

**Student Services Program Review Report
Sierra College, 2018-19**

Department: Assessment Testing

Date Submitted: February 18, 2020

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1) Relevancy:

1a) The Sierra College Assessment and Testing Center is dedicated to guiding students into courses in which they will have the greatest chance for academic success. Assessment is responsible for providing information about course placements, prerequisites and relevant counseling and academic support. With the passage of Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705), the Assessment Center provides placement options, but no longer requires students to take the placement test for English and math.

1b) The Assessment Center supports the district mission by helping academic departments ensure students are placed appropriately into courses, or have met the prerequisites to courses that will meet their educational goals and achieve their degree(s). Current placement practices are intended to measure skills which research has shown to be closely related to academic success. Since the Fall of 2010, the Assessment Office has been using high school transcript information to place students into English and math courses. This method of placement, called multiple measures, is the primary method used for placement today. For English as a Second Language (ESL), we still rely on a standard assessment test for placements; for Chemistry 1A placement, the Assessment office proctors the Chemistry Diagnostic Test once a week.

1c) The Assessment Center continuously examines administrative effectiveness and seeks better procedures to support student retention and success. On a daily basis, the Assessment office provides students with well informed and clearly directed services from college entry to ongoing academic support such as campus resources and questions regarding course registration and prerequisites.

In January 2018, AB 705 went into effect which requires California Community Colleges to maximize the probability that students will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within one year and require placement into remedial courses only when they are 'highly unlikely to succeed' in transfer-level coursework.

With the new legislation, there have been significant changes to placement methods and to course offerings in English and math. Starting in January 2019, the Assessment center stopped using Accuplacer placement tests for English and math. Course offerings in basic skills significantly decreased, while transfer-level courses were modified to include a co-requisite support course. The objective for these changes is to increase student entry and completion of transfer-level coursework in English and math within the first year. Data showing improved success rates are promising (Charts 1.1 and 1.2). In an effort to address student equity and close the achievement gap, the new method of placement may increase graduation rates.

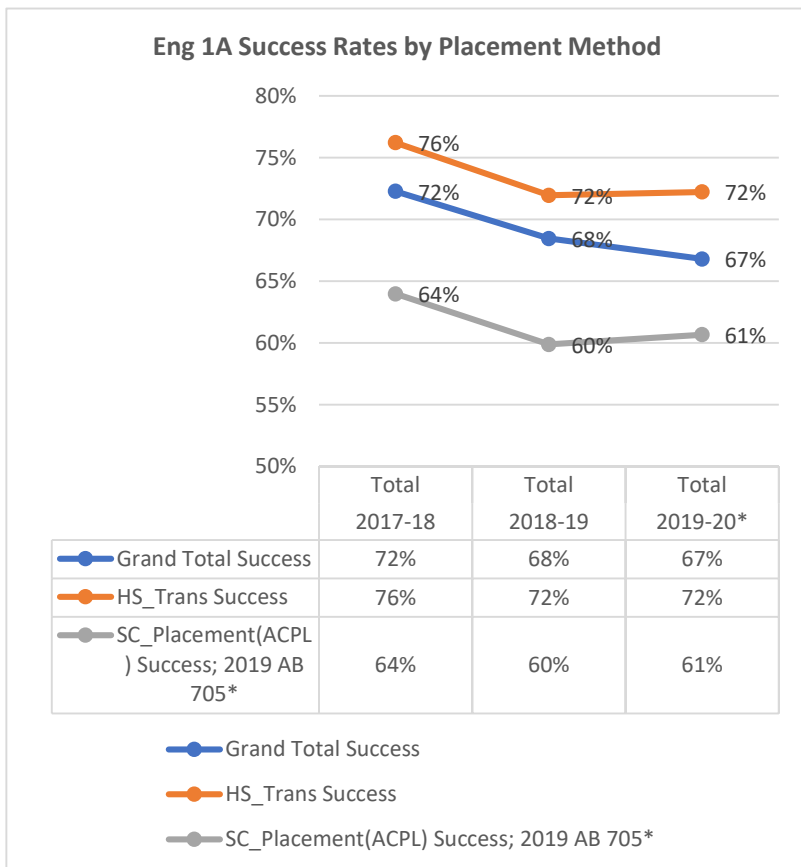
The Assessment Student Services Support Specialist partnered with counseling, Research, Admissions and Records and Instruction to develop processes to place students in accordance to AB 705 regulations.

As the first phase of the new placement options took place, the Assessment center worked with Information and Instructional Technology (IIT) to develop an automated method for placements. Through the CCCApply application, students self-report high school information in English and math. Using multiple measures, students indicate high school course grades and gpa. Roll out for this method began in early summer 2019 and continues today.

2) Currency

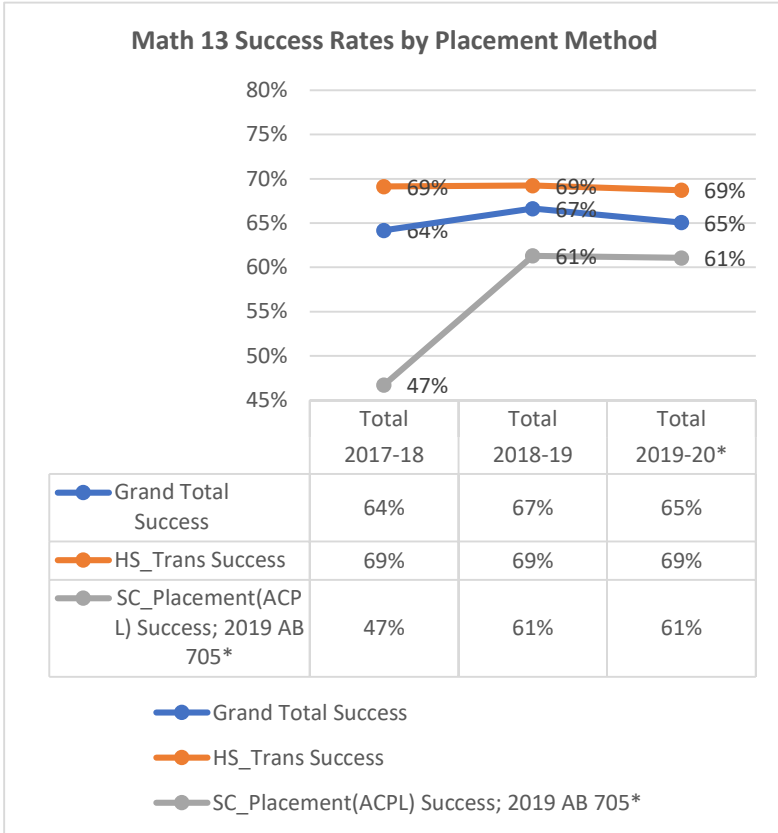
2a) Service Outcomes: In 2019, success rates in English 1A remained persistent (72%) and Math 13 (69%) using high school transcripts. For the AB 705 placement method, however, both English and math success rates are at 61%. The variance in success rates suggests that using high school transcripts yields a better outcome, however the AB 705 group is comprised of a wide range of students with varying backgrounds and diverse needs. In an effort to close the equity gap, the AB 705 changes are slow, but in time may show improvement as Sierra College continues to redesign support structures for student success.

Chart 1.1



Sierra College: English 1A Success Rates				
Placement Method	Year	Headcount	Retention	Success
High School Transcripts	2017	1897	91%	76%
High School Transcripts	2018	2799	88%	72%
High School Transcripts	2019	1788	89%	72%
Accuplacer	2017	620	83%	64%
Accuplacer	2018	746	80%	60%
AB 705 Placement	2019	1444	82%	61%

Chart 1.2



Sierra College: Math 13 Success Rates				
Placement Method	Year	Headcount	Retention	Success
High School Transcripts	2017	948	85%	69%
High School Transcripts	2018	1342	83%	69%
High School Transcripts	2019	991	83%	69%
Accuplacer	2017	303	69%	47%
Accuplacer	2018	596	81%	61%
AB 705 Placement	2019	1775	78%	61%

2b) Professional Development: The Assessment staff participates in regular AB 705 workgroup meetings, and receives educational opportunities through the Student Equity and Achievement Program (S.E.A. Program) listserv. Staff attended the *Equity and Inclusion Workshop* which focused on student needs awareness, interpersonal relations and a better understanding of historically underserved students. Assessment is nested in a department that inspires staff to exercise personal agency to strengthen their knowledge on support services for students at Sierra College, such as the Rise Program, EOPS, DSPS, and tutoring services.

3) Effectiveness

3a) The Assessment Center implemented new placement strategies for new students applying in 2019. One of the biggest obstacles for students who have been underserved in the past is the lack of academic records to use for placements. In absence of assessment tests and high school transcripts, the Assessment Office was faced with the challenge of determining placements based on one-on-one meetings with students to talk about available transfer-level English and math classes. The Student Services Specialist developed two questionnaires approved by the math and English departments to help determine the right math and English courses. With the completed questionnaire, students were asked what their purpose was for going to college and what educational goals (e.g. certificate, AA/BA/BS) they plan to follow. Students were informed of the new support courses associated with transfer-level English and math, and what it meant to take those classes. Many did not feel ready for transfer-level with support as it had been several years

since graduating from high school, and some disclosed their past struggles in education. As a result of the changes in placement methods, Assessment, for the first time, has redefined its services to provide a high-touch approach in identifying placement needs.

3b) The focus of the Assessment Center has changed in the last year. The center no longer proctors the English and math tests; ESL and Chemistry testing are the only two proctored tests. Staffing has been reduced to a full-time Student Support Specialist, Assessment Lead, and one full-time temporary support staff and student workers.

Because all new students receive English and math auto-placements based on self-reported information from CCCApply, Assessment does not receive the same number of high school transcripts as they did in 2018 (Table 1.1).

In 2018, the Assessment Office experienced a surge in high school transcripts, and a reduced number of assessment testers. This change coincided with the launch of the Promise Program, hiring of Enrollment Specialists and high school Transfer Counselors, all of whom campaigned to collect high school transcripts, which resulted in a decrease in assessment testing (Table 1.2).

Clearing students for course prerequisites taken at other colleges have also decreased in the last three years (Table 1.3). This change may be due to the increase in Evaluations staff who, in 2018 reached their highest number in articulating college transcripts. In addition, evaluators run daily reports on counseling appointments with transfer students whose transcripts need articulation.

Table 1.1

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of students who were placed using high school transcript	2742	4598	3059*

*Staff are still evaluating high school transcripts for foreign language, chemistry and physics placements

Table 1.2

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of students who took the Accuplacer Assessment Test*	4246	2890	0

*ESL testing is not reflected in the table

Table 1.3

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of students who were cleared using college transcripts	1884	1480	945

Chemistry and ESL are the two tests that are still proctored at the Assessment Center. The student numbers in both groups have also seen a decrease (Tables 1.4 & 1.5).

Table 1.4

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of students who took the Chemistry Diagnostic Test	223	262	172

Table 1.5

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019
Number of students who took the ESL placement test	544	418	361

The changes from 2017 to 2019 indicate a slowing in the number of students utilizing assessment services. However, there is still a moderate number of students who contact the Assessment Office for assistance, especially prior to registration. From November 6, 2019 to November 12, 2019, the office received over 120 emails about prerequisites. Telephone calls and walk-ins were not captured.

While assessment services are seeing less student traffic due to the implementation of AB 705, it is incumbent on the college to make certain that the assessment and placement process remain accurate. The new legislation has limitations as it does not take into account older students, home-schooled students, students who did not graduate, and students from foreign countries. Going forward, continued data collection, research and evaluation is important as the college navigates its mission to improve student success.

3c/d) Equity:

In support of advancing student success for historically underserved populations, barriers have been removed to allow all students to be placed into transfer-level English and math courses. The Assessment Office will continue to evaluate how the new policies have an effect on achievement gaps and look for unintended consequences of the law.

The Assessment Center keeps an open schedule (no appointments) for placements and clearing prerequisites, which is convenient for students.

4) Resources

4a) The Assessment Office plans to work with the ESL department to align placements with the AB 705 regulations. Currently, the Assessment Office uses CELSA and Accuplacer (Writeplacer Essay) to determine placement, however after the Fall of 2020, a new method needs to be implemented. We expect further guidance from the Chancellor’s Office and the ESL department soon. On a daily basis, the work to clear prerequisites for transfer students remains steady, with an increase in demand at registration (Table 1.3). Proctoring the Chemistry test continues as a weekly activity. With more course offerings with co-requisites, the Assessment Office has seen an increase in clearing students who have taken a co-requisite course and either pass/failed the lecture or lab component and are in need of clearance to repeat the failed co-requisite.

The Assessment Office is currently staffed with one Student Service Specialist, 12 student workers and one temporary Student Service Specialist. For ongoing updates and changes to achievement measures using high school transcripts, guided placements, prerequisites and current placement tests (ESL and Chemistry), the Assessment Office current staffing needs are acceptable.

Scoring the ESL and chemistry tests are done manually; ESL tests are scored every evening and chemistry every Friday.

For facilities, the Assessment Office utilizes the Testing Center lab which houses eight computers for ESL testing. Because chemistry testing is a paper-based test and is timed, we have to use a separate room to proctor the test. We reserve one classroom in a nearby building every Friday morning for chemistry testing.

4b)

Function/Role	Mtc	Development	Growth	Safety	Outcomes	Other success measures	No req
Assessment Student Services: Placement guidance, registration assistance, clearing prerequisites, test proctoring ESL/Chem		Due to the recent implementation of AB 705 legislation, changes are in development			TBD		

5) Summary

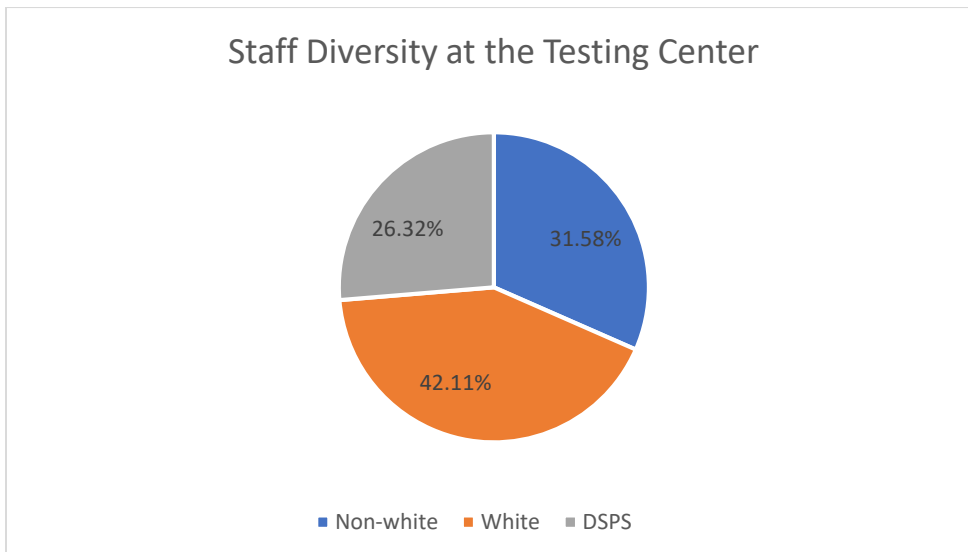
5a) Strengths: The Assessment Center is relatively small, but achieves optimal levels of performance during peak periods with a goal to process requests within a 24-hour period (excluding weekends and holidays). The staff is trained to address questions related to the application process, academic

enrichment, registration error messages, prerequisites, placements, ESL credit/no credit options, course repeats, course equivalencies and prerequisite appeals. In dealing with a diverse student population where levels of tension are intensified due to registration blocks, the Assessment Office is skilled in recognizing the needs of others and always willing to reach out and go the extra mile to assist students.

The Assessment Office maintains current knowledge and awareness of state regulations and Sierra College policies and is instrumental in implementing landmark changes to placement testing services.

The Assessment Center is committed to actively recruiting student employees of diverse backgrounds, needs and abilities (Chart 1.3). The center cultivates an inclusive and equitable approach to serving students.

Chart 1.3



Areas that may need improvement is access to counseling. The Assessment Center is a stand-alone building set apart from all of Student Services. Prior to moving to its current location, the Assessment Office was located next to Counseling. On a daily basis, counselors visited the center with questions regarding clearance of AP (Advance Placement) exams, other college course equivalencies and English and math placements. Frequently, students who have counseling appointments are often referred back to the Assessment Center without explanation. Relocating the Assessment Center would better serve the counseling staff and students.

5b) The author of this report interviewed Evaluations Specialists, an instructor, and a counselor.