Academic, Demographic, and Writing Attitude Correlates of Student Directed Self-Placement Into Freshman Composition Courses: Some Tentative Preliminary Findings

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Overview

- Differentiate between test-driven and self-placement models
- Brief examination of the CSUCI Directed Self-Placement model as an alternative to the CSU test-driven model
- Report preliminary results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the self-placement model at CSUCI
The Concept of Directed Self-Placement

• Assessment-driven models situate *models* at the center of students’ educational experiences by judging, critiquing and evaluating students’ skills and competencies relative to an agreed-upon set of criteria and standards.

• Self-placement models situate *students* at the center of their own educational experiences by asking them to judge, critique and evaluate their own skills and competencies relative to an agreed-upon set of criteria and standards.
Directed Self-Placement at CSUCI: First Semester English Course Choices

• **English 102 Stretch Composition I (3 units)** Three hours lecture per week. Focuses not on “finished products” but rather on helping students develop strategies for using writing to construct meaning – which in turn assists in generating thought-provoking discourse for the intended reader. Upon completing this course, students will have learned that all writing involves a recursive process of thinking and writing strategies often referred to as peer review, invention, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. This is the first in a two-course sequence, ENGL 102, ENGL 103.
Directed Self-Placement at CSUCI: First Semester English Course Choices

• **English 105 Composition and Rhetoric (3 units)** Three hours lecture per week. Introduction and practice in writing university-level expository and persuasive prose. The subject matter of the course will be thematic and variable. The focus of the course is development of proficiency in conceptualizing, analyzing and writing academic papers. Substantial writing is required. This course may be linked with another lower division course, in which case the student will enroll in both courses. May be linked to another lower-division GE course. GenEd: A2.
What Does “Directed” Mean?

- Students attend an orientation that explains the program and their options
- Students are given guidelines to consider in making their decisions
- Students’ decisions are absolute and final; the decisions are not overruled or undermined by the well-intentioned (i.e., English Placement Test, statistical prediction models, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, family members)
**Consider the Stretch Sequence if you . . .**

- Consider yourself an average reader and writer
- Do not feel ready to jump right in and begin with a documented research paper
- Want to learn more about revising your writing based on feedback from others
- Don’t feel very confident giving advice to other writers
- Could use some instruction on using the library and developing effective research skills
- Would prefer to slow down a bit and work on your writing at a steady pace
- Could use some brushing up on the rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling
Consider English 105 if you . .

- Think of yourself as a strong reader and writer
- Feel comfortable beginning a writing course with a documented research paper.
- Know how to revise your writing based on feedback from others
- Feel comfortable giving substantive feedback to other writers
- Already possess solid library and research skills
- Are immediately ready to work at a quick pace
- Are confident about rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling
How Would You Know if Self-Placement Models Work?

- Do student-based and test-based placements agree in their placement recommendations?
- How do students who elect Engl 102/103 (Stretch option) differ from those who elect Engl 105 (Standard option)?
The Research Questions

- What is the relationship between self-placement and EPT-based placement?
- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ on selected demographic characteristics?
- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ on selected personal characteristics?
- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?
Data Sources

- Official records from CMS/PeopleSoft database
- The CIRP/HERI Annual Freshman Survey
- Directed Self-Placement Study Questionnaire
  - Writing Apprehension Test, Writing Self-Efficacy Test, Inventory of Processes in College Composition
  - Ego-Resiliency Scale, Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Impression Management Scale
  - Everyday language use
Research Participants

- 127 (63%) English 102 students and 76 (37%) English 105 students
- 103 (53%) females, 83 (41%) males and 13 (6%) missing
- 93 (46%) Euro-American, 43 (21%) Latino or Mexican American, and 5 (3%) African American students; 62 (30%) declined to state or come from other backgrounds
- Ages ranged from 17 to 21, with M = 18.5 years and SD = .5 years
Research Question I

- What is the relationship between self-placement and EPT-based placement? $\chi^2(1, N = 203) = 15.67, p = .001, (\kappa = .27)$.

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<th>EPT-Based Placement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>English 102 (Stretch)</td>
<td>103 (71%)</td>
<td>24 (41%)</td>
<td>127 (63%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>English 105 (Standard)</td>
<td>42 (29%)</td>
<td>34 (59%)</td>
<td>76 (37%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145 (71%)</td>
<td>58 (29%)</td>
<td>203 (100%)</td>
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Research Question II

- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ on selected demographic characteristics?
- No differences in
  - Mother educational level, father educational level, gender or age
- Differences in
  - Ethnicity ($p = .006$; more Latino/Mexican American STRETCH than STANDARD students)
  - Yearly family income ($p = .001$)
Research Question III

• How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ on selected personal characteristics?

• No differences in self-reported levels of:
  – Artistic ability, computer skills, cooperativeness, drive to achieve, emotional health, mathematical ability, leadership ability, intellectual self-confidence, risk-taking, persistence, physical health, popularity, religiousness, self-understanding, social self-confidence, spirituality, understanding of others

• Significant differences in self-reported levels of:
  – Academic ability ($p = .003$), creativity ($p = .05$), public speaking ability ($p = .001$) and writing ability ($p = .002$)
Research Question IV

• How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?

• Inventory of Processes in College Composition (Lavelle, 1993) assesses writing in terms of Deep and Surface Writing characteristics

• “The basic distinction is between a deep, meaningful approach based on seeing the task as a whole and proactive engagement in learning, and a surface approach based on reproduction of information and memorization” (Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001, p. 374).
Research Question IV

- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?

- Inventory of Processes in College Composition (IPCC; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001)
  - Elaborationist Scale (α = .88) - “marked by a search for personal meaning, self-investment, and by viewing writing as symbolic, a deep personal investment” (p. 376).
  - Low Self-Efficacy Scale (α = .68) - “describes a highly fearful approach based on doubting ability and thinking about writing as a painful task” (p. 376)
Research Question IV

- **Reflective-Revision Scale** ($\alpha = .50$) - “describes a deep writing process based on a sophisticated understanding of revision as a remaking or rebuilding of one’s thinking . . . [it] implies willingness to take charge in writing to make meaning for oneself and for the audience” (p. 376)

- **Spontaneous-Impulsive Scale** ($\alpha = .59$) - “profiles an impulsive and unplanned approach . . . Overestimating skill and fear of fully dealing with what the writer perceives as limitations; the approach is defensive.” (p. 376).
Research Question IV

- **Procedural Scale** ($\alpha = .49$) - “a method-driven strategy based on strict adherence to the rules and a minimal amount of involvement“ (p. 377).

- **Findings:**
  - Elaborationist (STAND > STRETCH, $p = .012$)
  - Low Self-Efficacy (STAND < STRETCH, $p = .001$)
  - Reflective-Revision (STAND > STRETCH, $p = .021$)
  - Spontaneous-Impulsive (STAND > STRETCH, $p = .034$)
  - Procedural (STAND < STRETCH, $p = .012$)
Research Question IV

• How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?

• Writing Apprehension Test (Daly & Miller, 1975)
  – ($\alpha = .89$) (STAND < STRETCH, $p = .001$)

• Writing Self-Efficacy Test (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994)
  – ($\alpha = .94$) (STAND > STRETCH, $p = .005$)
Research Question IV

- How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?

- Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983)
  - ($\alpha = .88$) (STAND = STRETCH)

- Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)
  - ($\alpha = .89$) (STAND = STRETCH)

- Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Impression Management Scale (Paulhus, 1991)
  - ($\alpha = .74$) (STAND = STRETCH)
Research Question IV

• How do STANDARD and STRETCH students differ in their approach to writing and composition?

• Ego-Resiliency Scale (Klohnien & Bera, 1996)
  – \( (\alpha = .81) \) (STAND > STRETCH, \( p = .017 \))
  – Confident optimism, productive and autonomous activity, interpersonal warmth and insight, and skilled expressiveness
Some Tentative Conclusions

- Self-based and test-based placement methods yield considerably different placement results.

- Self-placement methods are sensitive to socioeconomic status variables (e.g., ethnicity and income) but insensitive to other demographic characteristics such as gender and parent educational levels.

- Students’ placements are consistent with their self-ratings of appropriate personal characteristics (academic ability, creativity, public speaking ability, writing ability).
Some Tentative Conclusions

- Students’ placements are consistent with their approach to writing, with STRETCH students employing a Surface Writing approach while STANDARD students more often employ a Deep Writing approach.

- Students’ placements are consistent with their levels of writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension.

- Students’ placements are consistent with their levels of ego-resiliency (Confident optimism, productive and autonomous activity, interpersonal warmth and insight, and skilled expressiveness).
Some Next Steps

- Same analyses with EPT-based placement as the “independent variable”
- More data collection and the creation/validation of analytic and longitudinal data sets for further analysis
- Analyses based on classification in the four cells of the Self-Placement X EPT-based Placement matrix
- For an expanded e-copy of this presentation, email me at: Harley.baker@csuci.edu