Informing Student Assessment and Placement at California Community Colleges

Summary of Statewide Initiatives

The purpose of this document is to define three distinct initiatives that inform effective practices around assessment and placement of California Community College students into courses. These initiatives support the creation of a Common Assessment Platform for California Community Colleges; research and modeling on multiple measures of assessment across the system; and a data warehouse that enables the use of multiple measures in assessment and course placement decisions. Specifically, they are:

The Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Project (STEPS): This project represents both the seminal and ongoing research regarding the use of multiple measures as an effective tool for student placement;

The Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP): This project will result in the development of a data warehouse, a comprehensive analytical model, and fully developed user tools to support school-level analysis of multiple measures for assessment and student placement; and,

The Common Assessment Initiative (CAI): This initiative will leverage the research of STEPS, as well as the data warehouse, analytical model, and user tools developed through the MMPP then create a comprehensive, web-based platform for a common assessment in English, Math, and ESL – with tools based on multiple measures to support faculty and staff in the effective assessment and placement of students.

The three efforts – including key project partners and primary goals – are defined below:

Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Project (STEPS)
STEPS was developed, in part, following an effort at Long Beach City College (LBCC) which, in partnership with Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), sought to improve the success of LBUSD students in English and math courses at LBCC. The study, which was awarded the 2012 RP Group Excellence in College Research Award, used data generated by Cal-PASS Plus of first-time student cohorts linked with high school performance data, to examine predictors of placement and performance at LBCC.

Led by the RP Group, and with support from the CA Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO), STEPS tests the specific transcript analysis methodology utilized at LBCC to examine the value of using transcripts as part of the assessment process. This pilot program engaged additional colleges in performing local analyses to generate campus-specific insight, and to support alignment conversations between the K-12 and community college communities. In
these pilot locations, predictive models using intersegmental data on students who have already taken community college courses were developed. The models developed during the STEPS pilot now support a system-wide analysis of how transcript data predicts the first English and math courses students take and how well they perform in those courses.

**The Multiple Measures Assessment Project**

The Multiple Measures Assessment Project is a collaborative effort led by Cal-PASS Plus and the RP Group, with support from the CCCCO to build a data warehouse, analytic tools and a communications strategy to support California Community Colleges (CCC) in implementing multiple measures of assessment for course placement.

The Multiple Measures Assessment Project has three primary objectives:

1. Develop a secure, large and robust data warehouse to collect, store and analyze multiple measures which will include high school transcript and test data, as well as MIS and placement test data for each community college.

2. Identify, analyze and validate known multiple measures data points, drawing directly from research obtained through the STEPS pilot, and leverage predictive analytic software to identify new data points that can serve as effective multiple measures.

3. Engage ten pilot colleges throughout the process to assist in development of the analytic tools and user interface, and to test the tools and models using local college data supplied through the data warehouse.

**The Common Assessment Initiative**

Butte-Glenn Community College District (Butte), in partnership with San Joaquin Delta College (SJDC), Saddleback Community College (Saddleback), the California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS Plus), and the Academic Senate, will collaborate to develop a comprehensive, common assessment system that utilizes multiple measures of placement and contains informational, test preparation, test delivery, test administration, data collection, and placement guidance and research. The Common Assessment System (CAS) will be developed so as to reduce remediation rates and provide statewide efficiencies for the placement process.

The CAI will widely engage faculty and community college leaders in the development of assessments, the testing platform, the student and faculty experience and related products and tools as part of the initiative. Pilot colleges will also be engaged throughout the development of the CAI to gain local user input and direction.

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