



**Redesigning Developmental Education for Student Success: A Third Annual Report**

**June 22, 2016**

## A LETTER FROM ELIZABETH COX BRAND

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I am pleased to submit to the Oregon Higher Education Community, its stakeholders and other interested parties the 2015-2016 Developmental Education Redesign *Annual Report*. It's hard to believe that this is already our third edition. The 2013-2014 report unveiled recommendations to redesign developmental education in our state. The 2014-2015 report chronicled the progress each campus made the first year of implementation. It featured reforms in a number of areas but highlighted the tremendous progress campuses made developing alternative mathematics pathways. While that work continued in our second year of implementation, this year's report features groundbreaking work campuses are doing to rethink how they place students and the coaching campuses received to help them implement their redesign plans.

We've already issued a report about the placement work that featured Clackamas and Klamath. This report will highlight the progress other campuses are making to rethink their reliance on a single measure for placement. I am happy to report that a majority of campuses are now either implementing or designing placement processes that rely on multiple measures, not just a simple standardized assessment. This is remarkable progress.

I want to remind us why we're doing this work and why this progress matters. In Oregon and across the United States, far too many students are placed into developmental education courses. Once placed there, they rarely receive degrees or certificates.

We need to place fewer students into developmental education to start with and accelerate the rate at which the vast majority of those assigned to developmental education pass their gateway courses—usually by the end of their first year of enrollment.

In this report we'll see not only examples of the way campuses have improved their placement practices, we'll also see how they are accelerating learning to tap into what was before the unrealized potential and capacity of community college students.

We have been on an amazing journey together, but we still have a long way to go. I hope this report explains where we've been, but I also hope it will inspire campuses to take the next step and do more to make sure our community college students succeed at greater rates. I hope readers will say, "If that campus can implement a new placement process, accelerate learning in writing or engage students on a new mathematics pathway, well, then so can mine. We can do this!"

Indeed, we can do this!

Elizabeth Cox Brand

## RETHINKING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLACEMENT PRACTICES: 2015-2016'S BIG WIN

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In late summer 2015, the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) convened the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group, consisting of teams from the state's 17 community colleges. Concurrently, the legislatively-charged HB2681 Committee began meeting to discuss the process it would use to develop recommendations to the Oregon State Legislature to improve the process of placing students at community colleges. To avoid duplicating efforts, the HB2681 Committee and the Placement Work Group joined forces and began meeting with each other. Both groups participated in two webinars and three day-long in-person meetings in Salem. They learned about and discussed the issues and reviewed research presented by Michelle Hodara, a senior researcher from Education Northwest, and John Hetts, former Director of Institutional Research for Long Beach City College and now the Senior Director for Data Science for the Educational Results Partnership.

From John Hetts, HB2681 and Placement Work Group participants learned:

- Community college placement processes are substantially underestimating student capacity.
- Actual measures of student performance, high school grade point average (GPA) and last grade in course more accurately predict college performance than do standardized assessments.
- Since community colleges are open access institutions, it may be difficult to get high school transcripts; however, self-reported GPA may be a better indicator than an actual score on a standardized test.
- The more measures the greater the accuracy of a placement decision, and a standardized test such as Accuplacer, can be one of those measures.

The Placement Work Group recommended to the HB2681 Committee that Oregon's community colleges should move from using only a standardized assessment as the default placement tool for all students and toward a system of multiple measures to increase the accuracy of placement decisions. The HB2681 Committee embedded this recommendation in its interim report to the legislature.

Early adopters of new placement practices include Clackamas and Klamath, which were featured in the [Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group's report](#). However, redesigning placement was a priority for many campuses during the 2015-2016 academic year:

- **Portland** will begin in the winter term to implement one of the state's most innovative placement processes. While many new placement systems Oregon community colleges are beginning to implement consider high school GPA and last grade in course to be valid only two years after graduation, Portland's system considers these measures valid for seven years. With a grade of A or B in a junior or senior high school English course earned within the last 7 years, students are automatically placed into Writing 121. Students scoring 4 or more on the IB exam, 165 or more on the GED exam, 540 or more on the SAT, 24 or more on the ACT, or 3 or more on the Smarter Balanced assessment earn the same placement. Students scoring outside these ranges will take the Accuplacer, but their placement will not depend on that measure alone. Portland will also weigh cumulative GPA, a metacognitive inventory score, prior reading and writing experience and anticipated course load.

- **Central Oregon** has been conducting two small pilots related to placement. It has asked students in Writing 95 and Writing 121 to self-report their high school GPA and year of graduation. It plans to compare this information with their placement scores and final grades in course, testing the validity of recent high school GPA as a reliable placement tool. In addition, this summer, campus personnel will meet individually with students who are college-level readers but who place into Writing 95 because of their sentence skills scores on Accuplacer, asking questions about high school GPA, 12th grade English coursework and grades, and soft skills, such as last book read and last multiple source essay written. The process will help determine whether students should take Writing 121 instead of 95, and whether the college will continue to offer Writing 95. Finally, the campus has volunteered to be part of a statewide pilot to use writing samples from high school students as a multiple measure for placement into writing courses.
- In a winter-term pilot, **Clatsop** re-assessed with a writing sample the placement of students in Language Arts 90. It found that over half of the students demonstrated readiness for placement in college level courses. These students also reported that the Compass assessment frustrated their ability to demonstrate competence. With the demise of the Compass test and new data about student readiness, the campus is exploring if it is feasible to use multiple measures to place students.
- To achieve its goal of engaging more students at a level of academic challenge best suited for their strengths and experience, **Linn Benton** convened college and community stakeholders to discuss the use of multiple measures to place students. The campus also consulted with personnel from its local school districts to identify sources of input Linn Benton might use in place of Accuplacer. Faculty met with several K-12 teachers, counselors and other stakeholders to discuss these options. As a result, Smarter Balanced (SB) and GED scores will be the first additional inputs that Linn Benton will adopt as part of a multiple measures approach to placement. Conversations with community and local K-12 educators will continue for the foreseeable future, with the potential to add additional measures in the coming terms. For now, specific GED and SB scores will result in the following placements:
  - GED Level 3 (or 165, honors) will mean Math 111 for math placement
  - GED Level 3 (or 165, honors) will mean Writing 121 for writing placement
  - SB 3 will mean Writing 121 for writing placement
  - SB 4 will mean Writing 121 for Writing placement
  - SB 3 will mean Math 111 or Math 105 for math placement
  - SB 4 will mean Math 112 or Math 241 for math placement
- **Tillamook Bay** is in the process of finalizing a multiple measure placement process.
- **Umpqua's** math department will begin using high school transcripts and Smarter Balanced scores for those students who are within two years of high school graduation or GED scores within that timeframe as well. Those outside this window will be placed using ALEKS. The campus hopes to have its plans in place by July 1.
- **Oregon Coast** further refined its math placement rubric to include high school course grades and has begun work on a similar rubric that will rely on multiple measures for writing and reading. The college also launched an online mandatory placement test preparation workshop that students participated in

fall, winter and spring terms. The workshop provides sample questions and links to tutorial videos. An instructor provides students with feedback. Initial data shows that not only is the tool well received by students but they are also spending significant time reviewing online materials. Ben Kauffman, developmental education redesign team lead, reports that the average student spends twenty minutes on the reading section, thirty minutes on the writing section and forty-five minutes on the math section. Kauffman notes that “there has been a shift on the campus as a whole—we recognize the importance of taking the time to use multiple measures to start students on a successful path.”

- **Southwestern** is finalizing development of a multiple measure placement process and an aligned advising guide. Measures will include Smarter Balanced; Accuplacer, ACT, SAT and GED scores; ALEKS, high school transcripts and a student’s own recommendation for placement.
- **Rogue** has begun work on a new process for placing students that will rely on multiple measures.

## NEW TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPTION PROVIDED CAMPUSES IN 2015-2016: COACHING

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The beginning of the 2015-16 school year saw campuses engaged in a second year of implementation of the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group’s recommendations. OCCA introduced coaching as a technical assistance activity to support campuses and 15 colleges utilized coaching services this past year.

Coaching took a variety of forms. Sometimes coaches researched topics such as placement options and what other community colleges are doing to measure the success of their developmental education reforms. Other times campus leads used coaches for thought-partnership as they navigated complex institutional politics and even disagreement with some of the redesign recommendations. Coaches also organized information, developed objectives and agendas for team meetings, updated work plans, drafted correspondence, helped team leads develop plans to monitor progress and in some cases helped with project management.

A recent [OCCA newsletter](#) shared team leads’ perceptions on the coaching they received this year. Team leads valued the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with coaches or simply “having a shoulder to lean on, as Kathie Hledik from Lane noted.

### Reflections from Coach Thalia Nawi

Things really clicked on my second site visit to Lane Community College in May. Team lead Kathie Hledik and I in advance set up either one-on-one or small group meetings with each member of the development education redesign team to review progress towards goals, troubleshoot and provide support and guidance. Each individual or group was greeted at the door by Kathie who invited them to join her in sampling treats she laid out on a small round table, which ranged throughout the day from oranges to banana bread to chocolates.

Some team members appeared tentative when they entered the room. Kathie quickly allayed any concerns they had about the meetings being a “gotcha” on work not done. They were, as she said, “simply meetings to check in, determine needs and identify next steps.” In each meeting, we were able to achieve a detailed level of conversation, which uncovered both the philosophical orientation of the team members as well as barriers, institutional or otherwise, that may have been impeding the work.

Their comfort level increased too as they took advantage of the treats at the table. At the conclusion of each meeting, I shared back the agreements that had been made and Kathie outlined next steps. I think having me on site helped give her a rationale to invite everyone in for these meetings, and it also served the purpose of clearly establishing her as the lead on moving the body of work forward while communicating that the developmental education work is a shared responsibility.

### Reflections from Coach Paolo DeMaria:

Rod Keller and I check in with each other every two weeks. At a small college, every administrator wears many hats—and Rod is no exception. He is doing many things – and so it is easy to be distracted by the challenge of the day and lose sight of some of the more strategic actions being taken. Our phone calls are never particularly weighty conversations—we review project activity, and Rod and I bounce around ideas for continuing to move the work forward. He might ask me to track down some information or share what I know about what is happening on other campuses. I think Rod feels that 30 minutes every two weeks is just the gentle reminder needed to keep the work moving forward.

My first visit to the campus was on a crisp November day that really set the stage for the successful coaching relationship we developed. That day formed the foundation for Rod and my regularly scheduled calls every two weeks.

Rod was at the airport waiting for me after I walked off the nine-seat puddle-jumper I flew out on from Portland. He suggested we get a bite to eat at a local breakfast joint. Over bacon and eggs and several cups of coffee, we spent the morning just getting to know each other better, and Rod taught me a lot about the college and the local community. As we later drove to the campus and made our way to Rod's office, I remarked how much I liked the college logo – with a picture of a lighthouse on it. What a perfect image to communicate the mission of a learning institution.

Our day focused on three areas – initial thoughts about developing and deploying an integrated reading and writing class, a meeting of the college's student success committee, and a discussion about continuing implementation of the college's student learning outcomes assessment plan. Each conversation was deep and rich, and with several of Rod's campus colleagues rolling in and out of conversations about topics pertinent to their work. There wasn't always 100% agreement, but in each area, there were general agreements to move forward with particular strands of work and clear next steps.

Since my flight back to Portland wasn't until late in the evening, Rod suggested that I attend the meeting of Southwestern's board. It was two hours before the gavel would drop and the meeting begin, so Rod drove me to the local state park to share some spectacular views of the ocean. The wind was strong and blew the glasses off my face, but the view was tremendous. Rod said he had been there the weekend before taking pictures of the waves crashing against the rocks. It was a display of the force and beauty of nature. And a great place to continue our conversations about the work.

It was clear that the board was made up of dedicated people. The college is an essential part of this small community built on the lumber industry. It is a point of pride and also a critical force in economic development and community prosperity. The board meeting was celebratory in focus, college accomplishments, new employees, those sorts of things. It gave me a strong sense of the context in which Rod and his colleagues are working. As Rod drove me back to the airport, I reflected on the day's experience with him. I told him I was impressed by the work that I saw taking place. Small colleges are such gems—everyone knows everyone else, and this helps create a sense of community that is so critical to driving success. I saw what I often see when visiting community colleges—passionate people committed to students working to identify strategies to improve success—and focused on supporting a small but tremendously dedicated community.

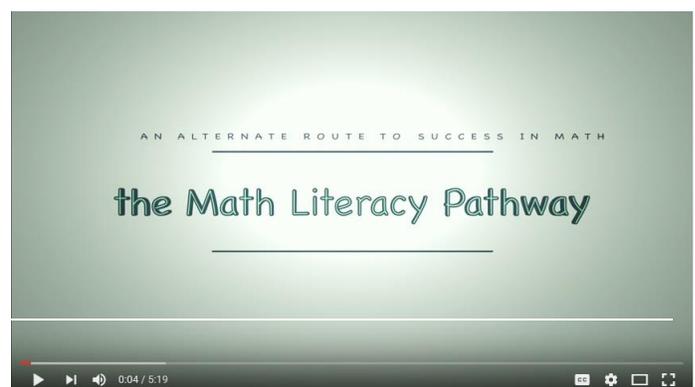
In the sidebars on this page and the previous, we feature the thoughts of two of the coaches themselves, Paolo DeMaria, who coached Southwestern Oregon, and Thalia Nawi, who coached Lane.

## MATHEMATICS

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In the 2015-2016 academic year, campuses continued to eliminate long developmental math sequences that are barriers to student success, accelerating learning by implementing new pathways for students in non-STEM fields. The non-STEM pathway is now a state-approved option for completion of the requirements for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree. A [video](#) produced by Portland Community College shows the impact the new pathway is having on the students of Oregon.

As reported in a [past newsletter](#), Portland Community College has made great progress eliminating barriers to student success in mathematics. So has Southwestern Oregon. It offered two sections of Math 98 in fall, winter and



spring terms. Enrollment in Math 105 has skyrocketed “because we get more completers in Math 98 who enroll in 105 the next term,” reports Nikki Armstrong, math instructor at the college. “Demand for Math 98 has been overwhelming. We’ve been packed to the gills with students.” Fall pass rates were between 65 and 70 percent for the two sections. Armstrong believes pass rates will get higher as faculty gain more experience teaching the new course. Pass rates, Armstrong notes, “could be higher if we had a bit more experience with the curriculum so that we could engage students more significantly. As a new pathway, there’s a new textbook, and a new style of teaching for faculty.”

Most of the state’s community colleges now have alternative math pathways. Many are working through the growing pains of introducing a new course but, like Southwestern, are making great progress.

- **Clatsop** reports that enrollment in the new math pathway continues to grow from a marginal number of students to a level that is self-sustaining. The college is currently developing an advising guide to help students decide what pathway is best for them.
- **Lane** has begun to examine how students in the new pathway are faring, in particular how students do in Math 105 after completing Math 98. It found that students in the traditional path—coming from Math 95—had an 83% success rate. Those coming from Math 98 had a 75% success rate. Kathie Hledik, Lane’s Developmental Education Redesign team lead, reports that “the difference is not surprising, since students who took Math 98 had different math backgrounds.” She says that Lane “was pleased that the alternative pathway was working well for the majority of students.” As a result, Lane is

“With the changes in the math pathway, a lot more students can use the alternative path. They are now feeling like they can be completers and that math isn’t the thing holding them back. A major gain for us – student motivation and perception has changed – they’re not just term after term after term beating their heads on the wall in developmental education math.”

*Nikki Armstrong,  
Southwestern Community College*

expanding its pool of instructors for Math 98 and will add sections to address increased enrollment. Building on the success of Math 98, Lane also took a hard look at its prerequisite for Math 112, trigonometry. In the past, Lane required students to pass both Math 111 (college algebra) and Math 97 (geometry) within four terms as prerequisites for Math 112. Many students ended up repeating one or both of these classes so they could pass them within that time period. Lane now allows students to verify that they have passed a geometry class at any point in the past, including high school, and no longer requires them to take Math 97. The change has had no negative impact on student success rates in Math 112, Hledik reports, and has saved many students at least one term of mathematics.

- This year **Central Oregon** created and implemented a non-STEM pathway, and the math faculty established relationships with local high schools. Together, they mapped the schools’ mathematics curriculum to help them determine which students coming from which courses had already achieved the expected outcomes for specific Central Oregon classes.
- **Treasure Valley** has fully implemented Math 98 and Math 105, shortening the sequence for non-STEM developmental education students from 18 to 6 credits. Next year, the college will divide math 98 into two four credit courses.
- **Tillamook Bay** consolidated its offerings in mathematics and eliminated Math 65 (Introductory Algebra-Second Term) by aligning courses and redefining the sequence in which courses present content. Its sequence now consists of Math 020, Math 060 and Math 095, which has reduced the

length of the sequence by four credits. The campus reports that it is now “poised to develop and implement the alternative math sequence of Math 98 and Math 105.”

- **Mount Hood’s** math faculty is developing new STEM and non-STEM pathways to meet the needs of students **and** address the requirements of programs that require math as prerequisites.

## READING/WRITING

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As in mathematics, the goal of the developmental education redesign work in reading and writing is to accelerate learning. In pursuit of that goal, colleges continued to implement new programs in 2015-2016:

- For several years now, **Clatsop** has combined reading and writing developmental study in a single language arts course (LA90) to prepare students for Writing 115 or Writing 121, shortening the developmental path for students not fully prepared for college level work. It is now developing a co-requisite course, combining developmental reading/writing and college level writing courses.
- At **Mount Hood**, the English and reading faculty developed a combined reading and writing course that will be offered as part of a learning community, paired with HD 101. It will be piloted this fall.
- **Tillamook Bay** redesigned its reading and writing sequences. Reading 090 and Writing 090 are now combined as one course, Reading/Writing 090. The same action has been taken with Reading 115 and Writing 115 (now Reading/Writing 115). With these changes in place, the campus is planning instructional support initiatives for instructors who will teach these courses and developing wrap-around services for students enrolled in them.
- **Southwestern** has also integrated reading and writing courses to accelerate learning. It is in the midst of the approval process to combine Reading 90 with Writing 90, which will reduce the number of credits required from six to four.
- Formally a standalone developmental education course, **Rogue’s** Writing 30 is now combined with the college’s first 100 level writing course.
- **Central Oregon** combined its writing and reading developmental literacy courses over 10 years ago. As a result, it has focused on reviving professional development supports for teachers, in particular for the teaching of writing. The college is also researching “co-requisite development labs” for Writing 121 as an option for students who place into Writing 65 or 95 and is considering eliminating Writing 95 entirely, but keeping in placing Writing 60 and Writing 65.
- An instructor at **Umpqua** has been teaching Writing 95 concurrently with Writing 115 and Writing 121 to accelerate learning and completion.

## CONCLUSION

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In each of the two years of implementation, the developmental education redesign effort had a big win. In the first year, it was the approval, design and implementation of new mathematics pathways. In the second year, it

was the proliferation of new placement processes that rely on multiple measures. Campuses will continue to nurture these reforms next year.

The third year of implementation and the fourth year of the project will begin in earnest in September. Key efforts will likely include:

- More and more campuses developing and implementing placement processes that include multiple measures.
- Ongoing discussions about the use of high school grade point average and last grade in course as measures for placement. Portland Community College sees these measures as valid up to seven years after high school graduation. Other campuses have been more conservative, recognizing these measures as valid for only two years.
- The development and implementation of a pilot to use high school writing samples as a one measure for placement. Seven campuses have agreed to participate in the pilot.
- More and more writing faculties agreeing to pursue accelerated learning opportunities for students and adopting co-requisite and other models to ensure greater student success.
- Campuses offering professional development support to instructors teaching co-requisites and courses in the new math pathway.
- More and more campuses using data to demonstrate increased student success and improve their programs.
- High school and community college faculty getting to know each other better, with high school faculty learning more about community college expectations and college faculty becoming more familiar with high school curriculum and what courses are college-preparatory.

Should resources remain available, OCCA will continue to provide technical assistance to campuses: coaching, ongoing team lead meetings, webinars and possibly a state-wide conference for faculty, staff and administrators to learn from each other and from initiatives in other parts of the country.