

Outside the

Notes from Institutional Effectiveness

S.T.E.P.S in the Right Direction

Our Perspective

The vision of the Department of Institutional Effectiveness is to continuously build and support a culture of evidence through the provision of institutional research studies, effectiveness enhancing methodologies and innovative strategic planning approaches to increase institutional and student performance.

According to the RP Group, California has placed a high value on assessment testing as part of its strategy to address basic skills. The Task Force on Student Success recommendations calls for the implementation of statewide common assessment and several pieces of legislation in the past year has directly addressed the process of assessment in California community colleges. However, given that common assessment is likely to move forward before a statewide definition of college/career readiness is developed, and absent a coordinated approach to basic skills curricula, it may be challenging for colleges to meaningfully coordinate common assessment with their developmental courses. This is particularly of concern given the poor correlation between placement test results and students' performance in college-level courses.

The Chancellor's Office is interested in evaluating the value of transcript analysis as part of a suite of multiple measures that would be incorporated into a common assessment instrument. The California Community College system has a history of calling for multiple measures in addition to placement tests, but by nearly all accounts, the placement test is the primary placement mechanism on most California community college campuses. Studies such as the ones recently released by the Community College Research Center indicate that the use of information contained on high school transcripts, such as GPA and grades in math and English courses, may be a viable option to significantly improve our current placement process. However, this methodology has not been implemented on a large scale in California.

Therefore the RP Group, with support from the Chancellor's Office, is conducting a pilot study that tests a specific transcript analysis methodology that has already been utilized at Long Beach City College. The RP Group will partner with Learning Works to disseminate the results and their implications for statewide common assessment.

This project is called the Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Study (STEPS)

Lassen College participated in the STEPS in late summer 2013 and saw a commonality in outcome with the factors of G.P.A and highest math course completed as predicting variables in student placement. These findings were similar to the findings in the work group in the local region.

