

■ The ESL placement process can route students to
  – ESL courses
  – Transfer-level + ESL support
  – Stand-alone transfer-level

Student ID: 10

Enrolling in an Academic English ESL course before taking Writing 1 will help you succeed in Writing 1. In fact, students who finish their ESL classes pass Writing 1 at a 93% rate with a B+ grade average (3.20).

Watch student DJ talk about the benefit of Academic English (ESL):

Sign up for the ESL assessment using the link below. You will need to take this ESL assessment before enrolling in classes.

Click here to sign up for an ESL assessment date.

Note: The ESL assessment can also place you directly in WR 1.
Guided Self-Placement – Early Data

- As of September 23rd, 3442 students have used the Guided Self-Placement tool in English.
  - 57% were recommended to stand-alone transfer-level English (with or without Writing Center support)
  - 37% were recommended to transfer-level + support
  - 6% were recommended to ESL placement

- The results so far:
  - Most students who were recommended stand-alone transfer level chose to enroll in that course (with or without Writing Center support).
  - 11% of students who were recommended stand-alone transfer level chose to enroll in a corequisite supported section.
  - 53% of students who were recommended a section with corequisite support chose to enroll in stand-alone transfer level (with or without a Writing Center support course).

Of the 12 students that were recommended a corequisite course that chose to enroll in stand-alone transfer-level writing, 92% were successful (11). The successful students passed with a B average.
INFORMED CONSENT: A PROCESS FOR COMMUNICATING STUDENT RIGHTS

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Access and Information

Law impacts systems: (placement)

Law impacts communication: (inform students)

What questions should our college ask to empower students to make informed choices within our systems?
Informed Consent: A Process for Students & Colleges

■ One way to ensure AB1805 compliance is to adopt a process connected to informed consent.

■ We are broadly defining informed consent as a process where
  - Students can “competently and intelligently”\(^1\) exercise or waive their right to transfer-level courses. This includes, in plain language:
    ■ Clarifying what a pre-transfer course is (a.k.a. not a refresher course)
    ■ Sharing the consequences (longer time, more units, financial aid impact, lower odds of completing transfer-level course, potential impact on degree completion, etc.)
    ■ Being explicit that pre-transfer course enrollment is completely voluntary
    ■ Communicating college support/belief in the student at a transfer-level placement.\(^2\)
  - Students’ free will not “overborne”\(^3\) by the consultation process.

1. Johnson v. Zerbst (1938)
2. In line with FDA Guidelines for informed consent for human subjects and Title 21, Code of Federal Regulations.
Informed Consent: A Process for Students & Colleges

- Colleges gain powerful insights through informed consent processes.
- Institutions learn about students and how/why they make choices.
- Institutions can analyze trends in course enrollments and student demographics before census.
- Information can be analyzed to inform future choices, for both students and the college.
There are several logical reasons why students might not feel or express confidence when choosing college math and English courses for the first time.

Yet when asked, students point to their feelings of confidence or anxiety as a major determinant for their decisions.

Research shows that feelings/internal beliefs about belonging ARE strongly connected to success and persistence.

Research also shows colleges can and do influence these beliefs

(Yeager Et al., 2016)

Confidence (or lack thereof) may be shaped by:

- Feeling of being an outsider/out group
- Past school experiences
- Past messages about their abilities
- Beliefs/assumptions about the rigor or environment within college courses
- Beliefs/assumptions about the expectations and personalities of college faculty
- The role of environment and messaging about academic capacity, especially for members of minoritized groups and underrepresented populations on campus
The Power of Belief and Belonging

Yeager Et. al’s 2016 research suggests that “lay theory interventions” taken by the college can increase student success and persistence by framing feelings of being an outsider as normal and demonstrating belief in their capacity through words and actions.

“Beyond prior preparation, it was not students’ traits or attitudes that predicted success in the transition to college. It was the presence of initial doubt about whether they would fit in.”

“Worries about belonging and potential are pernicious precisely because they arise from awareness of real social disadvantage before and during college, including biased treatment, university policies and practices that inadvertently advantage some groups over others, and awareness of negative stereotypes and numeric underrepresentation”

“When students learned that early difficulties are common and not necessarily diagnostic of a lack of ability or belonging, they showed they could succeed”

Yeager, Et. al, (2016) Teaching a lay theory before college narrows achievement gaps at scale
INFORMED CONSENT IN ACTION

A Tale of Two Colleges
Informed Consent Discussion: College of the Sequoias

SSSC 2018

Functional Task Force 2018

Counseling Votes “No” to Informed Consent Form 2018/2019

Decision to Put Information in SEP, “student requested”

Functional Task Force 2019: No final decision made

Fall 2019: Student rumblings that they were told to take corequisite support, “study lab”
Informed Consent Process: College of the Redwoods

SSSC 10/2018

10/2018 - 12/2018

Discussed and drafted with **students** & GP committee

Information pamphlets for students, video for students, social media dialoguing, counseling and advising handbook

Learn from our data
Monitor extra curricular
Support options and success rates
Support faculty

End of Accuplacer
04/2018

Guided Pathways Committee Discussion 10/2018

Created “ghost prerequisite”/informed consent process for all remedial math courses except intermediate algebra

Adjust enrollment process for Intermediate algebra.
Monitor enrollments within Liberal Arts/Contemporary math And Math for Career Education/Technical fields
Frameworks for Effective Collaboration

From Michael Fullan’s and Joanne Quinn’s *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* (2016)
What questions should our college ask students to empower students to make informed choices within our systems?

What questions do we need to be asking of our institutions to best support our students through their inquiry process?

The process begins by asking questions
AREAS FOR CONCERN
Unnecessary Corequisite Enrollment

- 60% of students surveyed had HSGPA 2.6+
- 66% of students surveyed had 3 years of HS English with B- or better
Uneven Implementation of AB 705

Figure 5. AB 705 by Strength of Implementation

*Implementation is much more uneven in math.*

**Source:** Individual College Course Schedules
"The prospect of some colleges eliminating developmental education while others offer it on an optional basis raises questions about equity: the likelihood that historically underrepresented students will complete transfer-level English could be affected by which college they attend" (17).

From  “What Happens When Colleges Broaden Access to Transfer-Level Courses? Evidence from California’s Community Colleges”

A study by the Public Policy Institute of California, October 2019