

## Assessment & Placement Action Project Update

September 2010

### **A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project:**

The Assessment & Placement Action Team met ten times over the course of 2009-2010. Achievements of the team this year include:

- Working with Counseling/Administrative Computing/Admissions/Registration: Enforced COMPASS testing at the 13th credit hour effective November 2009.
- Working with the Learning Center/Counseling/Admissions/LCC Staff Volunteers: Piloted voluntary group testing – Was not very successful.
  - Out of more than 5,000 who took the COMPASS test, only 117 students opted to be tested in the group format. When given the choice, students chose testing on a walk-in basis.
  - This resulted in the decision to keep testing “as is” (on a walk-in basis) at least through Summer 2010 in order to develop a better process for testing students in a group environment.
- Working with Math & English Faculty/Institutional Research/Administrative Computing: Revised COMPASS cut scores based on state standards.
  - After reviewing test data, also added a College Reading course requirement for students scoring 0-50 on the Reading Test.
- Working with President's Cabinet/Admissions/Registration/Counseling: To further ensure incoming students are prepared for college-level coursework
  - Added admissions criteria that require all new students to submit official high school transcripts, or GED, or college transcripts, or pass the Ability to Benefit exam.
- Working with Human Resources/President's Office/Vice President for Enrollment Services & Campus Life: Recommended the creation of a staff position dedicated to coordinating activities related to assessment and placement of incoming students.
  - Resulted in the creation of the hybrid position of Associate Director for Admissions and Coordinator of Assessment and Placement.
  - The position was filled on November 1, 2009.

- Working with Institutional Research/Administrative Computing: Developing data gathering methods to:
  - Identify placement based on COMPASS/ACT score.
  - Track which English and Math courses students enroll in, when they enroll in them, and grades they earn in them.
  - Monitor student success in subsequent Math & English courses.
  - Determine how many potential students take the COMPASS tests and “walk away” (no enrollment within 1 year of taking the test).
  - Create cohorts of students who place into the first developmental course in Math and/or English in order to track success and persistence into subsequent courses.
  
- Working with Admissions/Administrative Computing: Updated the version of COMPASS the college is using to test students.
  - Implemented the web-based version of COMPASS.
  - This included revising the instructions in order to improve student understanding of the tests.
  
- Working with President’s Cabinet/Counseling/Admissions/Registration/Institutional Research/Administrative Computing: Added admissions criteria that requires COMPASS testing prior to enrolling (at the “0” credit hour) for all new students.
  
- Working with Counseling/Learning Center/Institutional Research/Administrative Computing/Admissions/Registration: Developed a model for group testing of new students.
  - Piloted the model in Summer 2010 and Fall 2010 terms.
  - Tests are proctored in a group setting by professional proctors. This allows for uniform and consistent delivery of testing instructions, as well as professional monitoring of the testing environment.
  - 215 group exams were conducted from April–September 2010.
  - 3125 students were tested.
  - Scores are available immediately and entered by Registration staff.
  - A counselor is available to interpret scores for students, as well as assist them in developing a schedule based on where the student places.
  - Anecdotal observations include:
    - Students are pleased with the “one-stop” experience of testing, advising and registering.
    - Role of counselors is critical; more counselors are needed at sessions (currently 1 counselor is assigned per session of up to 50 people).

- Working with Administrative Computing: Created a system that allowed students to register online for group testing.

### **B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action project:**

The Assessment and Placement Action Team met ten times throughout 2009-10 academic year. Progress reports were presented to the AQIP Steering Committee on a quarterly basis.

Lakeland's Strategic Plan communicates the importance of making student success everyone's priority. Improving the effectiveness of student assessment and placement processes was a major goal of the college in 2008. The Assessment and Placement AQIP action team was formed as a result. An enormous amount of preparatory work was done in 2008 and 2009. While there is still much work left ahead, seeing the team's vision begin to materialize with the Fall 2010 pilot group testing has been rewarding. When establishing the new process appeared to be at an impasse, the vice presidents worked together to deliver solutions. This confirmed for those involved that the college does indeed see this initiative as a priority and critical to student success.

The Assessment and Placement Action team members represent nearly every area of the institution – faculty, staff and administrators. As evidenced in the response to Question 1 above, the team's accomplishments were only possible through collaboration, cooperation and camaraderie. The team's vision for group testing became a reality through dedication, perseverance and hard work across departments and divisions.

### **C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project:**

- In order to determine what's working well and what isn't, an entire cycle of testing needs to be completed. Logistically, we've learned:
  - A quiet, professional, dedicated space is important, not only for the institution to be able to create a good first impression, but also to provide the best environment for students to test in.
  - Ideal test space must include additional private areas for counseling as well as a separate area for inputting scores and registering students.
  - As new buildings are added to the campus, it is important to include plans for a permanent and appropriate place for proctoring entrance exams in the new group format.
  - We discovered a "loophole" in using the COMPASS test as the Ability to Benefit test. Minimum passing scores are required for Ability to Benefit test takers to be admitted to the college and qualify for financial aid. This is not the case for students who have graduated from an accredited high school and take the COMPASS test to determine their English and Math placement. These students have the ability to score lower on COMPASS as the placement test and still be admitted to the college. We need to

address this discrepancy by reviewing admissions criteria and establishing new requirements for the 2010-2011 academic year.

- Working with Institutional Research and Administrative Computing, continue to review and refine data collection methodologies
- Working with Video Production, develop instructional videos for students to view before scheduling a test. Videos will provide more information about the test, access to practice materials, and recommended next steps for attending college
- Disband the Assessment and Placement Action Team
- Create an Assessment and Placement Advisory Committee to work with the Associate Director for Assessment and Placement to help monitor the data for improvement in rates of successful completion of first semester classes; successful completion of second semester classes; improved student retention rates; and improved overall GPA. The Associate Director and Advisory Committee will make recommendations for ongoing improvement of assessment and placement processes to increase student success based on the data.

**D. Describe any effective practices that have resulted from your work on this Action Project:**

- Using the COMPASS test as the Ability to Benefit test has allowed us to determine whether students meet the high school graduation requirement for admission while simultaneously determining their English and Math placement. This has streamlined the admissions process for these students.
- Having counselors present to provide immediate feedback to students regarding their placement scores has positively impacted the admissions process for new students. While the data is still being collected, intuitively, it appears fewer students are simply “walking away” after taking the test and not enrolling in classes because of the contact and support they receive immediately following the test. Many students have expressed their satisfaction with the process. They didn’t expect to be able to walk out with a schedule in their hand – so their expectations are being exceeded.

**E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project:**

- Developing an agreed upon group testing process was challenging! Issues include:
  - Determining who to test – all students who had not yet taken the test (new and continuing)? Or only new students? Ultimately, we decided to test only incoming new students in order to start with clean, baseline data
  - Finding appropriate and dedicated space on campus for testing in a time when the college is experiencing record enrollment
  - Convincing counselors to participate fully at the test sessions

- Staffing registration coverage at the sessions (Admissions/Registration was severely understaffed to begin with; taking someone from the department to cover testing created an even greater strain on the department)
- Budgeting for the increased cost of mandatory testing, as well as the cost for retesting
- Maintaining a focus on the broad goal as the details of the process are complex.
  - It will be several years before data will be available to determine if the change in requirements (COMPASS testing at 0 credit hours, group testing, availability of supportive services at test) have positively impacted students. It is easy to focus on the process instead of the outcome.
  - Monitoring of data will be essential over the next few years in order to determine next steps.