Two Year College Association (TYCA) Diana Hacker TYCA Outstanding Programs in English Awards

*1. Submission Category (select one):

<mark>Fostering Student Success</mark>

*2. Title of Program:

Rethinking Placement as Part of Redesigning Developmental Literacy: Using Multiple Measures and Directed Self-Placement to Improve Student Success

*14. Program Description -- Please provide a brief description of your program in 60 words or less.

At Central Oregon Community College, we simultaneously redesigned placement and our developmental literacy curriculum to enable students of diverse backgrounds to achieve their college, career, and personal goals. At the same time, we added a co-requisite seminar option. to FYC. Student success in first-year courses has increased, partially due to curriculum and advising changes implemented along with placement reform.

*15. Program Statement – Please provide a detailed explanation of the program's goals and impact in 1,000 words or less. Be sure to include a description of the program, the purpose, the focus, the target population, the outcomes, and the evaluation process. Remember to consider the five criteria by which the program will be judged (listed on the print version of this form) as you develop your statement.

At Central Oregon Community College, we simultaneously redesigned placement and our developmental literacy curriculum to enable students of diverse backgrounds to achieve their college, career, and personal goals. Our purpose was to help students achieve success in college writing while reducing time and money spent on coursework that did not count toward a degree. To achieve that, we focused on placing students at the highest level at which they could succeed and providing the curriculum and support they need to progress quickly yet effectively through first year composition (FYC). Our target population was students placing below college level writing. Demographically, our students are rural, largely first-generation college enrollees, including 12% Latinx students and 10% Native American and Black/African-American students.

Developed over six years and supported by state and federal grants, our redesigned program centers on

- Accurate placement through multiple measures

- Redesign of course materials that are culturally inclusive, appeal to a variety of disciplinary and professional interests, and cost nothing to students
- Support for students who are nearly ready for first-year composition
- Ongoing training for instructors in teaching reading, working with English Language Learners, and improving instruction in online environments

A state grant funded the exploration of multiple measures placement methods, and a Title III grant enabled us to implement a total redesign of developmental education, including the use of the co-requisite model pioneered by Peter Adams in Baltimore. This work required buy-in and collaboration from many parts of the institution, including admissions and records, the placement office, database management, student services, institutional effectiveness, and interdisciplinary faculty.

Calls for redesigning or eliminating developmental education are cyclical and often ebb and flow in response to poor persistence and retention rates, especially at community colleges. But we did not want to completely eliminate developmental education as some states have done. Our experience in developmental classrooms showed that students benefited from these courses and persisted into college-level coursework, so we began by redesigning placement so that students were taking the right classes. Thereafter, we redesigned the developmental literacy curriculum to provide greater support and align better with FYC, following current best practices.

Redesigning placement

In 2015-16, we piloted the use of multiple measures to adjust placement after students took Accuplacer. A faculty member interviewed those students whose test scores indicated a high achievement in reading and slightly lower achievement in sentence skills. The discussion focused on whether they might benefit by placement into FYC. Interviewers asked about high school GPA, students' most recent writing classes and assignments, reading habits, and comfort level with academic writing. Then, the faculty member and student decided together whether an upper level developmental "review" course or FYC was the best choice. We tracked students who opted for FYC throughout the term to see whether they were successful. While this was labor intensive, we were pleased enough with the results to continue. From fall 2016 through fall 2017, over 50 students completed FYC successfully.

In fall 2017, we created a computer-based directed self-placement (DSP) tool that would replace lengthy interviews and allow us to scale up our plans. The DSP asks students similar questions as the interviews but it includes a reading passage and assessment. Students typically complete the DSP in a few minutes and are given a placement level that corresponds to a course number. In April 2020, the DSP moved online. Because it can be completed remotely, this has increased access for students in rural areas.

Analysis of both pilots also showed that Latinx last names dominated the list of students placed into developmental coursework, indicating something about the inequity of relying solely on Accuplacer. While some students still elect to take Accuplacer, the overall move to DSP has increased the percentage of students who place into college-level courses (see Figs. 1 and 2).
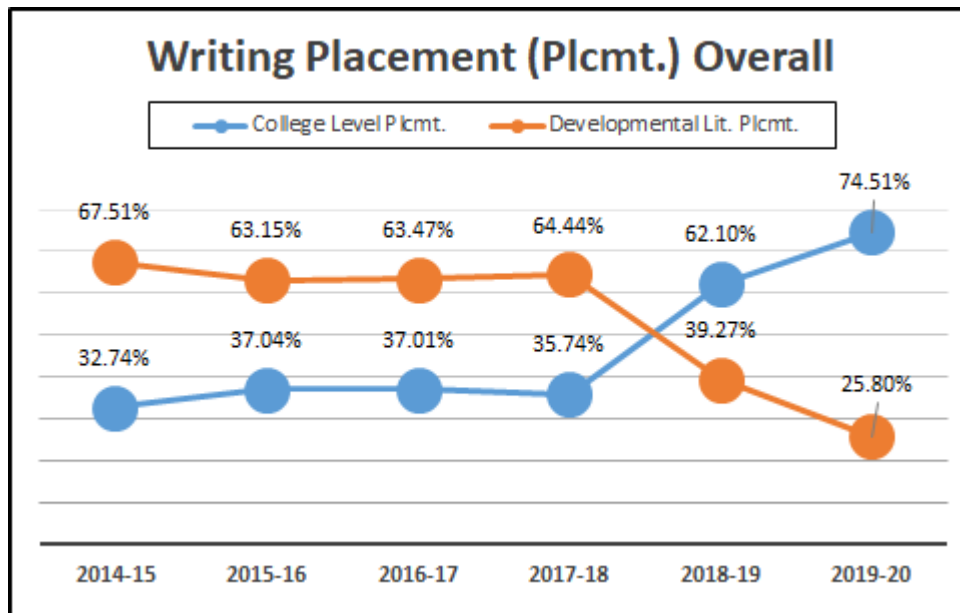

Figure 1. Writing Placement Overall, 2014–2020. Includes Accuplacer, revised placement, and DSP data.
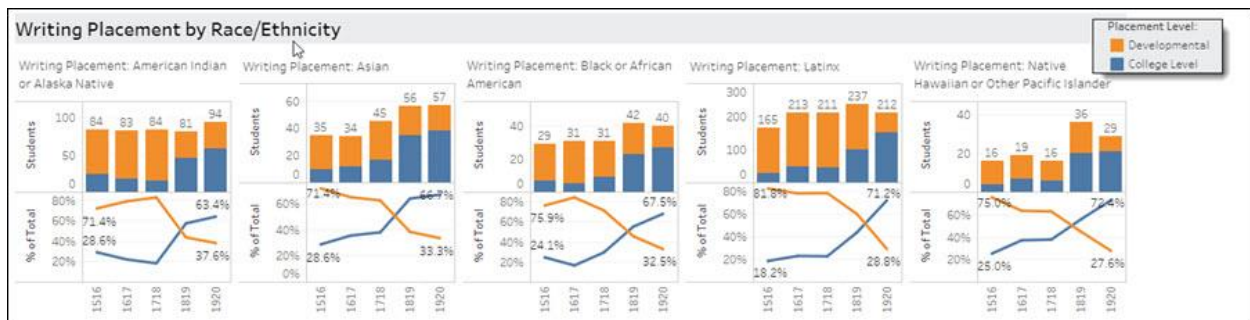

Figure 2. Writing Placement by Ethnicity, 2015-2020. Includes Accuplacer, revised placement, and DSP data.

Creating co-requisite courses

When a statewide Developmental Redesign group recommended creating support courses for students placing into higher levels of developmental reading/writing, we developed a curriculum we call *Writing Seminar*. This two-credit course is linked with a student's FYC and meets immediately after their FYC class. Seminars are limited to ten students and provide

additional time with instructor and peers to clarify assignments, get additional feedback, and discuss both affective (e.g., organization) and non-cognitive (e.g., motivation) skills.We started with two co-requisite sections in fall 2017. By fall 2020, we were offering seven sections, all fully enrolled with waiting lists.

Developmental literacy curriculum redesign

Through this process, we also sensed a need to design a more inclusive curriculum that would (1.) reduce barriers and increase access, (2.) update integrated reading and writing instruction in the developmental literacy curriculum, and (3.) better represent the diversity of our students, of genres, and of our academic disciplines. Our response was to redesign our developmental literacy curriculum as a system of *thematic units* which are structured to appeal to different learning styles. Texts highlight the perspectives/experiences of Latinx, Native American, Black/African American, LGBTQ, disabled, and veteran students, while assignments ask students to recognize, read, and communicate in multiple genres for varied audiences. Furthermore, all materials are OER (i.e. no cost) that are accessible in multiple formats, including screen readers for the visually impaired.

Evaluation

We evaluate our work through quantitative and qualitative methods, collecting completion and persistence data, as well as surveys. Our faculty meet regularly to discuss pedagogy and student success. Thus far, the results have been encouraging: Many more students begin their college careers enrolled in college-level writing and math classes, bypassing the developmental courses that did not count toward degrees or certificates. Student success in first-year courses has increased, partially due to curriculum and advising changes implemented along with placement reform. While we are still assessing the results of these reforms, refining the criteria, and tracking student progress, the data show that this has been a major success for students.