

Goal Statement from our Charter:

The goal of this project is to recommend policies and processes that address the academic needs of under-prepared students and increase success, retention and graduation/completion rates. This project will study the curricular and skill-based aspects of student academic preparedness and developmental education from the college-wide perspective of Academic Affairs and Student Services. This team will make specific recommendations on two aspects of developmental education at MCC: (1) the creation of a comprehensive, coordinated, and cross-disciplinary developmental education program, and (2) mandatory placement into developmental courses based upon the academic preparedness of incoming students.

Topic One: The Creation of a Comprehensive, Coordinated, and Cross-Disciplinary Developmental Education Program:

Recommendations:

- 1. We recommend formation of an MCC Developmental Education Steering Committee. We do not recommend creation of a college-wide developmental education program.**

The Proposed Developmental Education Steering Committee Should Include:

- The coordinators of developmental reading, writing, and mathematics* and one additional faculty member from each of the three developmental education subject areas, plus one developmental computing faculty member. Additional faculty members to be added as necessary.
- One student services professional from Counseling and Student Development.
- The Director of the Learning Center.
- The Dean of Humanities.
- The Dean of Science and Mathematics.
- The Dean of Enrollment Management.
- A representative from Institutional Research.
- The Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

* See 9a1.

Annual Work of the Proposed Steering Committee:

- a. Research and discussion of promising practices in developmental education.
- b. Facilitation (in consultation with the Reading faculty) of text/supplementary material readability studies across the curriculum.

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- c. Analysis of and recommendations for use of Accuplacer data, including regular assessment of how well Accuplacer is predicting student success and adjustment of cut-off scores to improve its reliability.
 - d. Identification of specific student cohort groups that could be targeted with interventions designed to improve their success.
 - e. Publication and dissemination of student success data within MCC and to all stakeholders.
 - f. Recommendations from this committee should go back to the various academic divisions and Student Services areas and go through the usual CPSC process where appropriate.
- 2. As this committee's work will require ongoing institutional support and leadership, we recommend that a developmental subject area faculty member be reassigned time to serve as the Developmental Education Coordinator, through the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, to coordinate meetings and committee review of relevant data.**
- a. This Faculty Coordinator will be responsible for fostering communication between the various academic and Student Services areas and following through on the collection and use of meaningful data so that developmental education at MCC will be improved on an ongoing basis.
 - b. This Faculty Coordinator should work closely with the Vice-President for Academic Affairs to ensure ongoing institutional support for the steering committee's efforts.

Topic Two: Mandatory Placement into Developmental Courses Based upon the Academic Preparedness of Incoming Students:

Recommendations:

While we recommend improvements to several key aspects of student enrollment, testing, placement, and data warehousing and analysis, as well as improvements in some aspects of each developmental subject area, this AQIP team's primary conclusion is that the ability to read with the necessary grade-level comprehension is essential for student success in each developmental subject area as well as in all college-level courses. We are most concerned with the students whose placement tests indicate developmental education is needed in all three subject areas: Reading, writing, and mathematics, but of the three academic deficits, reading is most critical.

- 1. We recommend that MCC establish the pre-requisite reading grade-level comprehension skill necessary for student success in all college-level courses.**

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- a. The process for determining this pre-requisite reading grade-level comprehension must be clear and based on data. This AQIP team does not have the necessary data; however, as the Achieve the Dream (ATD) Core Team is collecting and analyzing this information as part of its work, **we further recommend that the ATD Core Team be charged with establishing MCC's pre-requisite reading grade-level comprehension for all college-level courses and following through with CPSC to make this institutional change.**
 - b. The process for determining this pre-requisite reading grade-level comprehension must include a "fail safe" option (i.e. a backup test) for students.
 - i. Students must be able to re-test with Accuplacer if they believe their test results are inaccurate or do not reflect progress made since the time of the last test.
 - Re-testing guidelines will need to be developed to prevent students from taking multiple re-tests without sufficient time and/or skill building between tests.
 - c. The process for determining this pre-requisite reading grade-level comprehension must be reviewed on a regular basis by the Developmental Education Steering Committee.
- 2. We recommend that faculty in each program or area, in consultation with the Reading faculty and the area dean, participate in the regular review of the reading grade-level comprehension necessary for success in their program.**
- a. Each area or program should establish the appropriate minimum reading level required for success in its program.
 - b. Each area or program should establish the appropriate readability formula to use for analyzing texts in their area and obtain the software enabling them to perform this analysis.
 - i. The readability software required by each program or area should be provided by Information Technology Services, and training sessions for faculty should be conducted by the Center for Teaching and Learning (in consultation with the Reading faculty).
 - ii. Faculty should analyze, via the appropriate readability formula, the grade-level readability of texts and supplementary material commonly used in the program or course.
 - iii. Faculty should analyze, via data from Institutional Research, the link between student success or failure in a course and reading grade-level (from students' original Accuplacer scores or updated scores).

- 3. In its first year, we recommend that the Developmental Education Steering Committee determine a reading and mathematics skill level below which students have no opportunity to succeed at MCC.**
 - a. The Steering Committee should analyze Accuplacer raw scores in reading, correlate them with student success/failure in each developmental subject area, and determine the minimum grade-level reading comprehension skill level necessary for success in all developmental-level courses.
 - b. The Steering Committee should analyze Accuplacer raw scores in mathematics, correlate them with student success/failure in developmental mathematics courses, and determine the minimum mathematics skills necessary for success in developmental mathematics courses.
 - c. Implementation of any such recommendation should go through the regular CPSC process.
 - d. If such a threshold for success is revealed, the committee should work with the MCC Public Information Office to publicize the data throughout the college and the community.
 - e. Potential students whose skills are below the established threshold for success should be directed to alternative options before they are allowed to attempt an MCC degree.
- 4. Our AQIP team is distressed that there are few, if any, educational opportunities in our community for adult students whose skills are below the level necessary for success at MCC. We recommend that the college explore adult education alternatives and partnerships in the community designed to elevate the reading, writing, and mathematics skills of people in our area.**
- 5. Because timely, accurate analysis of students' reading, writing, and mathematics skill levels and subsequent success or failure in courses requires easy access to the relevant data, we recommend:**
 - a. That Institutional Research provides The Developmental Education Steering Committee, faculty coordinators, and deans with Accuplacer raw scores, in addition to the grade-level equivalents, so that the correlation between actual scores and the range of success can be studied.
 - b. That Information Technology Services makes Accuplacer raw score data accessible in the Datatel data warehouse.
- 6. Recommendations for Improving the Student Enrollment Process:**

a. Orientation and Student Success Programming

- i. Require student orientation to be a mandatory step, and emphasize the importance of taking the placement tests seriously (and when students are prepared and rested) prior to students taking the tests.
- ii. Redesign student orientation sessions to provide practical tips on how to be a successful student (emphasizing the importance of daily attendance, doing homework, being realistic about study time/family/work demands, and understanding differences in learning styles).
- iii. Offer skills workshops in reading, writing, mathematics, and computer skills (i.e. on fractions or sentence boundaries, for example) prior to and during orientation, the wait for registration, and Welcome Back week so that students who just need a quick refresher will be less likely to place into developmental courses that they don't really need.
- iv. Investigate and acquire a computer-based instructional product such as A+dvancer that would help students prepare for the Accuplacer tests.

b. Placement Testing

- i. Make more complete and better use of Accuplacer's potential by purchasing the Accuplacer computer skills assessment option, or an alternative, so that students needing developmental computing course work can be identified and placed in that course in their first semester.
- ii. Make placement test scores—the raw data showing the student's score in relation to the cut scores—easily accessible to the Developmental Education Steering Committee and advisors, counselors, and faculty charged with placing students into classes or assessing the reliability of cut scores.
 - It is especially important that raw reading placement scores are shown since currently, Accuplacer rarely places students below a fifth-grade comprehension level, yet students' true reading ability may range from functionally illiterate through grade five.
- iii. Analyze and adjust cut-off scores as necessary following Accuplacer guidelines and with faculty involvement.
- iv. Give students an immediate printout of their placement recommendations (not the raw score but the recommended courses) with explanations of what the recommended courses offer.
- v. Redesign the writing placement process to ensure that only writing faculty with sufficient and current MCC developmental writing experience assess the placement essays and recommend specific developmental courses.
 - The placement reader will need to be provided with the students' Accuplacer raw scores in reading and writing as well as the cut scores for the separate reading and writing courses.

- vi. Reconfigure the placement testing facility to improve the testing environment, making it quieter and more comfortable.

c. Promoting Student Success by Ensuring First Day Attendance

- i. Eliminate late registration (no registration permitted the day a class begins), except when necessary to transfer students between levels in a subject area.
- ii. Drop students from the class roster if they are absent on the first day of class.

d. Advising

- i. Require students testing into developmental courses in all three subject areas (e.g. "triples") to see a counselor or specially-trained advisor for advising prior to registering for classes.
- ii. Require that such students see a counselor or specially-trained advisor for advising each semester prior to registering for classes until they have passed all of the required developmental course work.
- iii. Establish coordination among advisors to improve the consistency of the advice, and improve the process by which advisors sign up for hours so that everyone who advises students does so frequently enough to stay up-to-date and knowledgeable. We recommend that a minimum number of hours be required if someone chooses to advise. (Currently, there are 60-70 part-time advisors, some of whom may advise only one hour per semester while others may advise 400 hours per semester.)

e. Mandatory Placement

- i. Require students testing into developmental writing to take and pass that developmental course, or sequence of courses where applicable, prior to enrolling in a college-level English course.
- ii. Require students placing into developmental course work in reading, writing, and mathematics ("triples") to take only developmental course work in their first semester.
- iii. Require students testing into a developmental computing course to take that course in their first semester.
- iv. Require students testing into one or two developmental courses (e.g. "singles" and "doubles") to take at least one developmental course in their first semester and complete all developmental course work within their first year.

7. Recommendations for Improvements in the Reading Program

- a. The Reading Coordinator serves on the Developmental Education Steering Committee.

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- b. The Coordinator and reading faculty work with Institutional Research and Information Technology Services to design a new electronic system of student-success record keeping that is accessible by Datatel.
 - This will enable faculty to update students' reading grade-level comprehension at the end of each semester in a format accessible by advisors, counselors, and Institutional Research.
 - c. The Reading faculty work with Information Technology Services to automate the Nelson-Denny reading skills test, which is used to place students into the appropriate levels of RDNG 016 and 030 (i.e. RDNG 010, 012, and 014).
 - d. Study, and correct if necessary, the correlation between Nelson-Denny scores and Accuplacer cut scores for reading courses.
 - e. Add basic computing skills as a co-requisite for RDNG 016 and 030 (students might test out through the Accuplacer computer skills assessment or take the COMG 099, Computer Fundamentals, class).
 - f. Consider opening a reading tutoring center and explore how to set one up.
 - g. Explore ways for the reading and developmental writing faculty to work together to accelerate student progress through their developmental course work.
- 8. Recommendations for Improvements in the Developmental Writing/English Program:**
- a. The Developmental Writing Coordinator serves on the Developmental Education Steering Committee.
 - b. Redesign the writing placement process to ensure that only writing faculty with sufficient and current MCC developmental writing experience are assessing the placement essays and recommending specific developmental courses.
 - The placement reader will need to be provided with the students' Accuplacer raw scores in reading and writing as well as the cut scores for the separate reading and writing courses.
 - c. Require students to take the writing course into which they place, unless the student chooses to take a lower level course. Further, require students to pass the pre-requisite developmental course or courses, where applicable, before they enroll in English 101.

- d. The coordinator and faculty in developmental writing work with Institutional Research and Information Technology Services to design a new electronic system of student-success record keeping that is accessible by Datatel.
 - This will enable faculty to record course recommendations at the end of each semester in a format accessible by advisors, counselors, subsequent writing teachers, and Institutional Research.
 - This will enable English faculty to record, in an accessible format, results of the “diagnostic” writing sample that they collect at the beginning of the semester to verify proper placement of entry-level writing students.
 - The new process for recording diagnostic results must be simple and fast for faculty to use in order to assure widespread compliance.
- e. The coordinator and developmental writing faculty redefine and standardize the skills students must demonstrate (in English 098 and 099) in order to earn an “S,” thereby clarifying that an “S” always means a student is ready to move forward to the next writing course.
 - This will enable Institutional Research to create an accurate “success funnel” that can be analyzed for program improvements.
 - This will facilitate new developmental writing teachers’ understanding of how to plan their courses and measure student learning, thereby bringing more program continuity as the department grows to meet increasing student need.
- f. The English faculty and Dean of Humanities explore ways to accelerate student progress through developmental writing course work and improve retention.
- g. The Writing Center staff (led by the Writing Center Director), collaborate with the Learning Center staff more closely to explore using the Writing Center for supplemental instruction (intensive tutoring) of selected students on a regular, appointment basis.
- h. The reading and developmental writing faculty explore ways to work together to accelerate student progress through their developmental course work.

9. Recommendations for Improvements in the Developmental Mathematics Program:

- a. Create and fund a structure for supporting developmental mathematics as a program with special needs within the mathematics area.
 - i. Developmental mathematics is the only MCC developmental program without a faculty coordinator responsible for leading teachers through an ongoing process of reflection and program improvement. We

recommend that a developmental mathematics coordinator position be created and maintained.

- ii. As a subdivision of the mathematics area, similar to the developmental writing program's status as a sub-division of the English area, the new developmental mathematics program should be encouraged to review and improve developmental mathematics course offerings and to collaborate to foster collegial discussion of developmental mathematics' students' needs.
- b. The developmental mathematics faculty and Dean of Science and Mathematics explore ways to accelerate student progress through developmental mathematics course work and improve retention.
 - c. As in reading and developmental writing courses, the class size in developmental mathematics courses should be reduced, through the CPSC process, to reflect the students' need for more individualized attention. We recommend that the class size be reduced from 34 students to 25, which is the class size maximum in reading and developmental writing courses.

10. Recommendations for Improvements in Data Systems

(Most of these recommendations are repeated in other areas of this document, but we would like to highlight them, here).

- a. Make Accuplacer raw score data accessible in the Datatel data warehouse.
- b. Make placement test scores—the raw data showing the student's score in relation to the cut scores and grade-level equivalents—easily accessible to the Developmental Education Steering Committee and advisors, counselors, and faculty charged with placing students into classes or assessing the reliability of cut scores.
- c. Add Accuplacer raw scores in reading, writing, and mathematics to the Class List data available to faculty through Secure Log-on.
- d. Institute a "red flag" system in registration to ensure that students not meeting the pre-requisites of a course cannot enroll in that course.

11. Other Recommendations:

- a. Change MCC's course schedule and catalogue abbreviations to eliminate developmental students' confusion over TR, NTC, and SLBC. (Developmental students frequently miss all or part of the first week of class because they do not understand the abbreviations).

- b. Support the increased need for developmental courses by opening more sections and hiring qualified, competent, full-time developmental faculty to staff those sections.
- c. Change the current practice of requiring developmental program coordinators to teach a full load of classes in addition to coordinating the program to reflect the time-consuming nature of working with developmental students and leading an on-going process of program review and faculty support.
- d. Support supplemental instruction centers (such as the Writing Center, the Math Empowerment Center, and the proposed Reading Center) with compensated coordinators and increased number of qualified tutors.