

RESOLUTION FA09.03: SBVC Assessment Process

SBVC English Department

Whereas, assessment must be sensitive to the local student population, and aligned with the local curriculum. This is of paramount importance relative to other values, such as speed of assessment, the ability to use assessment as a tool for marketing, etc.;

Whereas, quality of assessment has clear and direct impact on student success and retention;

Whereas, in the pilot study, only the locally developed test (LDT) results included the assessment/placement of ESL student placement;

Whereas, automated assessment/placement tools (such as AccuPlacer) cannot maintain our quality of assessment due to several inherent weaknesses:

- 1) Automated assessment/placement tools, while perhaps able to measure mastery of sentence-level English, cannot assess other equally important measures of good writing, such as focus (the presence of a thesis or point), support (the depth, breadth, relevance, and specificity of supporting details), individual style (the standardized test placed Shakespeare in ENGL 914), or organization (the logical grouping and ordering of ideas and details);
- 2) Automated assessment/placement tools do not evaluate the ability to assess a student's ability to synthesize ideas and concepts
- 3) Instructors are better attuned to the needs and uniqueness of the local student population and the local curriculum that has been created and calibrated to the special needs of this population;

Whereas, the use of locally developed assessment/placement tests is widely practiced at community colleges: of the 96 CCs which reported to the Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 36 use locally developed placement tests for English (which is 37%), 26 of which are writing samples (which is 25%), while the leader among the automated assessment tools (AccuPlacer) is used by 37 CCs (which is 38%); and

Whereas, the use of a combination of automated assessment tools for placement in basic skills courses and writing samples for placement in college-level writing courses (ENGL 101) is currently utilized successfully by many California Community Colleges and is locally validated by each college;

Resolved, that the SBVC Academic Senate and the District, recognizing that the faculty are the local experts in the assessment and placement of students in their respective disciplines, adopt the following English department recommendations:

- 1) they will not oppose the implementation of the most accurate automated assessment/placement tool based upon the results of the pilot study;*
- 2) the assessment/placement test is validated with the same rigor as the locally developed test
- 3) the English Department faculty set and fine tune the cut scores to ensure placement accuracy;
- 4) the newly adopted assessment/placement process will be able to identify students who exhibit ESL characteristics in English comprehension for further placement testing; and
- 5) there be a writing sample required for placement in ENGL 101 (college level writing) that is scored by the discipline experts.

and;

Resolved, that the SBVC Academic Senate deliver its advice and judgment in this academic and professional matter to the administration and the Board of Trustees.

*"A Comparative Study of Three Assessment Tests at SBVC: Locally Developed Tests (LDTs), AccuPlacer, and Compass," by Dr. James Smith, Office of Research and Planning, August 17, 2009.