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From the Chair

Welcome to Eleven Update, a newsletter designed to inspire, challenge and assist the members of Commission XI to survive and thrive on a day-to-day basis at their institutions.

Commission XI helps student development practitioners across the nation to anticipate and meet the needs of students, to learn how to identify and remove barriers that prevent students from learning, and to support the teaching-learning process in a positive, pro-active, student-centered manner.

Through Eleven Update, sponsored programs at the ACPA Convention and numerous special projects, Commission XI tries to provide members with roadmaps to the future. Why roadmaps instead of blueprints? Blueprints provide exact scale models of what must be done, while roadmaps act as guides allowing users to view all options and select the one most likely to help them reach their destination. The diversity among practitioners, students and institutions requires that student development practitioners deal with roadmaps rather than blueprints!

As Commission XI chair, my job is to take member input, create roadmaps and distribute copies where they will have a positive impact on two year institutions; to help administrators, faculty members and student development practitioners become aware of the roadmaps; and to encourage everyone to use a student development compass when building or repairing academic roads-- or exploring alternate routes.

As a Commission XI member, your job is to identify goals and suggest ways to get there; discover new roads and shortcuts; tell us when the highway has potholes, detours or dead ends; and suggest good places to rest and recover from the hardships of the journey. How do you fulfill this role? Become a member of the Commission XI Directorate, and join the most effective map builders and pothole spotters in the profession! Write an article for Eleven Update describing the roads you travel. Test your roadmap via a research study and apply for financial support from Commission XI. Rest and recuperate at the ACPA Convention in Indianapolis, then join your colleagues on Sunday, March 5 for "Look Who's Coming to College: Student Affairs and the New Majority."

In addition to articles on assessment, this issue of Eleven Update contains information about how to become more actively involved in Commission XI. Read this information carefully, think about the students you serve and choose to become involved. Share your roadmap, your compass and your knowledge of potholes, detours and dead ends with your colleagues. We need you!

Maggie Culp
Chair, Commission XI

How Useful Are Language Arts Assessment Tests?

An Analysis of Language Arts Assessment Test Data Fall 1988 - Spring 1992

by John J. Stewart
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San Mateo, CA

Editor's Note:

The text of Mr. Stewart's paper is presented in this issue. The tables that accompany the report will not be printed but will be made available upon request to the editor.

Introduction

This report presents the results of research undertaken to determine the extent to which English and Reading placement tests meet the academic and vocational needs of students at College of San Mateo (CSM). Research finding provide important information regarding student academic performance in courses to which students are placed as a result of various Language Arts placement tests.

These research questions were answered through an analysis of College of San Mateo students who took the English Assessment Test (Test of Standard Written English-TSWE) and the Reading Assessment Test (Nelson-Denny Reading Test-NDRT) between Fall 1988 and Spring 1992. A total of 5,588 student records were analyzed. In addition to student academic performance, student perceptions of placement tests are examined as factors which contribute to students' actual success in the Reading and English curricula offered at CSM.

This report examines the following issues:

- 1) general characteristics of the assessment test-taking population;
- patterns in student placement proficiency levels;
- comparison of the academic success of followers and non-followers of placement advice;

- English and Reading course placement and academic outcomes in three curricular areas (basic skills, associate degree, and transfer level course work);
 and
- 5) student perceptions of the accuracy and usefulness of assessment test results to their educational planning.

Characteristics of Language Arts Assessment Test-Takers

Tables 1-3 present an overview of the student test-taking population in terms of students' ethnicity, gender, and age. The following highlights information contained in these tables.

- * Asians and Whites comprise approximately two-thirds (65.6%) of the test-taking population. The remaining one-third is comprised of Hispanics (15.2%) Filipinos (9.2%), Blacks (4.5%), and Others/Unknown (4.4%).
- * Proportionally, there are more men (52.4%) than women (47.6%) test-takers.
- * Recent high school graduates comprise more than one-half (54.2%) of test-takers. Only 10.1% of test-takers are more than 25 years of age.

The following discussion considers TSWE and NDRT test-takers separately.

English and Reading Course Placement Scores Distribution

Tables 7-11 present data examine English and Reading course placement level scores in terms of students' age, ethnicity, and gender. A placement level of 1 or below corresponds to basic skills course work; a placement level of 5 corresponds to baccalaureate level course work. The following highlights information contained in these tables.

- * Generally speaking, a greater proportion of recent high school graduates perform at the higher English and Reading course placement levels (3, 4, or 5) than older students. Conversely, fewer high school graduates score at the lower English and Reading course placement levels.
- * An examination of ethnicity data indicates very clear patterns in the performance of various ethnic groups. Asians/ Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, and Whites score at the higher placement levels for both English and Reading courses (4 or 5) than other ethnic groups.
- * There are only relatively small variations between the English and Reading course placement level scores of male and female test-takers. Variations are less than 5.0% across all levels for both English and Reading.

Comparison of Followers vs. Non-Followers of Placement Advice and Subsequent Academic Success in English and Reading Course Work

Survey data indicate that students who follow placement recommendations are significantly more likely to succeed in their coursework. Conversely, those students who "self-place" into course work--contrary to course placement recommendations-are much more likely to fail in their educational pursuits.

Tables 10-15 compare students who followed their English and Reading course placement recommendations with those who did not ("followers" vs. "non-followers"). In addition, followers and non-followers with different characterisites (ethnicity and gender) are examined in relation to their academic success ("pass" vs. "fail") in subsequent English and Reading course work.¹

- The vast majority of students followed their English course placement recommendations: 89.6% (3212/3584). However, nearly one-third 31.9% of students did not follow their Reading course placement recommendations.
- A comparision of pass/failure rates for followers and non-followers indicate a moderate gain in academic success for followers in both English and Reading course work. For English course work--84.5% pass vs. 68.8% pass; for Reading course work--78.2% vs. 65.4%.
- Table 10 indicates relatively minor ethnic variations in the pass/fail rates for students following placement advice. The proportion of students successfully completing their English course work ranges from a high of 86.5% for Whites to a low of 79.2% for Hispanics. There are somewhat larger ethnic variations for Reading course work: ranging from an 84.4% pass rate for Whites to 64.2% for Blacks.
- Women who follow placement advice are slightly more successful than men in both English and Reading course work.
- Tables 14 and Table 15 examine success rates by English and Reading course work categorized into three levels-basic skills, associate degree, and transfer. These tables show a consistent positive relation between academic success and the academic level of

the course work attempted: students are significantly more likely to succeed at higher level course work than lower levels.

Student Perceptions of Language Arts Assessment Tests: Survey Results

The above discussion examined the academic outcomes of students placed into various levels of English and Reading course

work. Another important element of student assessment is the perceptions of students themselves regarding the placement tests. In order to understand-from the point of view of students--the accuracy and utility of English and Reading assessment tests, a survey of student opinion was conducted during the Spring 1993 semester. Specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- 1) to assess the level of student satisfaction with the Language Arts placement tests and the accompanying course placement recommendations; and
- 2) to determine the extent to which students found placement test information and course placement useful to their educational planning;

In order to meet these objectives, selfadministered questionnaires were given to

446 students enrolled in all areas of skills study within the Language Arts curricula. The results of these studies are presented in the following disucssion.

Overall, the results of the self-administered questionnaire indicate a high degree of satisfaction with

> both the accuracy and utility of the Language Arts placement tests. Language arts assessment test results are used to generate placement recommendations for students regarding the appropriate skill level at which to begin their studies. Survey data indicate that an overwhelm-

ing majority of students felt the Reading placement tests provided both an accurate assessment of their Reading skills (86.5%) and were useful to their educational planning (83.1%).

However, a bare majority (52.8%) of English students felt that the assessment tests provided an accurate evaluation of their skill level and recommended the appropriate course for enrollment. Of those students who felt that the course placement recommendation was not accurate (47.2%), nearly all (96.0%) felt that they were placed in course work below their self-perceived skill level.

In spite of the somewhat mixed opinion of students regarding the accuracy of the English assessment tests, more than two-thirds (69.0%) indicated that assessment test results were of benefit to their educational planning.

Conclusion

With science and technology continuing to play increasingly significant roles in society, it is important that all students, not just those who show special talent or interest, possess the reading and writing skills required for success in the "information age" we are entering. In short, students who possess the skill, literacy, and training essential to the modern world will be able to reap the material rewards that accompany competent performance, and more importantly, be fully enfranchised participants in our national life.

Many students, especially those unfamiliar with higher education, do not fully anticipate the level of quantitative knowledge or literacy skills required for success in college course work. The findings of this study strongly suggest that in terms of student academic success in course placements and from the students' point of view, the Language Arts assessment tests serve as an accurate tool for diagnosing the competencies necessary for success in English and Reading course work. And, to the extent that these tests are accurate diagnostic tools, they assist students in the realization of their educational and occupational objectives.



to

John J. Stewart recipient of the 1992

Commission XI Research Award

Retention and Persistence in the Community College

by Sandra L. Solon, Counselor Laramie County Community College Cheyenne, Wyoming

The community college takes pride in its mission to provide educational opportunities to non-traditional, minority, and underprepared students. The community college offers low cost, convenient programs for students seeking vocational training, associate degrees or preparation for transfer to a four-year institution. However laudable these goals, the community college is faced with serious problems concerning the retention of students enrolled in these programs.

Researchers and administrators have long noted that community colleges have the lowest retention rates of all post-secondary institutions (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Row & Smith, 1992; Gates & Creamer, 1984). An increasing number of critics have questioned whether or not baccalaureate students who attend two-year colleges are as likely to persist to graduation as native students of four-year institutions (Dougherty, 1992). The issue of retention becomes critical when colleges are faced with shrinking recruitment pools and massive national debt leading to funding cuts for education on local and state levels (Smith, 1986). Shrinking resources are creating a demand for accountability and the success of community college programs is being measured in part by student retention and graduation (Rowe & Smith, 1992).

The intent of this paper is to review several community college retention issues, including student and institutional variables, and to suggest ideas for retention programming and further research. The issues to be addressed are: the applicability of current retention models, variables affecting students' decisions to persist or depart, and the relationship of the community college mission to retention.

Applying Popular Models to Community Colleges

Two popular theories which many research-

ers use as a model for their studies are those of Alexander Astin and V. Tinto. Although widely accepted as the definitive studies of college student retention, these theories have limited applicability to community colleges. Both Tinto and Astin conducted their research with traditional students in residential four-year institutions. Research in community colleges has not always supported their hypotheses.

Tinto's model suggests that the decision to drop out occurs when students are not adequately integrated into the social and academic environment of the college, and, that student background characteristics influence the decision to drop out only indirectly through their effects on social and academic integration. Integration produces institutional fit and commitment which lead to the decision to remain in school (cited in Williamson & Creamer, 1988).

Williamson and Creamer (1988) tested Tinto's model on two-year schools using path models to indicate the interactions of variables thought to affect retention. They noted that the definition of retention in Tinto's model did not allow for the community college phenomena of stopping out or transferring to another institution. Williamson and Creamer (1988) concluded that changing the definition of college dropout to reflect the community college experience reduces the impact of integration on persistence.

In another study using Tinto's theory of departure in a community college, Mutter (1992) found that social integration played little partin persistence. The only academic integration variables found to affect persistence were the amount of time spent studying and the amount of interaction with faculty and staff concerning academic and career issues.

Astin's involvement model suggests that factors associated with retention are residence on campus, interaction with peer groups, and full-time enrollment status (cited in Brooks-Leonard, 1991). Bers

(1984) did not find involvement or linkage to be associated with persistence. If, as Bers (1984) stated, "the variable considered so important in current theories of attrition may not be pertinent for community college students" (p. 55), then what variables are related to retention in community colleges?

Gates and Creamer (1984) spoke of the difficulties of determining exactly which student and institutional variables affect persistence or how these variables interact with one another to affect a student's decision to leave. They stated that "none of the variables tested singly or collectively explains variation in retention to practically worthy levels" (p. 45). Researchers have concluded that from 75% (Brower, 1992) to 92% (Gates & Creamer, 1984) of the variation in retention is not accounted for in current studies. However, a look at some institutional and student characteristics, as well as, the mission and function of the community colleges, may shed some light on the dilemma of what does affect retention.

Institutional Characteristics

Gates and Creamer (1984) reached the conclusion that institutional characteristics may account for more variation in retention status than do student characteristics. Astin claimed that community college students have less involvement in school and therefore, a poorer college experience which leads to leaving college. He decried the lack of student housing which he believed offered students opportunities to leave home and become involved in college life (cited in Bers, 1984). Other institutional obstacles to student success in the community college include: weaker academic integration leading to poor attendance, low grades, and lack of interaction with faculty; poor social integration resulting in low participation, fewer friends on campus, and less extra-academic faculty contact; more distractions from family and community obligations; lower faculty expectations result-

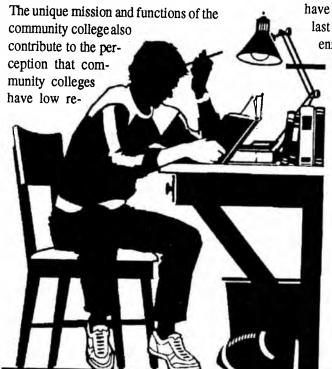
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ing in lower academic standards and less encouragement; poor transfer advising; encouragement to lower aspirations and goals; and difficulties in obtaining financial aid (Dougherty, 1992).

Student Characteristics

Several student characteristics show up as important to retention. The most frequently occurring variables relating positively to persistence are strong career goals and goal commitment (Gates & Creamer, 1984; Mutter, 1992; Williamson & Creamer, 1988; Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Bers, 1984; Rowe & Smith, 1992). Full-time enrollment is also frequently cited as contributing to retention (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Bers, 1982; Dougherty, 1991). Rowe and Smith (1992) found a relationship between occupational personality types and retention. When career choices corresponded to their occupational personality types, students tended to persist in pursuing their goals. Other variables noted are: student intention, socioeconomic status, age, sex, minority status, and educational level of parents. However, none of these variables by itself had significant effect on retention.

Community College Characteristics



tention rates. The open-door admissions policy and lower tuition rates encourage students to attend who are under-prepared or ambivalent about higher education. These students may drop in to test the waters and then drop out if college is not to their liking. Courses offered to update the skills of employees of local businesses will attract students who are interested in specific jobrelated courses and do not intend to pursue a degree. The remediation function will attract students who may transfer as soon as skills are at college level, or who may be at such a low skills level that they will not persist. The non-traditional students may stop out or drop out because of work, family, financial considerations, or job relocation. The transfer function will encourage students to pursue a four-year degree who previously might not have considered a baccalaureate degree. The community college offers important opportunities for educating students who might otherwise not receive training beyond high school. The key is to find ways to retain these students so that they will be able to benefit from these opportunities.

Retention Strategies

A number of interesting retention programs
have been introduced within the

last few years. Summer preenrollment programs for aca-

> demically under prepared students offer courses in remedial Math, English, orientation, study skills, and career planning as well as a few introductory college courses. These programs have proven to affect success and retention rates beyond the first year of college (Garcia, 1991). Orientation programs are another approach that have achieved some success (Donnangelo & Santa Rita, 1982; Jones, 1984; Belcher et al., 1987). Orientation programs focus on teach-

ing students to: use college resources, use the college catalog and handbook, manage time, develop study skills and interpersonal skills, and select courses. Students attending these programs are showing significantly higher re-enrollment rates and higher GPAs. A model introduced by Heath et al. (1991) proposes the appointment of a retention coordinator directly accountable to the president and a steering committee made up of representatives from all of the campus constituencies. Programs formed by the coordinator and steering committee would focus on orientation, identification of high risk students, a student alert system, social integration, student-faculty contact, mentoring, and goal and institutional commitment. The purpose of the program would be to upgrade the quality of education and to improve the experiences provided for students.

Conclusions

As Brooks-Leonard (1991) has indicated, the literature on factors related to retention in community colleges is "strikingly inconclusive" (p. 57). This inconclusiveness makes continued explorations of the many components of retention and attrition an imperative. The inappropriateness of the existing models for use in community colleges points to the need for researchers to design research models, conduct studies. and construct theories that will be consistent with the community college experience. Regardless of the lack of the conclusive data on retention, community college counselors must continue to develop programs based on the most rational data to assist students to successfully achieve their goals. Accurate data must be collected to provide a basis for further research and to provide material for evaluation of existing retention programs. Despite the pressure on the community college to retain enrolled students, the professional must remember their ethical responsibility to assist students to become self-determining. The final decision to stay or leave an institution belongs to the student.

(Footnotes on next page)

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Recruit New Members, Earn Money for Commission XI

ACPA launched a major membership drive on October 1, a drive that could significantly increase Commission XI's 1994 budget. Here is how!

On October 1, commission chairs received new membership brochures, each of which could be personalized with the Commission XI logo. When a new member completes a membership application stamped **Commission XI**, the commission receives \$10 for each new regular member and \$5 for each new member joining at a reduced rate.

Commission XI also receives new money when any ACPA member elects to join Commission XI, whether or not Commission XI recruited the member, since each commission's budget is determined by the number of ACPA members who join the commission.

Each member of the Commission XI Directorate has a few ACPA applications with Commission XI stamped on the front. Matt Moreau (Edison State Community College, Piqua, Ohio 45356) has a substantial supply of the applications which he is willing to share with potential member. If every member of Commission XI recruited one new ACPA member or convinced one current member to join the Two-year College Commission, our budget would double in 1994 allowing the commission to do more for student development professionals in two year institutions. Please take a few minutes from your busy schedules, obtain an application or commission membership form from a directorate member or Matt Moreau, and convince one more professional to either join ACPA or become active in

Commission XI Directorate Nominations

Deadline: DECEMBER 10, 1993

Commission XI.

Commission XI is accepting nominations for its Directorate Body, twenty-four people who define dreams and determine direction for the 800 member commission.

To be a part of this personally challenging and professionally rewarding experience, you may nominate yourself or a friend. Simply call Maggie Culp at (407) 323-1450 ext. 369 or Nancy Tyler at (313) 762-0368.

Commission XI will hold elections in early January and announce the election results in the spring issue of Eleven Update. Nomination forms have been sent to ACPA Commission XI members.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

ACPA Leadership Updates

National Membership Committee Initiatives

The primary activities of the membership committee have focused on the creation and production of new membership marketing pieces and gearing up for the new membership incentive program.

Sarah Albritton and Fred Naijar continue to provide fantastic leadership for our national membership efforts. They have an exceptional group of regional standing committee coordinators who are supported by Jane Furbee at headquarters. For their efforts to be successful, however, they must have the complete support and dedication of the ACPA leadership. Remember, the goal is to recruit 2000 new members. PLEASE MAKE MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION A TOP PRIORITY FOR THIS YEAR!

Executive Council-Executive Committee Relationships

Dr. Celerstein Johnson has been appointed to chair a small task force to review the role and scope of the ACPA Executive Committee and its relationship to the Executive Council. The task force, which includes Rusty Belote and Paul Oliario, will submit its report in October and the recommendations will be shared with the Executive Council in November.

ACPA Personnel Committee

Effective July 1, Terry Williams assumes the role as Chairperson of the Personnel Committee. He has continued to coordinate the performance evaluations of the Executive Director initiated in the Spring 1993 by the prior chairperson, Leila Moore.

Student Learning Project

Dr. Robert Albright, President of Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, N.C. has agreed to join the task force that will develop a new perspective for Student Affairs, one that focuses on student learning. Dr. Albright has been very active in the American Council on Education and was a member of the NASPA group that developed A New Perspective on Student Affairs.

Other members of the task force include: Sandy Astin, Lena Astin, Anne Pruitt, Patricia Cross, Patricia Hutchings (AAHE), Ted Marchese (AAHE), George Kuh, Ernie Pascerella, Jim Hurst, and Charles Schroeder.

"ALL STUDENTS MATTER":

An interactive teleconference on commuter students and adult learners

The American College Personnel Association and ACPA's Commission XVII (Commuter Students and Adult Learners) are proud to present "All Students Matter: Strategies for Making it Happen", an interactive teleconference on commuter students and adult learners for campus leaders. The conference will take place on Thursday, January 27, 1994 between 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. EST, live via satellite from Cincinnati, Ohio.

The video conference will bring together national leaders to discuss services, programs, advocacy and research related to diverse groups of students, with a focus on the commuting student.

The conference panelists include: Dr. Sylvia Ramos, President, Houston Community College, Southeast Campus, Dr. Nancy K. Schlossberg, Professor of Counseling, University of Maryland and Dr. Barbara M. Jacoby, Director, National Clearinghouse for Commuter Programs and the Office of the Commuter Affairs.

University of Maryland. The inclusion of Dr. Ramos on this panel is a direct result of Commission XI's efforts to have community college representation in the teleconference.

Dr. Ramos, her fellow panelists and other participants in the conference will be exploring a number of issues: understanding the unique needs of the commuting student; planning for commuter recruitment and retention; sharing resources for providing and implementing commuter services; translating mattering theory into good commuter, student practice; sharing strategies for changing the institutional climate and culture into mattering environments; and increasing the understanding of methods for realigning delivery systems for commuter students and adult learners.

ACPA members are strongly encouraged to participate in this teleconference and to share expertise they have developed from their dealings with commuter students and adult learners at the community college.

For further information, contact: Sue Witschi, Bowling Green State University, 419-372-8015, 419-372-2300 (Fax); Mary Brigham Hoying, College of Mount St. Joseph, 513-244-4304, 513-244-4222 (Fax); or Virginia Elkins, University of Cincinnati, 513-556-9195, 513-556-3280 (Fax).

This program is sponsored in collaboration with the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, National Clearinghouse for Computer Programs, Association of Continuing Higher Education, and National University Television Network.



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Newsletter of Commission XI
Student Development in
Two-Year Colleges
American College Personnel
Association

EDITOR

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The Eleven Update is published three times per year by Commission XI of the American College Personnel Association. All Contributions to the winter issue should be submitted to the editor by December 10, 1993.

"Indy '94 - ACPA Annual Convention, March 5 - 9, 1994

"Rev up your engines, ladies and gentlemen!" The ACPA Indy '94 Annual Convention in Indianapolis will be here before you know it!

This year's convention theme is Focus on Student Learning: Imperatives for Student Affairs in Higher Education. The theme will be addressed through three program tracks: assessment, collaboration, and learning environments.

ACPA is delighted to announce the confirmation of several speakers for the Indy '94 Convention:

- -Dr. K. Patricia Cross, Professor of Education at the University of California-Berkeley will be the opening session speaker focusing on student learning.
- -Dr. Theordore J. Marchese, Vice-President, American Association of Higher Education, and Dr. Trudy Banta, Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement at Indiana University Bloomington, will be speaking on the issue of assessment.

- -Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, former President of Virginia Union University and North Carolina A & T University, and now Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University and Pastor Emeritus of Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, will challenge our thinking on the issue of collaboration.
- -Dr. Arthur Levine, author of When Dreams and Heroes Die, former member of the faculty in the Higher Education Program, Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, and now President of Milton Hershey School, will discuss learning environments.
- -Dr. George Kuh, Professor of Education, Indiana University Bloomington, will close the convention with a synthesis of the three tracks as they relate to student learning and the role of student affairs.

The ACPA Indy '94 Annual Convention looks to be an exciting and intellectually challenging event! Be sure to be there!



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