
Lessons from Multiple Measures Reforms across Six Two-Year Colleges in Three States

Phase 2 Report

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About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to: strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at www.researchforaction.org.

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Introduction

There's nothing like getting off on the right foot. This is especially true for beginning college students—particularly those from traditionally-disadvantaged populations.

Unfortunately, research has shown that between 24 and 33 percent of students are “misplaced” when entering college, often because a single, standardized test yields an incomplete (or incorrect) picture of a student’s readiness for credit-bearing coursework.¹ The result can be a permanent drag on a student’s prospects for postsecondary success, as fully 40 percent of community college students who enroll in developmental education fail to progress in their studies, let alone earn a degree or credential.²

As a result, states and postsecondary systems are beginning to use multiple pieces of evidence (Multiple Measures) to improve student placement decisions and boost completion rates. Along with traditional placement tests, examples of these measures include overall high school grade point average (GPA) and writing samples along with non-cognitive forms of assessment; together, the measures provide more evidence for how a student should begin their postsecondary experience.

This report is a companion to Research for Action’s (RFA’s) earlier examination of the policy context in three states—California, North Carolina, and Wisconsin—where Multiple Measures reforms are underway in different forms.³ In this document, we center our analysis on the implementation challenges that emerge as Multiple Measures policies are interpreted at the institution level. This cross-site report and the individual case studies of six colleges that accompany it provide postsecondary policymakers and institution leaders with information on how implementation varies based on a wide range of factors along with recommendations based on our initial data collection efforts.

¹ Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). *Do high-stakes placement exams predict college success?* (CCRC Working Paper No. 41). New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

² Complete College America. (2012) Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere.



³ Tracing the Development of Multiple Measures for College Placement across States and Systems: Analysis of Three State Systems – Phase I Report

State Policy Context and College Case Study Sites

Understanding Multiple Measures implementation starts with understanding the contexts in which they occur.

Our Phase I report provides important background on the formal policies surrounding Multiple Measures in each of our three study states. The report describes the work of the relevant state agencies as well as the structure and composition of each state's public postsecondary system. Table 1 summarizes key details about what makes each study state unique—details that, in turn, inform our approach to this case study portion of the research.

Table 1: A Summary of Multiple Measures Policies across States

	<p>The California Community Colleges System has been at the forefront of Multiple Measures reform since 1986—longer than any other state. Regulations passed that year required more than one piece of evidence in placing students in introductory-level classes, but gave colleges considerable discretion in selecting which measure to use.</p> <p>This fact—coupled with the longstanding decentralized nature of system governance, history of campus leadership, and lack of formal accountability mechanisms—has led to significant variation in implementation across campuses.</p> <p>Legislation passed in 2011 and 2012 would have ushered in greater uniformity via a standard, common assessment system to be used as one of the placement measures. However, funding constraints have slowed progress, and the assessment has not yet been developed.</p>
	<p>By contrast, North Carolina has the shortest experience with Multiple Measures of our study states; however, with a formal approach for rolling out the policy, the initiative will reach all 58 colleges in the state by fall 2015.</p> <p>The policy establishes a hierarchy of measures through which students are exempted from developmental education courses if they graduated from high school in the last five years and satisfy at least one of the following requirements: 1) A high school GPA of at least 2.6 and demonstrated completion of four high school math courses, 2) ACT/SAT scores that meet specific score thresholds, and 3) Placement test scores that meet specific score thresholds. The hierarchy works as follows: Administrators first check students' high school transcripts to see if they meet GPA and course completion requirements. If students do not meet these standards, administrators consult ACT/SAT scores. Students who do not qualify for credit-bearing courses based on either of these measures then take placement tests.</p>
	<p>Unlike the formal policies in both California and North Carolina, Wisconsin has relied on pilot programs and gradual implementation via the English Department that traverses the state's two-year college system. Multiple Measures reform began at the University of Wisconsin-Marathon County in 2007, and had expanded to seven additional campuses by 2012-13.</p> <p>Prior to 2007, students in the University of Wisconsin (UW) College system were placed in first-year writing courses based only on the Wisconsin English Placement Test. This test is still required across colleges in the system, but can be augmented by additional measures on a voluntary basis. While the UWC English Department has recommended a standard set of multiple measures for campuses adopting the reform, measures may vary by campus.</p>

Within each of these states, RFA selected two campuses for in-depth study. Each campus provides specific examples of the ways in which colleges are leading Multiple Measures implementation. The collective experiences of these campuses paint a picture of the diverse range of implementation approaches and challenges.

- In California, urban **Long Beach City College** is seen as a pioneer in Multiple Measures reform because of its research on the relationship between transcript data and college performance. Similarly, **Bakersfield College**, in a more remote region of the state, was selected due to its association with the Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Project (STEPS), which was based, in part, on the work at Long Beach.⁴
- Site selection in North Carolina, where the reform is in its infancy, focused on two early adopter sites: **Davidson County Community College**, a small, rural college that was the first to implement the reform, and **Central Piedmont Community College**—a large, urban campus in metro Charlotte.
- Wisconsin’s two campuses have especially long tenures with Multiple Measures. **University of Wisconsin-Marathon County**—a campus of just over 1,000 students in the rural, central portion of the state—developed and piloted Multiple Measures beginning in 2007. Two years later, Multiple Measures reached **University of Wisconsin-Waukesha**, a campus of twice as many students outside Milwaukee. Today, the initiative is in use at the majority of the 13 campuses in the UW College system.

Report Structure and Summary of Findings

Our examination of the work underway at these colleges is organized into the following sections:

- Overarching findings that are common across postsecondary systems and institutions;
- System-level policy influences on college/campus implementation;
- Implementation challenges at the institution level; and
- Challenges to instructional practices and supports.

We conclude with suggestions for further study that are especially vital considering states’ relatively brief experience with one reform. Table 2 outlines key findings for each section.

⁴ The Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Project (STEPS), a study that tests whether high school transcript data can improve the likelihood of accurate placement and student success.

Table 2: Summary of Findings

KEY FINDINGS	SUPPORTING POINTS
<i>1. Overarching Findings across Systems and Institutions</i>	
While Multiple Measures reforms are operationalized in a variety of ways across states and colleges, certain measures are used consistently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement tests and overall high school GPA are included as measures of college readiness at all study sites. • Every college utilizes at least four measures.
Multiple Measures reform is still in the early stages of implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most study sites have only begun implementation in the last few years. • The reform has not been fully scaled across all of the colleges and systems. • Student outcomes show early signs of promise but further analysis is needed.
<i>2. System Level Influence on Implementation</i>	
The degree of policy centralization influenced the level of reform scale-up and campus buy-in in the study sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal, required policy (top-down approach) leads to lower levels of buy-in at the institution level, but faster adoption across the system. • More organic, campus-led efforts (bottom-up) lead to higher levels of buy-in, but slower scale-up. • A mixed or hybrid approach leads to variation in implementation and buy-in based on local college context.
System-wide policy is not predictive of system-wide supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development from the system offices is more limited in states that require Multiple Measures reform. • Data collection systems are yet to be fully developed in the study states.
<i>3. Institutional-Level Implementation Challenges</i>	
The complexity of Multiple Measures reform requires increased institutional capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Measures review and analysis creates logistical and other challenges for already-burdened administrators and faculty. • New and varied inputs for placement sometimes require colleges to develop workarounds to address those issues. • While colleges have increased advising services around placement, students report that more academic advising is still needed. • New policies create an imperative for training and support for faculty and staff.
<i>4. Challenges to Instructional Practices and Supports</i>	
Multiple Measures has meant changes in the composition of both developmental education and credit-bearing classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Measures placement results in an increased concentration of students with the lowest skill levels in developmental education courses. • The diversity of skills has grown in college level courses. • To address these shifts, institutions have offered additional academic supports for students. • The data generated from Multiple Measures does not necessarily meet the instructional needs of faculty working in this new paradigm.

I. Overarching Findings across Systems and Institutions

Looking across both the three systems and six institutions included in this study, two key findings emerge.

Finding I. While Multiple Measures reforms are operationalized in a variety of ways across states and colleges, certain measures are used consistently.

Despite variation in each college's specific approach to Multiple Measures reform, there are some basic similarities in these efforts to provide a more complete picture of a student's skills and experiences (see Table 2). There continues to be heavy reliance on **placement tests**, including both national (*e.g.*, ACCUPLACER) and custom, state-developed assessments such as the Wisconsin English Placement Test. North Carolina is transitioning from one to the other: colleges continue to assess student readiness with ACCUPLACER, Asset, or COMPASS placement tests while the system completes implementation of the Diagnostic Assessment and Placement test.

Likewise, **high school GPA** is included as a measure at all campuses. At the two California sites, a GPA of 3.0 is one of many criteria used to determine placement in both English and math. In North Carolina, an overall minimum un-weighted GPA of 2.6 is the first in a hierarchy of measures required across the system. (This cut point has caused some consternation on campuses, as described in our case studies.) While Wisconsin does not specify a GPA threshold, its colleges do use GPA as one of several measures to determine readiness. In addition to placement tests and high school GPA, all colleges draw on at least two other measures. The most commonly-used include:




- **Recent high school grades in English and math courses:** Three colleges (Bakersfield College, Long Beach City College and UW-Marathon County) include specific grades in recent math and/or English courses as elements of placement decisions, in addition to overall high school GPA.
- **Written Essays:** In Wisconsin, specific essay prompts were the foundation for reforms to go beyond standardized tests in assessing writing skills; the number and type of measures have expanded from there. At Long Beach City College (California), students near the lower cut score on the English component of ACCUPLACER write an essay to further inform placement.
- **College Readiness or Standardized Tests:** In addition to placement tests, some type of college readiness (*i.e.*, SAT/ACT) or other standards-based achievement tests were used across all campuses and systems. In California, the Early Assessment Program provides students with their first opportunity to place into college level courses; this assessment involves test items in both English and math included in the 11th grade California Standards Test that relate to college readiness as determined by California State University. In North Carolina, the SAT or ACT is used as part of the hierarchy of measures for placement

described in Table 1. At UW-Marathon County, both the SAT and ACT are used; UW-Waukesha relies only on the ACT.

- High School Course Completion:** Campuses in all three states include transcript analysis in their assessment of incoming students. Both California sites examine whether a student has taken the high school courses that the University of California has identified as academically challenging.⁵ In North Carolina, the first tier of measures includes whether a student has completed four high school math courses. At UW-Marathon County, the placement process includes a review of English courses completed in high school; however, UW-Waukesha did not include a similar measure.

In addition, student surveys and questionnaires are major components of placement decisions in Wisconsin. These are used at both UW College sites to gather information on students' background characteristics to help with placement decisions. Similarly, in California, colleges can add a series of survey items on a student's perceptions of their own college readiness *as part of* the ACCUPLACER exam. This method of fulfilling the Multiple Measures requirement is common across the community college system, according to a statewide survey of matriculation officers.⁶ (See Table 3.) Two administrators included in our field work verified this trend, with one stating: "Traditionally, the way most community colleges have addressed Multiple Measures is to use a standardized test...and load in questions that students can answer. So technically it meets the mandated requirement of Multiple Measures by the state ...that's the primary model."

Table 3: Measures Used for Student Placement across Campuses

MEASURES FOR STUDENT PLACEMENT	CALIFORNIA 		NORTH CAROLINA 		WISCONSIN 	
	BC	LBCC	CPCC	DCCC	UWMC	UWW
Academic Measures						
College Placement Test:						
• Nationally used (e.g., ACCUPLACER)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• State developed (WEPT)						
College Readiness Test (SAT/ACT)			✓	✓	✓	✓
Standards-based Achievement Test	✓	✓				
Advanced Placement (AP) Test Score	✓					
Overall High School Grade Point Average (GPA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High School Grades in English or Math Course(s)	✓	✓			✓	
Written Essay		✓			✓	✓
Non-Cognitive Measures						
Independent Student Survey or Questionnaire					✓	✓
High School Curriculum/Courses Completed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

⁵ Courses from California high schools used to satisfy the "a-g" subject requirements must be certified by the University of California and appear on the school's "a-g" course list. These courses are to be academically challenging, involving substantial reading, writing, problems and laboratory work (as appropriate) and show serious attention to analytical thinking, factual content, and developing students' oral and listening skills.

⁶ According to a statewide survey of matriculation officers by Venezia, Bracco and Nodine as reported in the report, *One-shot deal? Students' perceptions of assessment and course placement in California's community colleges* by WestEd, 65 percent of those responding cited questions embedded in their college's placement test (e.g., ACCUPLACER) as one type of measure.

Finding 2: Multiple Measures reform is still in the early stages of implementation.

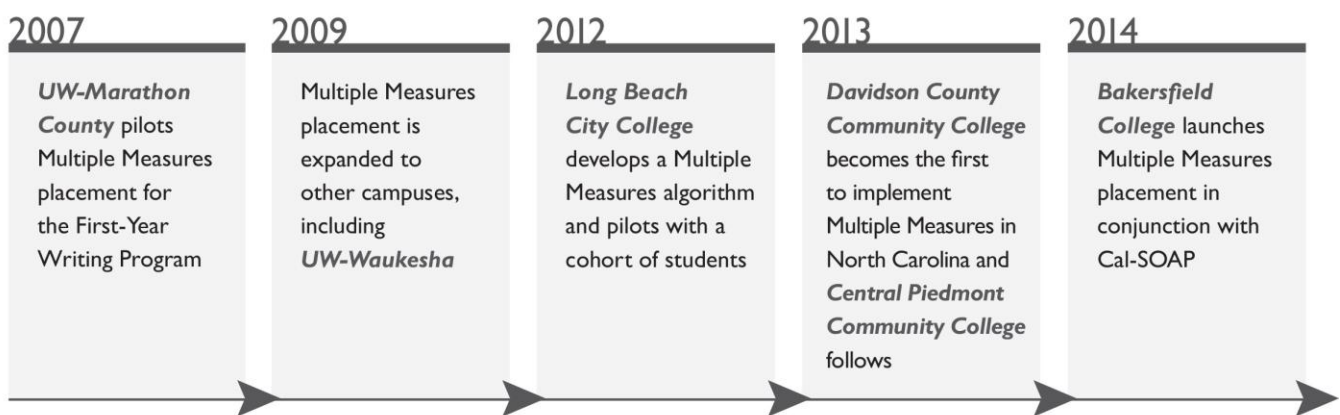
Whether it is current reforms to California’s roughly two-decade old Multiple Measures requirements, Wisconsin’s voluntary roll-out across colleges, or North Carolina’s efforts with “early adopter” institutions, states and colleges continue to work at getting this complex work right. This finding includes several indicators, including the duration and expansion of the reform, as well as the status of analyses on its impact related to student outcomes.

Reform Duration and Implementation: Limited and Evolving across Sites

While California has had multiple measures policy in place since 1986, the University of Wisconsin (UW) Colleges have the longest tenure reforming campus level implementation of Multiple Measures among the study sites (see Figure 1). In 2007, Multiple Measures was piloted at UW-Marathon County with at-risk students placed in the first-year writing program; it was expanded from there to include additional measures and student cohorts. By 2012-13, eight of the 13 campuses in the UW College system had implemented their own version of Multiple Measures beyond the standard usage of the WEPT. The system continues to work at refining and standardizing the placement process, with more changes scheduled for fall 2014.

Study sites in California and North Carolina have been involved in this reform for an even shorter period of time. Despite the fact that California already required placement based on more than one measure, Long Beach City College recognized the need for further reform and responded with the 2012 piloting of their new alternative assessment system; Bakersfield followed in 2014. North Carolina has been engaged in Multiple Measures for less than two years; its process began with the state community college system’s 2013 approval of new system-wide policies and implementation among a set of “early adopter” colleges.

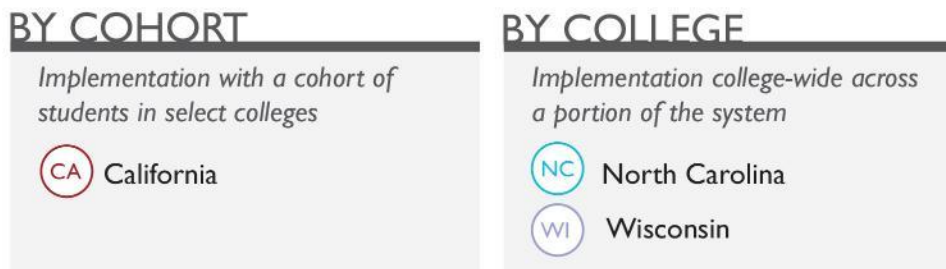
Figure 1: Campus Level Multiple Measure Reform Timeline



Expansion of Reform: A Work in Progress

Multiple Measures implementation occurs along two basic expansion patterns: **by cohort** or **by college** (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Level of Implementation of Multiple Measures Reforms



In California, institutions are implementing the reform with cohorts of students from specific high schools or programs. At Long Beach City College, the first cohort involved in its pilot included roughly 1,000 students from Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD); participation grew to more than 1,900 by 2014, representing about one third of all first time students. Similarly, at Bakersfield College, implementation began with roughly 450 pilot students from the California Student Opportunity and Access Program⁷ in the spring of 2014.

In both North Carolina and Wisconsin, the reform has yet to be scaled across the system. Only a fraction of the 58 community colleges in North Carolina implemented the Multiple Measures policy during the 2013-14 academic year. Wisconsin's reform started at UW-Marathon County with a cohort of at-risk students who completed a short writing sample for English placement. Since then, the process has expanded to include other measures and all incoming students with increasing levels of standardization over time; today, the reform covers English placement at a majority of campuses.

Student Outcomes Data: Early Promise, More to Learn

Several study colleges use student data to assess the relationship between Multiple Measures and early academic milestones. While initial results are promising, longer-term, independent research is needed to arrive at more definitive assessments of impact.

The most extensive analyses have been conducted at Long Beach City College and UW-Marathon County; in both cases, research suggests improved student outcomes. At Long Beach, a greater percentage of students placed through Multiple Measures attempted and successfully completed college level English and Math courses than those placed through traditional means.⁸ Research conducted on the impact of Multiple Measures at UW-Marathon County found that the number of at-risk students who remained in good standing at the end of their fall semester increased by almost 24 percent in three years (2006 to 2009).⁹

⁷ The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) provides information about postsecondary education and financial aid to low-income students and geographic regions with low college participation rates. The Bakersfield Cal-SOAP students are part of a grant project with CSU-Bakersfield that provides coaching by counselors-in-training from the university who help local students with the college transition process.

⁸ Long Beach City College at <http://www.lbcc.edu/PromisePathways/documents/First-Term%20Results%20of%20F2013%20Cohort%20Promise%20Pathways%20Students%20-%20FINAL%2002122014.pdf>

⁹ Hassell, Holly, and Joanne Baird Giordano. "First Year Composition Placement at Open-Admission, Two-Year Campuses: Changing Campus Culture, Institutional Practice and Student Success." *OPEN WORDS: Access and English Studies* 5. 2 (2011).

More limited analysis at Bakersfield College and North Carolina’s Davidson County Community College likewise shows promise. At Bakersfield, use of Multiple Measures impacted the placement of 68 percent of the incoming fall 2014 cohort, placing them in college level courses for which they would have otherwise been ineligible. However, outcome data for these students has not yet been collected or analyzed, so the full impact of the reform is unknown. Davidson analyzed the influence of the policy based on data from math courses in fall 2013. Administrators sent these results to the system office, which reported that “there was no difference between students who were placed by the placement test and students who were placed by Multiple Measures.” Although the report did not indicate improved outcomes, administrators felt it was important that students placed by high school GPA were performing no worse than their peers in college-level courses.




II. System Policy Influence on Implementation

Our initial report for this project provides analysis of the policy context in the three study states. In this next section, we explore how these policies support the work of campuses operating within a diverse system.

Finding 3: The degree of policy centralization influenced the level of reform scale-up and campus buy-in.

Looking across the three systems, Multiple Measures reform can be understood as largely centralized or decentralized based on the policy structure and uniformity of implementation at the campus level (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Multiple Measures Policy Structures

Centralized Reform		Decentralized Reform	
			
Mandatory Policy		Voluntary Policy	
			
Policy Initiated at the State or System Level		Policy Initiated at the Campus Level	
			
Uniform Measures required across Campuses		Variation in Measures allowed across Campuses	

Using this framework, our study states can be characterized according to three general models of implementation. The first is North Carolina's top-down pursuit of a mandatory policy with uniform measures. The second is Wisconsin's bottom-up implementation involving a highly decentralized, voluntary policy with variation in measures. California presents a mix: a state-initiated policy with mandatory, bare minimum requirements that allow for variation in the adoption of specific measures.

All of these models have implications for campus buy-in and scale-up:

- Formal, required policy (top-down approach) led to lower levels of buy-in at the institution level, but faster adoption across the system.
- More organic, campus-led efforts (bottom-up) led to higher levels of buy-in, but slower scale-up.
- A mixed or hybrid approach led to variation in implementation and buy-in based on local college context.

This variation in policy context provides contrasting pictures of implementation across the study sites. In California, the limited nature of the regulations has left colleges with considerable discretion. The two study colleges are leaders in the system because they recognized, and acted on, the need for reform above the minimum standard. In other words, in the absence of an explicit state framework, colleges have had to independently make the case for reform, while developing and implementing the use of new measures.

Making the case for new measures without requirements from the system office makes support for the reform among faculty especially critical, but the level of buy-in varied by department at both study sites in California. While the math faculty generally supported the reforms at one institution, English faculty members there were concerned about the reform because they felt that more students with lower skills were being placed in college-level courses. As a result, shifts in instruction were needed, both to meet the needs of lower performing students who remained in developmental education courses and the more diverse set of skills found in college level classes. At the other institution, past problems with the enforcement of prerequisites and placement errors led to concerns from the math faculty, while the English faculty members were more open to the use of Multiple Measures for placement.

In North Carolina, the combination of mandatory policy from the system office and limited campus involvement in development of the initiative has led to rapid scale-up but limited faculty support. Specifically, faculty at both study colleges did not believe that students placed through Multiple Measures were prepared for college-level work. Meanwhile, instructors at Central Piedmont expressed doubts about the validity of the policy's 2.6 GPA cutoff, believing it to be far too low.

As a result of these and other concerns, North Carolina campuses worked to customize the reform where possible within rather rigid confines. For example:

- To place into college courses in any subject, system policy requires that students complete four high school *math* courses. Davidson County Community College administrators initially attempted to customize the policy to admit students into college level English courses if they met the 2.6 GPA requirement and had completed four courses of *English*. However, the system office removed the college’s ability to grant this exemption.
- Central Piedmont customized the system’s Multiple Measures policy by: 1) disregarding codes formerly used to indicate preparedness;¹⁰ 2) making campus-level determinations as to whether out-of-state, homeschooled, and foreign students had met requirements; and 3) allowing students to self-identify for the Multiple Measures exemption in the fall semester of 2013.

With Wisconsin’s decentralized approach, gradual scale-up had the effect of allowing local support to build over time. Because participation is voluntary, campus buy-in is a precondition for adoption of the reform. In fact, faculty buy-in at study sites in the UW College system was stronger than in the other states due to their close involvement with the reform and evidence of student success based on the pilot at UW-Marathon County.

Finding 4: System-wide policy is not predictive of system-wide supports.

Somewhat counter intuitively, resources for professional development, data collection tools, and other supports provided to colleges and campuses via the more centralized reforms in California and North Carolina are more limited than those in the UW College system.

In terms of professional development, both the California and North Carolina system offices have not yet provided training or oversight to colleges regarding Multiple Measures implementation, nor have these entities shared lessons learned from the “early adopter” colleges. Acknowledging this gap, administrators at both North Carolina campuses remarked that additional guidance from the system office would have helped to “make the process work.”

Conversely, in Wisconsin, the UW College English Department—which functions across campuses—provides considerable professional development related to the reform. The UW College Developmental Reading and Writing Coordinator and the Writing Program Administrator both provide training each spring on Multiple Measures placement. Each participating campus selects members of the English faculty and Student Services Office to serve as members of the team that will review incoming student assessment results and determine placement. All placement team members are required to participate in annual trainings; those who have experience in the process can serve as resources for members who are new.

On the specific matter of data collection systems to track the effectiveness of reforms, there have been more noticeable moves on the part of all three systems to support campuses. In California, data

¹⁰ Future Ready Core (FRC) transcript codes 1, 2, 3, and 4 had been used to indicate that a student’s high school course of study included Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a fourth math suitable for community college and/or university admissions.

access and availability varies by college, but the system is developing a data warehouse to collect, store, and analyze multiple measures data in concert with its common assessment. Similarly, North Carolina is working to streamline the accessibility of high school level data by automatically providing data to colleges from a statewide repository of high school transcripts. In Wisconsin, both WEPT and ACT scores are easily accessible through the PeopleSoft Student Information System (SIS); however, the format used to store other student assessment files varies by campus. A uniform data collection system is in development for fall 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATES & SYSTEMS

- **Develop resources to facilitate access to and interpretation of high school transcript data.** Colleges in California struggled to access the high school data needed to implement Multiple Measures reforms; however, the system is working on streamlining that process. In North Carolina, colleges had to determine on their own how to interpret transcript data from a variety of districts and states.
- **Pilot Multiple Measures reforms and use lessons learned to inform expansion efforts.** Multiple Measures reforms are complex and can be difficult to implement. Lessons from pilot cohorts or sites allow systems and colleges to learn early implementation lessons and make course corrections as needed.
- **Provide professional development.** Colleges and campuses may struggle to independently determine the best course for Multiple Measures implementation. Focused, system-supported training can help.

III. Institutional Challenges for Implementation

In large part because supports from system offices have either not been developed, or have been available only in modest doses, colleges and campuses have had to learn and invent as they go; frequently, the process taxes limited resources and forces college personnel to think in new ways.

Finding 5: The complexity of Multiple Measures reform requires increased institutional capacity.

The development of Multiple Measures placement processes stretches the capacity of administrators and faculty members in a number of ways. Moving from a single, standard measure to a series of different assessments requires that colleges:

- Determine how to combine and weigh the measures to determine placement;
- Allow for subjective placement decisions on an individual student basis;
- Establish clear guidelines that facilitate objective placement decisions;
- Access and interpret high school transcript and other data;
- Include faculty and staff in reform implementation;
- Provide needed placement advising to students; and
- Offer training and support for faculty and staff.

Campuses vary in how they address these questions. Below, we highlight specific approaches to three challenges that were especially prominent in our field work.

Placement Approaches

On the issue of combining and weighing measures, Long Beach City College created a computer algorithm to place students, thereby limiting subjective placement; Bakersfield took a different approach, with individual reviews of each student's placement test scores and high school transcripts. North Carolina's Central Piedmont trained staff to use a common checklist to review individual student transcripts, and determine if they have met GPA requirements or SAT/ACT cut scores for credit bearing coursework. The UWC English Department used a team-based approach in which multiple English faculty members review and score each student's writing sample.

Whatever the approach, these new requirements can be taxing for both administrators and faculty. For instance, given the large student body and the tight implementation timeline in fall 2013 at North Carolina's Central Piedmont, administrators could not review all existing transcripts before the start of the semester, and therefore allowed students to self-identify for the Multiple Measures exemption in fall 2013. The process of reviewing transcript data for nearly 500 students at Bakersfield was similarly daunting; faculty called the job "tedious" and "cumbersome," and administrators spoke of the need to involve a more automated system in the future. The turnaround time at UW-Waukesha is managed only through the close cooperation of multiple partners: English faculty review dozens of student essays as well as other data compiled by student services staff; team members make placement decisions; and results are reported back to Enrollment Services—all within a period of days.

The challenge of managing this information flow is compounded by a lack of uniform high school transcript data. California colleges experienced particular hurdles. At Long Beach City College, administrators said "the challenge is getting the data from the school districts" in the first place—a step that requires parents of applicants to "sign waivers to release the transcript data." Bakersfield likewise lacked direct access to this data, and had to leverage its relationship with Cal-SOAP to gain supervised access to transcripts; once placement decisions were made, transcripts had to be returned immediately to high schools. In North Carolina, the desire for a consistent approach ran headlong into significant variability in available high school transcript data. As an example, Central Piedmont serves South Carolina students, as well as high numbers of homeschooled and foreign students—requiring decisions by transcript reviewers at each of the college's six campuses; this challenge was addressed by developing the checklist for transcript review described above.

Student Advising

A third challenge is that Multiple Measures creates the imperative for additional student advising. Study colleges recognize this fact and are working to respond in a number of ways. For example, to address the significant reduction in counselors on staff at Bakersfield College due to budget cuts, the college is developing a team of faculty and administrators that will be trained to act as student mentors. Additional supports are provided as part of the Multiple Measures initiative at Long Beach City College as well, in the form of additional academic and career counseling. At Davidson County

Community College, all students are required to meet with an advisor to determine their course trajectory. Similarly, administrators at UW-Marathon County explained that on the day students register for courses, “advisors work individually with small groups of students...and then the placement team works with students one-on-one to give help.”

Still, these efforts do not always align with students’ expectations. At Central Piedmont, for instance, some students cited positive, productive relationships with their advisors, while others reported advisors were so busy that it was difficult to schedule meetings with them. Similarly, developmental education students at Davidson said contact with advisors was sporadic, and that advisors did not always help interpret their placement test scores. When asked about the relationship with her advisor, one student said, “I really don’t have one.” Focus group participants at UW-Marathon County reported that they only experienced large group advising, typically in groups of ten or more, once they received their placement scores on the same day they signed up for classes. Overall, a majority of students included in focus groups at this campus reported that they could have used additional advising and explanation of the placement results. At UW-Waukesha, some students reported that they simply registered for courses online, without directly interacting with advisors.

Professional Development

Finally, colleges implementing Multiple Measures have new obligations to communicate with faculty and staff and deliver appropriate training. In California, professional development on the two study campuses was informal but included faculty and staff in the development of the new placement measures and processes. The level of training at the colleges in North Carolina varied, but in both cases the administration took responsibility for guiding the transcript review process. Wisconsin’s professional development efforts are provided by UWC English Department representatives and include annual training on the placement process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES & CAMPUSES

- **Encourage collaboration across departments and offices.** In all three states, study sites provided examples of the ways in which collaboration between departments and units (both academic and administrative) can facilitate reform. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Long Beach City College worked with multiple committees as well as the math and English departments to develop and implement the reform, while close collaboration between the UWC English Department and the Enrollment Services Offices on each campus ensured that the placement process went as smoothly as possible.
- **Build relationships between colleges and feeder high schools to support Multiple Measures reform.** Over more than a decade, Long Beach City College has developed strong ties with the local school district and California State University-Long Beach which developed into the Long Beach College Promise in 2008. Bakersfield College has been involved with the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) for many years, which helped the college to access high school transcripts.
- **Provide additional counseling and information to students.** Improved placement is just the first step; students want access to more intensive counseling in order to understand placement decisions, and how they should plan their course schedule to meet academic goals.

IV. Challenges to Instructional Practices and Supports

Early results from Multiple Measures provide evidence that the reform can affect the percentage of students placed into developmental education classes. Bakersfield College offers one example, as mentioned previously, where the use of Multiple Measures impacted the placement of 68 percent of the incoming fall 2014 cohort, placing them in college level courses for which they would have otherwise been ineligible. At the same time, these shifts in placement trends create new challenges in providing appropriate instruction and academic supports to students.

Finding 6: Multiple Measures has meant changes in the composition of both developmental education and college level classrooms.

While Multiple Measures has provided students with new opportunities to place into college level courses, it has also led to an increased concentration of students with the lowest skill levels in developmental education.

Faculty members at multiple campuses reported changes in the needs of students placed through Multiple Measures. At Long Beach, English faculty felt that more students with lower skill levels were being placed in college level courses. As a result, shifts in instruction were required in two directions: first, to meet the needs of lower performing students now concentrated in developmental education courses and second for the more diverse set of skills now found in college level classes. Similarly, at Davidson, faculty members reported concerns about the concentration of very low-skilled students remaining in developmental education classes without higher achieving students in the same class to act as informal tutors. One faculty member teaching college-level courses at Central Piedmont said he believed his students overall performed at markedly lower levels on their first assignment during the spring 2014 semester than in any other semester in his experience at the college.

To address these shifts, colleges and campuses developed new academic supports to help students succeed after placement. For example, Long Beach added a new course designed for students who were borderline in their placement between college and developmental English. After having students complete a number of assignments for the class to gather additional information on their skill levels, faculty can recommend that a student either continue on to college level English or remain in the developmental course. Students at Central Piedmont who were struggling in college level math courses had access to a supplemental lab that was designed to be integrated into the course. The UW Colleges took a similar approach, providing support or tutorial courses alongside regular coursework to supplement instruction and help students maintain progress.

Interestingly, despite the challenges inherent in the shifts in class composition in both directions, faculty did not receive individualized data or reports out of the placement process to help them adjust instruction. Administrators defended this choice by arguing that providing such data to faculty would impact student experiences in the classroom. One explained, “We don’t want the faculty to do anything different for those students than they would for any other students, because we want to see what our interventions are doing.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION & SUPPORTS

- **Share placement data to identify the academic needs of students.** While college administrators were concerned about identifying students placed through Multiple Measures, assessment results used in the placement process can also be used as diagnostic data to help administrators and faculty identify areas of greatest academic need among students.
- **Provide faculty with professional development on addressing the individual needs of students.** Colleges can work with faculty on how to differentiate instruction based on the needs of individual students or groups of students. This type of instruction requires a shift in traditional pedagogy and will require ongoing professional development and support.

V. Conclusions and Next Steps for the Research

Our study of Multiple Measures reforms across six sites in three states, each with differing policy contexts and postsecondary structures, reveals several key similarities regarding implementation. These include continued reliance on traditional placement testing, the addition of high school GPA as a key piece of evidence in placement decisions, and the incorporation of non-cognitive indicators such as student surveys. Another common theme was that Multiple Measures, for all the positive early signals, is labor-intensive work that requires significant additional supports at a time when public institutions are operating with limited resources.

Important differences in approach and implementation also emerged—especially with regard to the ways in which the degree of policy centralization affect scale-up and buy-in at the institutional level. Factors such as institutional will and capacity to enact these changes—as well as the capacity of the system to support change—will be central in determining the long-term success of these policies.

Continuing to Track Implementation

While all three states in our study have made real progress in reforming college placement through use of Multiple Measures, this work is just beginning in several important respects—and especially at the institution and classroom levels. As reforms continue to roll out, it will be critical to track progress; identify challenges; and understand how colleges, campuses, and faculty and staff react to stages of the reform as it comes to scale. Using our analytic framework—which looks at the influence of system policy, institutional practices, and classroom instruction—we pose continuing questions for the research moving forward; see Table 4.

Table 4: Multiple Measures Implementation Research Questions

STATE AND SYSTEM POLICY CONTEXT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale-up: How have the processes, plans, and specific measures used for placement evolved over time and phases of implementation? What have states and institutions learned from the successes and challenges faced by these early implementers? How are these successes and challenges communicated? What changes are states making to their policies as a result of this feedback? • Data Systems: Have new data structures been developed to support this work and evaluate its success? If so, what do these systems include? If not, what additional resources would be needed? What role, if any, do campus-level personnel play in informing data system design? How can these structures build on existing efforts to align secondary and postsecondary initiatives? • System Supports: How have states expanded training and professional development as the reform matures? What specific models and approaches for Multiple Measures professional development appear to be most effective?
COLLEGE AND CAMPUS CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity: How are institutions addressing the capacity and professional development challenges resulting from Multiple Measures implementation? • Advising: How are institutions responding to the need for additional placement advising supports? How has advising changed since the introduction of the reform? What opportunities exist for institutions to expand student supports in light of stagnant or declining resources? • Course Offerings: How have course offerings, course loads, and faculty assignments changed as a result of Multiple Measures reform?
CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND ACADEMIC SUPPORTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction: How do colleges address the shifting composition of developmental education classrooms? What curricular changes and instructional strategies have been implemented in response? What practices appear to be most successful? • Academic Supports: What tools and techniques can allow for integration and use of Multiple Measures data beyond placement decisions? How does the identification of specific student needs support academic services?

Assessing the Effects of Multiple Measures Reform

As Multiple Measures reforms reach full implementation, it will be critical to assess their effects on a variety of specific student outcomes. Although colleges and systems are examining some data on their own, independent analyses of institutional level outcomes data will be essential to determine the impact of the reform on student success.

Analyses should include how Multiple Measures initiatives have impacted student:

- Placement outcomes;
- Completion rates in the *initial semester*, by subject (i.e. math and English) and course level (i.e., developmental education and college level courses);
- Completion of the developmental education sequence;
- Enrollment in college level courses;

- Retention rates during the first year of college;
- Completion rates towards a certificate or degree; and,
- Successful transfer to a four-year institution.

States and institutions have advanced Multiple Measures reforms in the hopes of reducing poor placement decisions that are too often a roadblock to success. Additional research, both around ongoing implementation at our study sites and at institutions that build on this early adopter work, can lead to more definitive assessments of the impact of Multiple Measures reform on both institutional practice and student outcomes. Such research will be essential to establish a wider angle lens on policy implementation structures and supports and identify which types of Multiple Measures policies lead to improved student outcomes in the two-year college setting.

Appendix A. Case Studies



Multiple Measures for Student Placement at Bakersfield College in California: Building Multiple Measures Reforms in a Decentralized System

This profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide multiple measures policy for student placement at Bakersfield College in California. This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of multiple measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges in three states. Bakersfield College was selected as a case study site because of its leadership in assessment reform in California, including involvement in the Student Transcript-Enhanced Placement Project (STEPS), a study that tested whether high school transcript data can improve the likelihood of accurate placement and student success. In addition, Bakersfield College provides an example of a community college serving a large, rural population that is attempting to utilize student placement as a central mechanism to improve outcomes within a decentralized community college system.

To develop an understanding of how the California policy on multiple measures has played out at Bakersfield College, RFA visited the campus in May 2014. Our field work included interviews with five college administrators and four faculty members (two in math and two in English), as well as four student focus groups. This profile provides important background on Bakersfield College's experience with multiple measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment

THE CALIFORNIA CONTEXT

The California Community Colleges System has been at the forefront of Multiple Measures reform since the passage of Title 5 in 1986. These regulations:

- *Require more than one piece of evidence in placing students in introductory-level classes.*
- *Allow colleges considerable discretion in selecting which measures to use.*

With the passage of legislation in 2011 and 2012, the state required the creation of a common assessment system to be used as one of the placement measures. In addition, the legislation required that the common assessment must be used in order for colleges to receive matriculation funds. Funding constraints have slowed progress, however, and the common assessment has not yet been developed. In addition, the decentralized nature of system governance, history of campus leadership and lack of accountability mechanisms has led to significant variation in implementation across campuses.

data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.¹¹

KEY FINDINGS FROM BC

- Bakersfield College uses a wide range of measures and criteria in its Multiple Measures system; practice varies by academic department.
- Involvement in an established postsecondary transition program with the local university and high schools facilitated the reform.
- Administrators are strong in support of the reform, while buy-in among faculty members varies by department.
- Supplemental student services are also being implemented to support student success.

I. Local and Community College Content: Large Rural Campus with a University Partnership

Bakersfield College serves Kern County, which is the fourth largest agricultural producing county in the United States and is the main economic driver in the region. The county often experiences high seasonal unemployment due to the nature of agricultural work and lower average-wages compared to both the state’s and the nation’s rate.¹² Figure 1 and Table 1 summarizes salient demographic information.

Figure 1: Kern County Demographic Information (2012)



¹¹ The profile was verified by the point of contact at the college; data included in the profile offers a stand-alone summary and will be used for cross-site analyses.

¹² <http://www.co.kern.ca.us/econdev/pdf/ceds-2012-2013.pdf>

Table 1: Kern County Demographic Information (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	37.6%
African American	6.3%
Hispanic	50.3%
Asian	4.8%
Other	1%

Source: U.S Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

Founded in 1913, Bakersfield College is one of three colleges in the Kern Community College District.¹³ Along with the main campus, there are three additional satellite campuses. The college serves more than 27,000 students, primarily part time and Hispanic (see Table 2). However, significant funding cuts to California’s community colleges (\$1.5 billion in budget cuts between 2007–08 and 2011–12) have meant reductions in staff and course offerings.¹⁴

Table 2. Student Characteristics (2011)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS				
Full-Time Equivalent: 11,841			Total Headcount: 27,426	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 28%			Part-Time: 72%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 31%	African American: 7%	Hispanic: 53%	Asian American: 4%	Other: 5%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 13%	Associates Degree: 22%	Certificate: 4%	Other ⁵ : 68%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

Bakersfield College has been involved with the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) for many years. The program provides information about postsecondary education and financial aid to low-income students and geographic regions with low college participation rates. The Bakersfield Cal-SOAP students are part of a grant project with CSU-Bakersfield that provides coaching by counselors-in-training from the university who help local students with the college transition process.

¹³ <http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/about>

¹⁴ <http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=1048>

¹⁵ Other is the sum of the non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

II. Features of Multiple Measures for Student Placement at Bakersfield: Varying Measures across Academic Departments as a Result of Multiple Catalysts

While the college has a history of implementing multiple measures in a variety of ways, concerns about implementation and its impact on students have led to a new wave of reforms. In a follow-up to the STEPS project, each academic department at Bakersfield College has developed its own set of measures and criteria.

Participation in a statewide study was a catalyst for reform. Between 2012 and 2013, Bakersfield College was one of 11 community colleges in California to participate in STEPS, a study by the RP Group, in which colleges used Cal-PASS Plus data to see if using the transcripts of recent high school graduates can facilitate more accurate placement decisions for students and predict their likelihood for success in college courses.¹⁶ From this study, a correlation between high school GPA and college course success rates was found, similar to findings at Long Beach City College, which has been a leader in this area of reform.

The college has begun to pilot a new placement system. After local high school staff voiced concerns about the college placement process, Bakersfield College piloted a new multiple measures process for student placement called Transfer Making it Happen (TMIH). Two members of the initiative’s work group—the project lead and the counseling department dean—took primary responsibility for examining individual high school transcripts and applying the measures to determine placement for each of the 454 pilot students from the Cal-SOAP project in the spring of 2014. These students are expected to enroll during the 2014-15 academic year. Once the transcripts were reviewed and placement decisions made, the transcripts had to be returned immediately to the high schools, along with the individual students’ placement decisions.

A wide range of measures and criteria are included across the departments to determine transfer placement. The individual departments involved in the initiative (English, math and academic development (developmental education)) identified separate measures and criteria for placement decisions (see Table 3 below). As seen in Table 3, the measures used include the Early Assessment Program (EAP), COMPASS placement test, AP testing results, high school GPA, most recent coursework grades and University of California high school subject requirements. Measures were also used to “bump up” students from lower to higher courses, including both developmental education and transfer level classes; students cannot be placed in a lower level course through this process. In English and math, students could only be moved up one level, while in reading the criteria and number of levels that a student could move was more flexible. A math faculty member explained the rationale for allowing students to be moved up only one level: “We were very firm that we did not want students to be bumped up more than one level because we had done some data in the past on our own that showed ...when students were bumped up two levels higher than where they placed, the success rates were just terrible.”

¹⁶ Cal-PASS Plus is a pre-K through postsecondary student data system sponsored by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office.

Table 3. Eligibility Criteria for Students' Placement in Transfer-Level Courses or in Higher Course Level

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PLACEMENT IN TRANSFER LEVEL COURSES	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO BE MOVED UP IN PLACEMENT LEVEL
<p>ENGLISH</p> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Score at the College Ready Level on the <i>Early Assessment Program (EAP)</i>⁷ aligned to CSU → Score at the Conditional Level⁸ on the EAP and earn a C or better in the 12th grade Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) → Score a 3 or better on the English AP Test → Meet cut score on COMPASS 	<p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Score in the borderline range and satisfy two of the measures below → Satisfy four of the measures below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school GPA of 3.0 • Four years of English with a C grade • AP English in junior or senior year with a B grade • Any English class with a B grade (not <i>CAHSEE preparation class</i>)⁹ • Reading COMPASS score of 06 • Complete 9 of any "a-g" course requirements for UC¹⁰
<p>READING</p> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Score at the College Ready Level on the EAP aligned to CSU → Score at the Conditional Level¹¹ on the EAP and earn a C or better in the 12th grade ERWC → Placement in Transfer Level English (see additional criteria above) 	<p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Score in the borderline range and earn A's and B's in "many" a-g courses and have a higher English placement; → Score near the borderline for the lowest developmental education reading level, but earn "good grades in classes that require reading" and "good overall GPA" bumped from Level 0 to Level 4 Placement in Reading
<p>MATH</p> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Meet cut score on COMPASS → Score a 3 or better on the Calculus Advance Placement (AP) Test 	<p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → High school GPA of 3.0 or above without physical education included → At least a B in their highest level math class

Faculty member support varies in the English and math departments. While English department faculty members participating in the study appear to be on board with the use of multiple measures, the math faculty members are “more skeptical” about the use of more than one test to determine placement. Previously in English, the faculty members had used writing prompts along with the ASSET placement test, so the department is open to including indicators beyond the COMPASS. As one English faculty member explained:

From my viewpoint, people are on board in the English department. They like this. And those that were involved, I think saw the value in meeting with the counselors, meeting with others, taking a look at very current information about placement and multiple measures. And the data, high school transcripts, that seemed to show more than just a placement test measure, and the benefits of that. I think they were very open to that.

In math, however, past problems with the enforcement of pre-requisites and placement adjustment decisions made by counselors unfamiliar with the requirements of the math courses led to concerns from the math faculty about the placement process and support for a single, objective score to determine placement. This has resulted in limited buy-in from that department and led to a narrower set of measures for placement in math as compared to other departments.

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: Limited System Support with Faculty in the Lead

The limited specificity of system policy around multiple measures and the strong role played by faculty members have both influenced implementation at the college.

Revisions to state regulations triggered new discussions on multiple measures implementation. Revisions to the Title 5 regulations—requiring the use of multiple measures for student placement in the wake of the Student Success Act of 2012—revived discussions about multiple measures implementation.¹⁷ While the use of multiple measures has been a requirement for decades, the new regulations are more specific; the regulations clarify that the use of two measures that are highly correlated do not meet the guidelines. Nevertheless, the policy remains vague and continues to allow colleges to implement multiple measures in many different ways.

Existing relationships outside the college facilitated review of high school transcript data. The college has worked with CSU-Bakersfield for many years through the Cal-SOAP program. This collaborative relationship helped the college to access the high school transcripts that would have been difficult otherwise.

Faculty members have taken a leading role in the reform. The multiple measures pilot taking place has been led by a faculty member with extensive experience working at the system level on similar initiatives. While she has been given leave from some of her teaching responsibilities to lead the project, coordinating the project has presented a challenge and highlights the lack of institutional research capacity on the campus.

IV. Multiple Measures Assessment Data Use: Uneven Access to Information

Bakersfield College will have its first cohort of students placed with their new multiple measures system in classrooms in fall 2014, so outcome data is limited at this stage. Access to assessment information is focused at the high school level, while faculty members do not receive information on multiple measures results that might provide helpful background information on their students.

High schools have primary access to placement data. Using the individual student reports from their COMPASS placement tests, the college placement team used the high school transcript

¹⁷ SB 1456 (Student Success Act of 2012): Required the community college system to: 1) target existing student services resources to support orientation, assessment, and education planning; 2) utilize a statewide system of common assessment once available as a condition of receiving funding; and 3) participate in the statewide Student Success Scorecard to report progress in improving success rates.

data to make adjustments to the student's placement levels as recorded on their COMPASS report form. The placement team then submitted the forms to the high school guidance counselors so that they could discuss the results with their students; the forms were then used to register students for classes. In addition, the high school transcript data used by the college to place students was not accessible through Cal-PASS and therefore had to be reviewed and returned to the high school.

Students included in the TMIH cohort will not be identified to faculty on class rosters.

In order to ensure equal treatment in the classroom, the initiative workgroup decided not to notify faculty as to which students were placed into their classes using multiple measures. One administrator explained that, "we don't want the faculty to do anything different for those students than they would for any other students, because we want to see what our interventions are doing." Faculty have not yet had cohort students in their classrooms, so the impact of the decision on instructional practice is unknown.

V. Academic and Student Services Based on Placement: Additional Services are Being Provided to Students in the Multiple Measure Cohort

Funding reductions diminished the number of counselors on campus, so faculty and administrators are taking on new roles and expanding existing supports to students involved in the project, with support from Cal-SOAP.

The college has suffered significant cutbacks in the number of counselors on staff, making it a challenge to provide individual support to students. Students expressed that it is difficult to make an appointment with a counselor due to the large number of students at the campus. One student stated that: "The ratio of counselors to students...there is a gap there. If there were more counselors, they could be more involved, but with so many students, there is only so much they can do. You can only do so much with what you have."

A mentoring group is being developed to track and support the student cohort. In an effort to address the limited number of counselors available on campus, a team of 30 administrators and faculty members from the math, English and advanced development departments, as well as remaining counselors at the college, will be trained to act as mentors for the students in the TMIH cohort. Each faculty member will track students over their first year. For the students' part, cohort members agree to touch base with their mentors at the first sign of academic trouble.

Accelerated and compressed developmental coursework is provided as an additional option to improve completion rates. If students are on the borderline between placement levels but show a strong high school GPA overall and in the coursework related to that subject area, they can also be placed into accelerated or compressed courses that can move them through the developmental education curriculum more quickly. Several such courses have been developed by the college in English, math, and advanced development departments.

Summer bridge programs will be offered for students to help with the transition to college. Multiple bridge programs are being developed by the college to address the needs of

students near the border between placement levels based on their multiple measures results. While each program will have a somewhat different focus based on the common placement level of the students included, each will also work with students on similar tasks, such as identifying their learning styles, orienting them to the campus and the resources available, talking to them about study skills and the more rigorous expectations of college and meeting with their mentors.

VI. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Limited System Support has Led to Training Developed at the College

While the system has historically allowed colleges to determine how to implement multiple measures, new resources are being developed to support reform and increase consistency.

The system office does not currently provide training or oversight to colleges regarding multiple measures implementation. With the broad requirements around multiple measures and a lack of accountability from the system office on the implementation of multiple measures, the system has a very limited role in implementation on the college campus. Colleges have individually determined how to implement multiple measures regarding assessments and processes.

Bakersfield College delivered its own training to college counselors and advisors.

Historically, the counseling office at the college had been responsible for placement and course registration. However, through the multiple measures pilot process, it became clear that some of the practices used by counselors to place students were inconsistent and that multiple measures were primarily used when a student challenged their placement. It was therefore important for the work group to explain the new multiple measures pilot to the counseling staff, ask for their input, and orient them to the process.

VII. Successes and Challenges of Implementation

Although the initiative is new to the college, a number of successes in placement have been identified while challenges remain as implementation takes hold for the first cohort of students.

Successes

Building the relationship with area high schools through Cal-SOAP was an important foundation for the initiative. The existing relationship between Bakersfield College and some of the high schools through the Cal-SOAP grant helped the college to identify the cohort of students to be included in the multiple measures pilot. At the same time, the college also reached out to the high schools to learn more about the ways in which they could improve their relationship, which helped to identify the problems associated with the assessment and placement process.

An increase in the number of students placed above the level of coursework they would have taken based only on the COMPASS is seen as an early success. The use of multiple measures impacted the placement of 68 percent of the incoming cohort of students; some students were placed higher in more than one subject area. However, data has yet to be collected on

the outcomes for students placed using the new multiple measures process and so the full impact of the reform remains unknown.

The administration of placement tests in the high school also improved student placement in college level courses. The college found an increase in the percentage of students who were placed in transfer level courses once the college began sponsoring placement testing at the high schools instead of just at the college site. In math, the college reported an increase from three percent to 12 percent, while in English the increase was only two percent (29 percent to 31 percent), and there was no increase in reading.

Challenges

Accessing high school transcript data proved to be an implementation barrier. High school transcript data is central to the multiple measures policy. However, the college could not receive copies of the students' high school transcript data. Instead, it worked through Cal-SOAP to gain supervised access. Once the transcripts had been reviewed and placement decisions made, the transcripts had to be returned immediately to the high schools.

The college is balancing the development of a more streamlined process with the need for a thorough review of transcript data. The process of reviewing transcript data for nearly 500 students was described as “tedious” and “cumbersome” by those involved, and administrators spoke about the need for the process to become more automated if it is scaled with a larger number of students. At the same time, there was concern that there needs to be a human component to the review of the entire transcript.

VIII. Conclusions

Bakersfield College provides an example of an institution with limited resources but an urgency to reform their system of placing students as a way to improve overall completion rates. Strong support from the president of the college, the leadership of a faculty member with experience at the system level, and consensus among other administrators for the need to change the measures used for placement has been central to their early momentum. As Bakersfield College continues the roll out of their multiple measures reforms, there will be much more to learn from the campus about implementation.



Multiple Measures for Student Placement at Long Beach City College in California:

The Role of a Leading College in pioneering Multiple Measures Reform

The following profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide Multiple Measures policy for student placement at **Long Beach City College (LBCC)** in California.

This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of Multiple Measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges across three states. LBCC was selected as a case study site because of its pioneering work in Multiple Measures reform in the state. In 2011, LBCC conducted a study that related high school transcript data to college performance and found a significant association between high school and college performance in English and math for recent high school graduates. Building on that work, LBCC developed an algorithm to place students based on multiple assessments that is being reviewed by colleges across the state and is seen as a model. This work was further supported by existing relationships between LBCC and the local California State University campus and high school district.

To develop an understanding of how the California policy on Multiple Measures has played out at LBCC, Research for Action (RFA) visited the campus in April 2014. Our field work included interviews with four college administrators and four faculty members (two in math and two in English), as well as four student focus groups.

THE CALIFORNIA CONTEXT

The California Community Colleges System has been at the forefront of Multiple Measures reform since the passage of Title 5 in 1986. These regulations:

- *Require more than one piece of evidence in placing students in introductory-level classes.*
- *Allow colleges considerable discretion in selecting which measures to use.*

With the passage of legislation in 2011 and 2012, the state required the creation of a common assessment system to be used as one of the placement measures. In addition, the legislation required that the common assessment must be used in order for colleges to receive matriculation funds. Funding constraints have slowed progress, however, and the common assessment has not yet been developed. In addition, the decentralized nature of system governance, history of campus leadership and lack of accountability mechanisms has led to significant variation in implementation across campuses.

This profile provides important background on LBCC’s experience with Multiple Measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.¹⁸

KEY FINDINGS FROM LBCC

- Early internal research has found promising student outcomes as a result of the placement reforms and made the college a pioneer in the system.
- LBCC’s Multiple Measures placement process is comprised of several assessment systems that create a series of opportunities for students to place into college level coursework.
- Collaboration between the college and Long Beach Unified School District has been central to the success of the reform to date.
- The level of support for the initiative is strong among administrators, most faculty and students involved in Promise Pathways.

I. Local and Community College Context: An Urban Campus serving a Diverse Population and supported by strong Educational Partnerships

Long Beach City College is located on the border of Long Beach and Lakewood within Los Angeles County. Lakewood is a small city with a median household income is \$78,876 which is well above the county median. In contrast, Long Beach is the second largest city in Los Angeles County with about a half-million people (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Demographics for Los Angeles County (2012)



¹⁸ The profile was verified by the point of contact at the college; data included in the profile offers a stand-alone summary and will be used for cross-site analyses.

Table 1: Demographics for Los Angeles County (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	27.3%
African American	9.3%
Hispanic	48.2%
Asian	14.5%
Other	0.7%

Source: U.S Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

Founded in 1927, Long Beach City College (LBCC) serves a high percentage of Hispanic students; close to half of the student population is Hispanic or Latino with relatively similar proportions of African Americans, white and Asian students making up the remaining college population (see Table 2). Over time, the population served by the college has transitioned from a solidly “middle class community...to an immigrant community” with a large portion of first generation college students and increasing poverty levels, explained one administrator.

Table 2. Student Characteristics (2011)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS				
Full-Time Equivalent: 15,244			Total Headcount: 35,722	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 30%			Part-Time: 70%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 21%	African American: 15%	Hispanic: 43%	Asian American: 14%	Other: 7%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 13%	Associates Degree: 16%	Certificate: 5%	Other*: 71%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

*Other is the sum of the non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

PLACEMENT-RELATED INITIATIVES

The **Long Beach College Promise** is a joint initiative started in 2008 with the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University at Long Beach (CSU-LB). It provides many benefits and services, including a tuition-free first semester (**Promise Scholarship**) at LBCC; and CSU-LB admission to those who complete minimum college preparatory requirements or minimum community college transfer requirements. Collaboration between the leaders of LBCC, LBUSD and CSU-LB has been in place for more than a decade; one administrator explained that these institutions “have been willing to work with each other to a point that is has become an expectation” in the community.

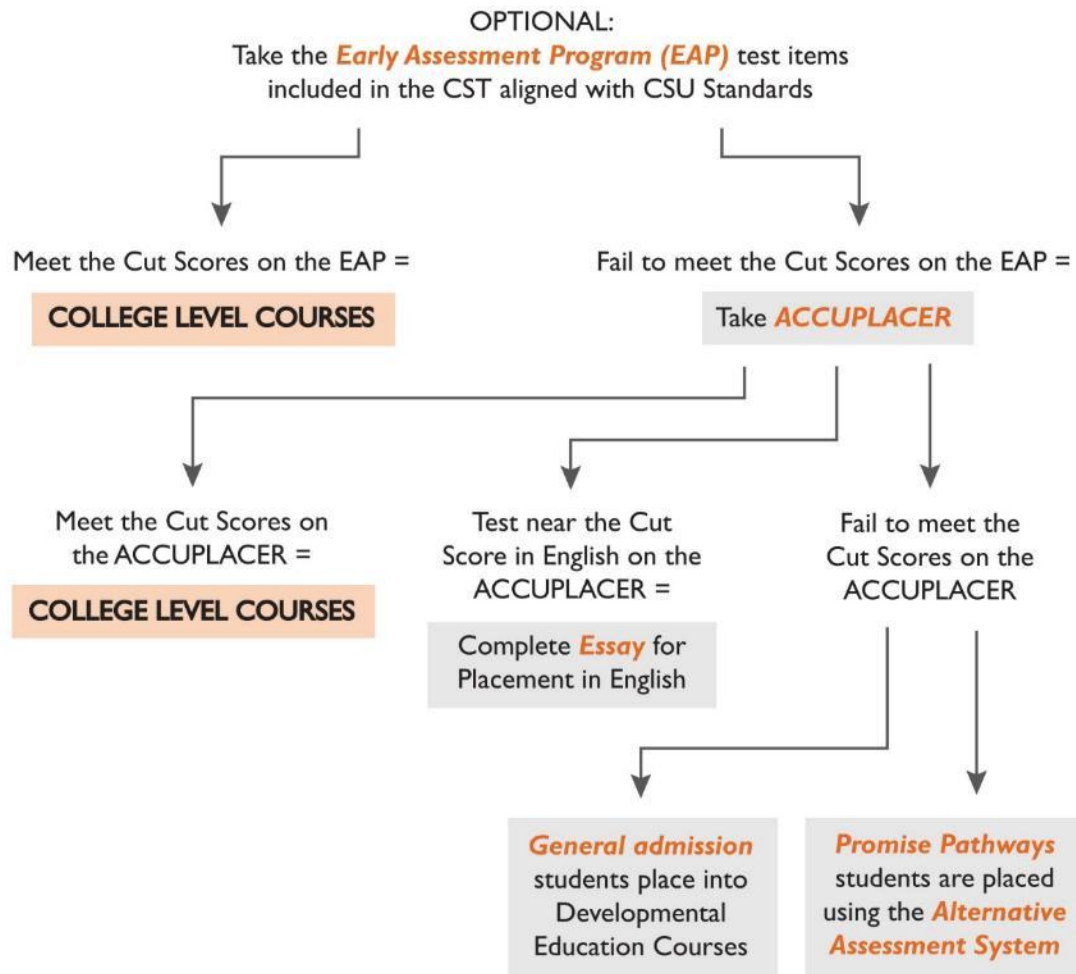
Promise Pathways is an expansion of the Long Beach College Promise and provides an additional opportunity for students involved in the program to be placed into college level courses through LBCC’s **Alternative Assessment System**. This system uses an algorithm that combines high school achievement data (overall GPA, recent course grades, California Standards Test (CST) scores and courses taken) to determine placement for students. To be included in the program, students must agree to complete key foundational courses in the first semester and enroll full time. While students are not required to participate in the Promise Pathways program to receive a Promise Scholarship, the first cohort of 976 students (2012) in Promise Pathways was from LBUSD. Participation grew to more than 1,900 students by 2014 representing five high school districts in the area and about one third of all first time students.

II. Features of Multiple Measures for Student Placement at LBCC: Multiple Pathways to College Level Courses

LBCC’s Multiple Measures placement process is comprised of several assessments, and several opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness for college level coursework. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. LBCC Placement Process

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE PLACEMENT PROCESS



All students have the option to take the following assessments to determine college placement:

1. The **Early Assessment Program (EAP)** provides students with their first opportunity to place into college level courses. California State University (CSU) identified and supplemented test items in both English and math included in the 11th grade California Standards Test (CST) that demonstrate college readiness. Students *electing* to take these items (which together comprise the EAP) at the end of their junior year in high school are notified online as to whether they are able to take college level courses.
2. **Traditional Placement Test:** All students who do not take the EAP portion of the CST or fail to meet the cut score for college level placement are required to take the **ACCUPLACER** in both English and math as part of the application process at LBCC to determine placement.

3. **Written Essay:** Those near the lower cut score on the English component of the ACCUPLACER are asked to write an essay which is scored and used to determine placement.

Promise Pathways students may take the EAP and are required to take the ACCUPLACER as described above. Those still ineligible for college level math and English courses based on the results of these assessments have an additional opportunity to be placed in college level coursework through the **Alternative Assessment System for Promise Pathways**, which uses an algorithm that combines the following to determine placement:

- Overall high school GPA
- The most recent high school math and English course grades
- California Standards Test (CST) scores in math and English; and
- High school math and English courses completed

As noted above, students must agree to enroll full-time and complete key foundational courses beginning in their first semester at the college to be eligible for Promise Pathways.

Once the placement process is complete, Promise Pathways students meet with a counselor who explains how the outcomes of the ACCUPLACER and the alternative assessment system have been used to determine their placement and recommends courses for the first semester.

Internal research on the use of high school data for placement was the impetus for Multiple Measures reforms at LBCC. In 2011, LBCC partnered with a California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS), a data warehouse that links student performance from pre-K through 12 to college, to assess the degree to which high school transcript data was a strong indicator of college performance by tracking all LBUSD students who matriculated to LBCC. The analysis found that while standardized tests are a good indicator of how well students will perform on other standardized tests, high school grades are a better predictor of how well students will succeed in college courses.¹⁹

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: Data systems and local partnerships support reform

The community college system's policies, as well as the characteristics of the campus and the students it serves, have influenced the development and implementation of Multiple Measures at LBCC.

Broad policy direction and limited oversight by the system regarding Multiple Measures allowed for high customization at LBCC. Title 5 mandates a "holistic assessment" for placing students in which *Multiple Measures* are a required component of the placement assessment system. However, the system does not offer recommendations for the assessments to be included or the placement process to be used. In an effort to improve student success rates at the college, LBCC conducted internal research on the use of high school achievement data in placement to improve student outcomes, and developed the Alternative Assessment System as a result of that work.

¹⁹ Hetts, J., Taylor, M., & Willett, T. (2012) Assessing Transcript-Based Placement. Presentation at the RP Group's 2012 Student Success Conference.

A system of shared governance requires the inclusion of faculty in local college policy.

Assembly Bill 1725, legislation passed in 1988, ensures that college faculty members play a strong role in the development of college policy, including Multiple Measures. The law mandates that college administrators "consult collegially" with their faculty-led Academic Senates. This tradition of faculty leadership has influenced the roll out of the Promise Pathway program and the alternative placement system. Specifically, the Promise Pathways Coordinating Team includes faculty in English, reading and math and is co-chaired by the faculty chair of the Student Success Committee and the Vice President for Student Support Services.

Existing relationships with other educational institutions facilitated the implementation of Promise Pathways. As noted above, LBCC has had a longstanding relationship with the LBUSD and California State University-Long Beach through the College Promise initiative. LBCC leveraged this history of collaboration to facilitate the launch of the initiative as an expansion of the Long Beach College Promise.

IV. Multiple Measures Assessment Data Use: Results Supporting Reform

Campus research capacity has allowed for the collection and analysis of student data on the reform, but the results are only shared with faculty in the aggregate.

The college has collected extensive student outcomes data. LBCC has conducted considerable internal analysis of student placement and success data over the course of the initiative, and it has shared aggregated student outcomes data with faculty and administrators at LBCC and elsewhere. A further discussion on the results of these analyses is presented below.

Individual student-level Multiple Measures data are reported to students but not faculty members. Students involved in Promise Pathways receive the results of their test soon after completing the assessment. However, they do not receive their course recommendations for placement until they meet with a counselor who explains the results and how placement was determined. Faculty members do not know which students in their classes are placed using the EAP, ACCUPLACER or the alternative assessment system. One faculty member explained that "individual student results are not given to prevent faculty from clouding their perceptions" based on whether they are in the Promise Pathways program.

V. Academic and Student Services based on Placement: Additional Supports provided with Multiple Measures Reform

Once placement decisions are made, LBCC offers students additional counseling to help them understand what courses they need to take and academic services to help them succeed in those courses.

The Promise Pathways Program offers additional requirements and supports. Promise Pathways students sign a mutual responsibility agreement that specifies a list of requirements such as enrolling full-time, maintaining a 2.0 GPA, and taking their English, math and reading courses during

their first semester at LBCC. In return, Promise Pathways students receive priority registration and additional academic and career counseling each semester.²⁰ The availability of counselors in the Promise Pathways program was reported as helpful to participating students. One student explained that:

We don't know how to register so the [counselors from the college] were there to help us...it was very helpful. Counselors reviewed our placement results and explained that the test score was low but my grades were high enough to skip developmental education. They are really helpful and one of the counselors was amazing – he said he hoped I succeeded.

A new course was created for students who placed between college and developmental level English. The English Department created a new course designed for students who were “borderline” in their placement between the English 1 (college level) and English 105 class (one level below college level English). After having students complete a number of assignments for the class to gather additional information about their skill level, faculty members are allowed to:

- Recommend that a student be placed in English 1 or English 105, and/or
- Work with students throughout the course on curricular material aligned to the learning outcomes associated with either English 1 or English 105 and give students credit for the appropriate course if they are able to show proficiency.

VI. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Limited System Support requires a Strong College Role

The college administration has taken the lead in the development and implementation of Multiple Measures reform at LBCC.

The system office does not currently provide training or oversight to colleges regarding Multiple Measures implementation. With the broad requirements around Multiple Measures and the lack of accountability in this area, the system has a very limited role in implementation on the college campus. Colleges have individually determined how to implement Multiple Measures regarding assessments and processes.

LBCC administrators have worked with faculty on the development of the placement process and shared the data results. One administrator explained that math and English faculty worked together with administrators to examine data to determine the impact of alternative assessment measures on student placement and success rates once implemented. In the math department, a committee of four faculty members worked with LBCC administrators to design the algorithm used to calculate placement based on the measures. While English faculty members were not as intimately involved with the initial design of the process, they have been equally involved in discussions around the impact on students and classroom instruction, the review of placement data and the design and implementation of the algorithm in subsequent years.

²⁰ <http://www.lbcc.edu/apps/promisepathways/>

Formal professional development around the new placement process has not been offered by the college. Professional development on the campus “must be faculty driven” explained one administrator. The Academic Senate at the college has not requested professional development on the alternative assessment system as it is still being implemented with only a cohort of students, and so resources have not been used for this type of training.

VII. Successes and Challenges of Implementation

The state and system policy environment as well as the local college context provide a particular set of both opportunities and challenges for implementation:

Successes

Administrators championed the use of Multiple Measures and have the support of the math faculty. With the college president’s full support, all administrators we interviewed expressed strong buy-in for the use of Multiple Measures in student placement. One administrator explained that initially some math faculty members were hesitant. However, after becoming involved in testing out different scenarios and variables, the department was convinced of the validity of the process. One math faculty member confirmed this, stating that “there is no blowback or negative feedback whatsoever” from the math faculty about the initiative. In general, math faculty felt that it is “an improvement from ACCUPLACER” and that they “have not seen huge misplacements”.

Investing in the colleges’ research capacity provided leadership for the initiative. The college invested in its research capacity by hiring additional staff for the Office of Institutional Research, and it developed the alternative assessment algorithm described above.

Analyses of student outcome have shown promising results. LBCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness found that compared to the 2011 first-time LBUSD students, a greater percentage of fall 2012 and fall 2013 Promise Pathways students attempted and successfully completed college level English and Math courses. Specifically, the 2012 cohort of Promise Pathways students showed increases in the percentage of students placed in college level both math and English courses. Further, the same cohort completed college level English and math in their first year at a rate that exceeds what the most recent available cohort achieved in six years.²¹

Capitalizing on the strong partnership between the LBUSD and the LBCC was central to the initiative. LBUSD and LBCC boast a strong partnership since 1994. The Long Beach College Promise is an example of their partnership to provide financial and academic support for students to progress through college if they are able to enroll full time and complete coursework in their first semester while maintaining a 2.0 GPA. Implementing Multiple Measures was folded under the Promise Pathways Initiative, a signature effort of the Long Beach College Promise.

²¹ <http://www.lbcc.edu/PromisePathways/documents/First-Term%20Results%20of%20F2013%20Cohort%20Promise%20Pathways%20Students%20-%20FINAL%202122014.pdf>

Challenges

Accessing individual student-level data from school districts was difficult. Administrators explained that “the challenge is getting the data from the school districts” and that some “districts were required to ask the parents of the high school students applying to LBCC to sign waivers to release the transcript data.”

English faculty members were more hesitant in their support for the reform. Though English faculty members were open to using more than one measure in placing students, they believe that the verdict is still out on its success in helping students progress through college. One faculty member said that the Multiple Measures algorithm is good at predicting student behavior, like persistence and the likelihood of turning in homework, but is not good at predicting the skill level needed to succeed in the course.

The college had to independently make the case for Multiple Measures reform. Without direct support from the state, LBCC has had to independently make the case on campus for the reform, while developing and implementing the use of new measures. One administrator stated,

We have a loose structure of governance in the system. Our college needs a unified front in the governing board and leadership to make this shift. Faculty members see that they own placement in their classroom which is fine but it is a shared responsibility – administrators are also responsible of placement along with faculty. It is difficult to make those shifts because there is no clear leadership direction at the state level.

The reform has required faculty to change instruction and curriculum to address the changing needs of the students. English faculty felt that more students with lower skill levels were being placed in college level courses and as a result, shifts in instruction were needed to meet the needs of the lower performing students that remain in developmental education courses and the more diverse set of skills found in the college level classes.

VIII. Conclusions

LBCC has become a leader in Multiple Measures reforms in California’s community college system and the reforms put in place at the college are spreading to other institutions in the system. While implementation has taken place over time, the number of students involved has grown steadily to now represent about a third of all first time students. The college has also reported strong outcomes as a result of Multiple Measures placement based on internal research. As the system continues to develop additional resources to support assessment reform and the use of more Multiple Measures is scaled up over time at LBCC and across the system, it will be important to continue to track these reforms.



Multiple Measures for Student Placement at Davidson County Community College: An Early Adopter in North Carolina

The following profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide Multiple Measures policy for student placement at **Davidson County Community College (DCCC)** in North Carolina.

This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of Multiple Measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges across three states. Study sites were selected based on characteristics such as longstanding experience with Multiple Measures reform, diversity in state- and/or system-level policy, and student demographics. DCCC was selected as a North Carolina case study site because the college was the first in the state to implement the Multiple Measures policy, which provides important insight on the implementation experience of an early adopter.

To develop an understanding of how the North Carolina policy on Multiple Measures has played out DCCC, Research for Action (RFA) visited the campus in April 2014. Our field work included interviews with four college administrators and four faculty members (two in math and two in English), as well as two student focus groups

THE NORTH CAROLINA CONTEXT

The North Carolina policy is a top-down set of rules for placement to all colleges in the state, and will become mandatory in fall 2015. The policy establishes a "hierarchy" of measures. Students are exempted from developmental education courses if they graduated from high school in the last five years and satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

- 1) A high school GPA of at least 2.6 and demonstrated completion of four high school math courses.**
- 2) ACT/SAT scores that meet specific score thresholds.**
- 3) Traditional placement test scores that meet specific score thresholds.**

The hierarchy works as follows: Administrators first check students' high school transcripts to see if they meet the GPA requirements. Then, they check ACT/SAT scores. Students who do not qualify for the GPA or testing exemptions must take the diagnostic placement tests.

This profile provides important background on DCCC’s experience with Multiple Measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.²²

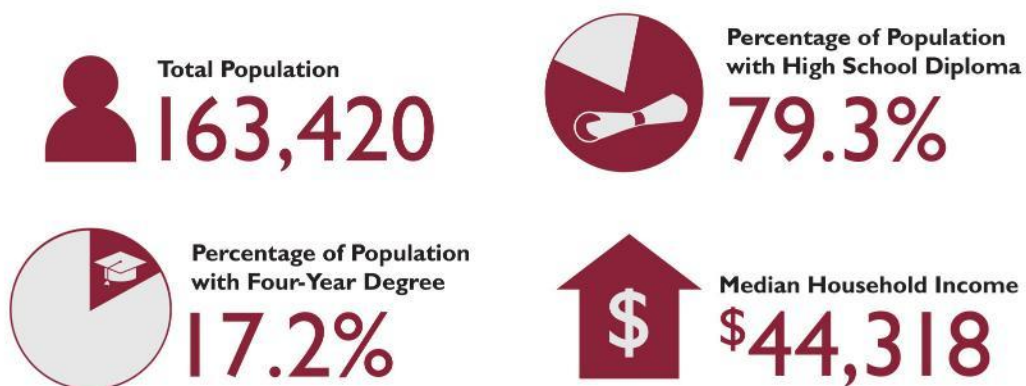
KEY FINDINGS FROM DCCC

- Multiple Measures transcript review went smoothly due in part to the small size of the campus, yet it is too early to gauge the policy’s effectiveness.
- Faculty have concerns about the 2.6 GPA cutoff, fearing students were placed into classes without adequate preparation.
- As a result of the policy, administrators and faculty are beginning to think about additional support services for struggling students in college-level courses.
- North Carolina is fertile ground for developmental education reforms, yet the sheer amount of policy change adds challenges for administrators and faculty.

I. Local and Community College Context: Serving a Rural Community

Davidson County Community College (DCCC) is located in central North Carolina in the city of Lexington and serves residents in both Davidson County and Davie County. Due to declining jobs in manufacturing, both counties suffer from high levels of unemployment. In particular, Davidson County reports that it has lost over 5,500 jobs over the last six years in furniture manufacturing and textile industries.²³ Figure 1 and Table 1 summarizes the salient demographic information.

Figure 1. Davidson County Demographic Information (2012)



²² The profile was verified by the point of contact at the college; data included in the profile offers a stand-alone summary and will be used for cross-site analyses.

²³ <http://www.visitdavidsoncounty.com/factsandinfo.html>

Table 1: Davidson County Demographic Information (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	81.9%
African American	9.1%
Hispanic	6.4%
Asian	1.3%
Other	1.3%

Source: U.S Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

DCCC was founded in 1963. The college opened the Davie campus and three satellite education centers due to increased enrollment numbers in the 2000s. Historically, the campus was established to educate and prepare those who needed to transition from an agricultural to a manufacturing-based economy. The college serves a primarily white student body (72%) of almost 6,000 students with African Americans as the next largest ethnic group served (17%). The split between full and part time students is nearly even at 47 percent and 53 percent respectively (see Table 2).

Table 2. Student Characteristics (2011)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS				
Full-Time Equivalent: 3,932			Total Headcount: 5,944	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 46.9%			Part-Time: 53.1%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 71.8%	African American: 16.9%	Hispanic: 3.8%	Asian American: 1.9%	Other: 5.6%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 19.3%	Associates Degree: 24.4%	Certificate: 28.5%	Other ³ : 48.4%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

A number of programs supported by the Gates Foundation are active at DCCC. It is home to the Achieving the Dream initiative and the Completion by Design Program, both of which are aimed at identifying strategies to increase graduation rates.²⁵ Davidson also participated in the Developmental

²⁴ The sum of non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

²⁵ <https://davidsonccc.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/DCCC%20Annual%20Report%20FULL%20LR.pdf>

Education Initiative, and, in 2010, DCCC signed on to the Student Completion Pledge, an initiative led by six national organizations to increase access and quality.

DCCC was the first community college in the state to implement Multiple Measures, doing so in March 2013 for students entering the following summer. Field interviews indicated that the college began planning for Multiple Measures implementation before the statewide policy was finalized (in February 2013).

II. Features of Multiple Assessment Measures at DCCC: Following North Carolina’s Highly Prescriptive Policy, Facing Some Faculty Pushback

Because the North Carolina Multiple Measures policy is top-down in nature, DCCC’s primary concern in the first year of implementation was compliance with the policy.

The North Carolina’s Multiple Measures policy applies to placement in college-level math and English/Language Arts, establishing a hierarchy of placement measures. Table 3 (below) details the scope of the Multiple Measures policy, including the cognitive skills on which it is based, as well as the subject areas to which it applies.

Table 3: North Carolina’s Multiple Measures for College Placement Policy

ASSESSMENTS USED AS MULTIPLE MEASURES	
Academic (Tiered System)	Tier 1. High School Grade Point Average Tier 2. SAT/ACT Scores Tier 3. Traditional placement test
Subjects	English/Language Arts, Math

Students are eligible for the Multiple Measures exemption if they have graduated from high school in the last five years and meet the first, second, or third tier of the Multiple Measures hierarchy (see Figure 1). At the top of the hierarchy is a student’s high school GPA and demonstrated completion of four high school math courses. The second is a student’s ACT/SAT scores. Finally, students who graduated from high school more than five years ago or who do not meet the GPA or ACT/SAT threshold must take a placement test (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Multiple Measures Placement Process

TIER 1 HIGH SCHOOL GPA	TIER 2 SAT/ACT SCORES	TIER 3 PLACEMENT TEST
<i>(for students who graduated HS within the last 5 years)</i>	<i>(for students who graduated HS within the last 5 years)</i>	<i>(for older students and those not exempted via Tiers 1 and 2)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum unweighted 2.6 GPA • Four High School math courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT cutoff: Minimum score of 500 in Writing or Critical Reading, score of 500 in Math • ACT cutoff: Minimum score of 22 in Reading (or 18 in English) and 22 in Math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must take subject-area, state approved assessments in both reading and math

The hierarchy works as follows: Administrators first determine whether the applicant has graduated from high school within the five-year window. Then, they check students' high school transcripts to see if they met the 2.6 GPA requirement and if they have taken 4 math classes. If they do not meet both of these criteria, administrators then check students' ACT/SAT scores. Students who do not qualify for tier 1 or tier 2 of the hierarchy must take the placement tests to place out of developmental education courses.

Students who are beyond the five-year window, or who did not meet the thresholds set in the Multiple Measures hierarchy must take the placement tests. These students will be placed into developmental education courses or college-level "gateway" courses based entirely on the scores on the diagnostic placement tests.

On the other hand, students who have graduated from high school within the five-year window and satisfy tier 1, 2, or 3 of the Multiple Measures hierarchy are considered "exempted" from developmental education courses. DCCC administrators noted that, as of fall 2013, the college had issued 1,031 exemptions under the Multiple Measures policy; however, not all of these students enrolled at the college.

The following findings suggest that the policy was received enthusiastically by administrators and with some apprehension by faculty.

College-level stakeholders were generally supportive of the policy change, and remained optimistic after the first year of implementation. Interviews with administrators, faculty and students indicated hope for future successes mixed with apprehension and, in some cases, skepticism about the policy. However, there was near-uniform opinion among faculty and administrators that the prior placement policy was flawed. Specifically, they believed that the ACCUPLACER test was too long and was discouraging for students, especially those with testing anxiety. They also believed that having more advanced students spend time in developmental education could potentially harm their ability to graduate in a timely manner, or graduate at all. One administrator said, "The previous system was terrible... pushing people into developmental even if they didn't really need it."

Despite generally being supportive of the policy’s intentions, some faculty members questioned the low GPA threshold for exemption from developmental courses. Three of the four faculty members interviewed reported serious concerns about the 2.6 GPA threshold, both in terms of the perceived ease of the standard, and because it is cumulative across subjects and not course specific. One faculty members stated, “When you take a group of students that have a 2.6 cumulative, to me that seems really low. That means they were basically a C student. And for many high schools, C is, ‘you’ve shown up.’”

The simultaneous implementation of various statewide reform efforts confuses the implementation process for Multiple Measures. At the same time that DCCC is working to implement the Multiple Measures policy, it is also implementing a new state mandated re-sequencing of the developmental education curriculum, as well as anticipating reforms to the state placement test. Due to issues with the initial roll out of the state’s new diagnostic assessment and placement test, DCCC has continued to use the ACCUPLACER. Administrators specifically cited the challenge of assessing the effectiveness of the Multiple Measures policy when so many other significant reforms were occurring simultaneously.

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: No Major Customizations to the State’s Centralized Policy

The Multiple Measures policy in North Carolina is highly centralized and does not leave much leeway for college-level customization to fit local context or needs. Yet, during its initial implementation period, Davidson administrators and faculty attempted to work within the law’s framework to expand the policy to reach additional students.

DCCC administrators initially tried to treat math and English/Language Arts separately during the placement process. To place into college courses through the GPA measure, state law requires that students complete four high school *math* courses. Davidson administrators initially attempted to customize the policy to admit students into college level English courses if they met the 2.6 GPA and four courses of *English*, but not the required four math courses. According to one administrator:

We made a decision as a college... to go outside the black and white of that policy to issue English exemptions independent of math exemptions. If the student has taken the four English [courses] identified...we felt like they should be exempt from English. The systems office gave us a little leeway to look at that, to look at our data and see what would come of that.

However, the state ultimately removed DCCC’s ability to exempt for English-only. An administrator noted that the state was “very generous” with its feedback on this issue.

Davidson’s relatively small size and central location aided the transcript review process. One administrator explained that, “We just went through and hand-evaluated every transcript. Now that’s something obviously [other colleges] can’t do.” Further, the fact that DCCC is located in the center of North Carolina limited the number of out-of-state applicants.

IV. Multiple Measures Assessment Data Use: Initial Data is Promising

Since the Multiple Measures policy has yet to be fully implemented statewide, plans to systematically collect and analyze college-level placement data are not fully developed; however, an initial data review suggests the policy had no negative effects on student outcomes.

Data on Multiple Measures is limited. DCCC analyzed the impact of the policy based on data from math courses in fall 2013. Administrators sent these math results to the system office, which collected information from more than a dozen other institutions piloting the policy. The state's report said: *"...looking just at Gateway Math, there was no difference between students who were placed by the placement test and students who were placed by Multiple Measures."* Although the report did not indicate improved student outcomes for exempted students, administrators interpreted the initial findings in a positive light, citing that exempted students were performing no worse than their peers in college-level courses. The data were shared among faculty and administrators at Davidson. However, a number of faculty and administrators stressed that the small sample size prevented any useful conclusions about these results at present.

Information about student exemptions is not shared with faculty, although faculty expressed a desire to receive more information about how the policy is working. One faculty member noted, "I think some extra reassurance of, 'This is why we're taking a chance on this. This is why it's been decided. This is how it's bettering student outcomes.' I think that would have been helpful."

A second faculty member said, "I'd just like to know is it really working but it's going to take a while to answer that question; not just a couple semesters."

V. Academic and Student Services based on Placement: Beginning to Rethink Support Services in Light of the Policy

The student experience at DCCC points to the need for additional advising and support services around the Multiple Measures policy.

Administrators view advisors as key players in the placement process, but students raised concerns about the advising process. All students at DCCC are required to meet with their advisors to determine their course trajectory at the college. Students exempted from the placement test meet with their advisors, draft a schedule, and proceed to orientation at the appropriate school. Students who do not qualify for the Multiple Measures exemption must take the ACCUPLACER test and bring their scores to their advisors for interpretation and assistance in college course placement. Accordingly, administrators at DCCC say that advisors play a key role in helping students understand their placement in classes during their first year. Said one administrator: "The first floor here is enrollment; the second floor is advising. We have a very strong relationship with between enrollment and advising."

Student focus groups, however, revealed that the process outlined above did not always reflect reality. Although some students reported positive, productive relationships with their advisors, students in one developmental education focus group reported that contact with advisors was sporadic, and that

advisors did not always help interpret their placement test scores. When asked about her relationship with her advisor, one developmental education student said, “I really don’t have one.” According to this student, her advisor never explained her ACCUPLACER scores and never helped place her into classes, so she eventually stopped trying to contact her advisor all together.

As a result of the Multiple Measures policy, administrators and faculty are beginning to think about additional support services for struggling students in college-level courses.

One of the primary concerns from faculty and administrators at DCCC about the implementation of the Multiple Measures policy was that exempted students would be poorly prepared for college-level courses. One faculty member commented that support “is my main concern... we’re putting them [students] there [in credit bearing courses] without all the support.” As a result, faculty reported that they were beginning to hold office hours in the tutoring center (as opposed to their offices) in the hopes that more students would take advantage of the opportunity to receive one-on-one help. Additionally, administrators were considering making mandatory a one-hour-per-week math lab for all college-level math students. Said one faculty member, “We talked about creating a skills assessment at the beginning of the curriculum level math courses so they could do some just-in-time stuff if need be.” This math pre-test was implemented in several college-level courses, and used to identify student needs.

Students appreciated the supports, but wished they were voluntary and supplemental in nature. Although students took advantage of the various supports offered by the college, including tutoring and study skills classes, they said a mandatory “Student Success” course for developmental education students was hindering their progress toward graduation more than it was helping. One student explained, “It pushes you back when you have to be in [the Student Success course] that you really don’t need. It pushes you back from taking your other classes and getting them out of the way and then going further.” Another student expressed similar concerns. He said, “We’re all here for the same objective: to make money. And when you’re sitting in a class that you really don’t need, you’re spending money and not making money.”

VI. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Early Adopters are on their Own

The state has not been heavily involved in Multiple Measures implementation at DCCC to date, leaving much of the implementation work to administrators at the college level.

The System office has provided very little training or oversight to DCCC regarding Multiple Measures implementation. However, the system office has been involved in select ways. For example, one administrator said that the state system is working “on a patch for our system” to expedite GPA reviews on transcripts. A Davidson administrator said the system could be helpful with regard to improving the common application: “The system office really has the leverage and the ability to make that process work.” An administrator also noted the state was “very generous in providing feedback on some of the grey areas,” namely, how to handle students who did not have the appropriate math course load but did meet this requirement for English.

Davidson’s administrators provided information and research supporting Multiple Measures policy during its development. Since its passage, administrators have not been “directly involved” with classroom adjustments in response to the policy; instead, the administrators

have provided faculty autonomy and have been supportive when faculty “communicates a need”. For example, in response to the Multiple Measures policy, math faculty proposed a “skills inventory” for all students in college-level math to determine abilities at the start of the semester. One faculty member stated, “[The administration] asked us, ‘OK, what do you think about this? What do you want to do about this? We said we have this idea for a skills inventory so they said, ‘...Go ahead and try it.’”

Developmental education faculty want more focused training on teaching a population of developmental education students with lower skill levels. Because the Multiple Measures policy theoretically pulls the higher performing students out of developmental education classes, faculty are concerned about the concentration of very low-skilled students that remain in their developmental education classes. In prior years, faculty said they had flexibility to deploy their best students as in-class tutors for struggling students. They noted that since Multiple Measures placement policy, all students are in need of focused instruction:

[Before the new policy], You could strategically place them in groups...you could strategically place them with partners. But now, because that upper level [of student ability] has been removed...The instructor has to be one-on-one more with the student.

Faculty said that they don’t have time or support to provide sufficient attention for every student, and would like more focused training in this area. The increased need for intensive instruction was echoed by several other faculty members as well.

VII. Successes and Challenges

Although initial data is promising, more work needs to be done to garner faculty buy-in, as well as establish additional academic supports for students.

Successes

Early analyses of student performance after Multiple Measures implementation were positive. The first analysis of student performance indicates reason for optimism, at least in terms of math performance. One administrator noted, “The biggest success is to see that math, it has worked. It has been a good measure of students’ ability to complete a gateway math course. That’s probably the biggest victory, is to say, CCRC was right.” However, the analysis examined results from math courses over the course of one semester, so more data is needed.

Faculty members and administrators communicate well about the multiple measure reforms. Interviews suggested that channels of communication are open between administrators and faculty, with both groups indicating a desire, and in some cases making efforts, to adapt to the needs of a changing student population.

There was consensus that the old student placement structure was flawed, and optimism that the new policy can work with sufficient support. Research and the experiences of students, faculty and administrators at Davidson all showed uniform placement test policy needed to be changed. One administrator said, “I think the policy is a fair shot. It’s a guess and you have to play it out.”

Challenges

The policy is competing with many other initiatives also being implemented for time and attention. At the same time that DCCC implemented the Multiple Measures policy, the NCCCS was also overhauling the developmental education curriculum and re-sequencing developmental education courses statewide, as well as working to replace ACCUPLACER as the placement test vendor. With so many new initiatives underway at the same time, administrators said that it would be difficult to determine the singular effectiveness of the Multiple Measures policy, and faculty did not like that the many different changes required them to process many new policies and procedures all at once.

Faculty expressed skepticism about the policy. Faculty have expressed concerns that the 2.6 GPA threshold is too low, and also were concerned that the Multiple Measures policy would negatively impact developmental education classes by pulling the highest-performing students away from their classes, thus impeding efforts at peer-to-peer tutoring.

Increased academic supports for students are needed. A major challenge moving forward is to increase student academic supports during a period of rapid restructuring. One administrator said, “The students, whether they are Multiple Measures or not, are not doing as well as we would like them to. We want all of them to do better.”

VIII. Conclusions

Policy implementation at DCCC exemplifies the benefits and challenges of being an early implementer of a new statewide policy. The college is working hard to establish additional supports for students and faculty but, with so many programs and reform efforts happening simultaneously, some students and faculty feel overwhelmed and under supported. However, some promising initial data analysis suggests students in gateway math courses were, at the very least, no worse off by the policy than their non-exempted counterparts. Additional data analysis is necessary to determine the degree to which the policy is successful at increasing student graduation rates.



Multiple Measures for Student Placement at Central Piedmont Community College: An Early Adopter in North Carolina

The following profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide multiple measures policy for student placement at **Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)** in North Carolina.

This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of multiple measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges across three states. Study sites were selected based on characteristics such as longstanding experience with multiple measures reform, diversity in state- and/or system-level policy, and student demographics. CPCC was selected as a case study site for two main reasons: First, an administrator at the college was a key player in the statewide effort to craft and later adopt the multiple measures policy; and second, the college became an early implementer of the policy, opting to implement a full two years before the policy becomes mandatory statewide.

To develop an understanding of how the North Carolina policy on multiple measures has played out CPCC, Research for Action (RFA) visited the campus in March 2014. Our field work included interviews with four college administrators and four faculty members (two in math and two in English), as well as four student focus groups.

THE NORTH CAROLINA CONTEXT

The North Carolina policy is a top-down set of rules for placement to all colleges in the state, and will become mandatory in fall 2015. The policy establishes a "hierarchy" of measures. Students are exempted from developmental education courses if they graduated from high school in the last five years and satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

1) A high school GPA of at least 2.6 and demonstrated completion of a college prep math track.

2) ACT/SAT scores that meet specific score thresholds.

3) Traditional placement test scores that meet specific score thresholds.

The hierarchy works as follows: Administrators first check students' high school transcripts to see if they meet the GPA requirements. Then, they check ACT/SAT scores. Students who do not qualify for the GPA or testing exemptions must take the diagnostic placement tests.

This profile provides important background on CPCC’s experience with multiple measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.²⁶

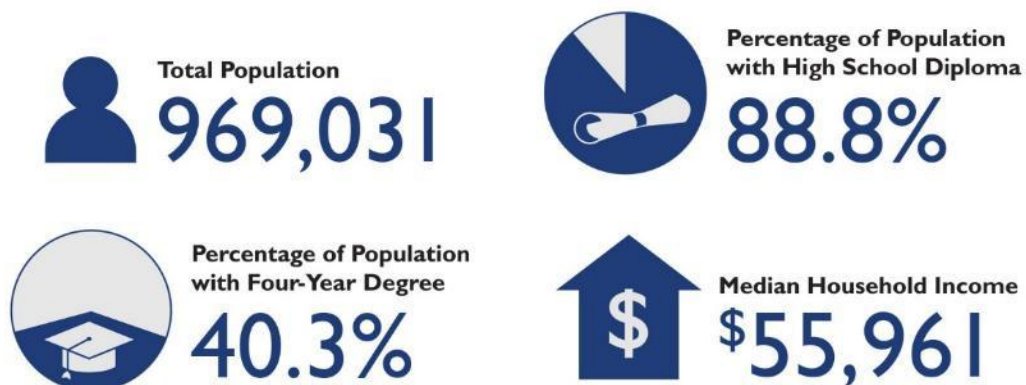
KEY FINDINGS FROM CPCC

- Administrators believe the policy will lead to a positive shift in student outcomes and, eventually, graduation rates.
- Faculty have concerns about the 2.6 GPA cutoff, fearing students were placed into classes without adequate preparation.
- CPCC customized the policy slightly by instituting a standardized transcript review process.
- Still in its first semester of implementation, it is too soon to tell if the policy has led to positive change at CPCC.
- North Carolina is fertile ground for developmental education reforms, yet the sheer amount of policy change adds challenges for administrators and faculty.

I. Local and Community College Context: CPCC is the Largest Community College in the State

Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) is located in Charlotte, North Carolina and includes six campuses across Mecklenburg County. Eighty-eight percent of the area’s residents have a high school diploma and over 40 percent a four year degree. The major industries in the county are banking, manufacturing and medicine. The median income of those living in the county is \$55,961, which is higher than the state median income of \$46,450 (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Demographic Information (2012)



²⁶ The profile was verified by the point of contact at the college; data included in the profile offers a stand-alone summary and will be used for cross-site analyses.

Table 1: Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Demographic Information (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	49.8%
African American	31.8%
Hispanic	12.5%
Asian	5.1%
Other	0.8%

Source: U.S Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

CPCC was founded in 1963 when it combined the programs of the Central Industrial Education Center and Mecklenburg College. When it first opened its doors, the College offered about a dozen programs to approximately 1,600 students. Now, it is the largest institution of higher education in the North Carolina Community College System, offering 285 degree, diploma, and certificate programs to over 30,000 students (see Table 2).²⁷ CPCC’s stated vision is “to become the national leader in workforce development.”²⁸

Table 2. Student Characteristics

NUMBER OF STUDENTS				
Full-Time Equivalent: 16,535			Total Headcount: 31,997	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 38.9%			Part-Time: 61.1%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 45.1%	African American: 29.9%	Hispanic: 6.1%	Asian American: 0.9%	Other: 18%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 22.9%	Associates Degree: 12.8%	Certificate: 1.8%	Other ⁴ : 66.4%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

CPCC is also part of the *Achieving the Dream* initiative that aims to find ways to increase retention and college completion rates nationwide. Dr. Brad Bostian, Director of First Year Experience at CPCC, was

²⁷ http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Statistical_Reports/collegeYear2011-2012/docs/Anntbl%2001%20%282011-2012%29.pdf

²⁸ <http://www.cpcc.edu/attending/catalogs/2012-2013catalog>

²⁹ The sum of non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

intimately involved in the creation of the multiple measures for student placement policy at the system level, serving as the leader of the state’s Multiple Measures Working Group. Dr. Bostian convinced the college to become an early implementer of the policy (which does not become mandatory until the fall of 2015).

II. Features of Multiple Measures for Student Placement at CPCC: Following North Carolina’s Highly Prescriptive Policy, Facing Some Faculty Pushback

Because the North Carolina multiple measures policy is top-down in nature, CPCC’s primary concern in the first year of implementation was compliance with the policy.

The North Carolina’s multiple measures policy applies to placement in college-level math and English/Language Arts, establishing a hierarchy of placement measures. Table 3 (below) details the scope of the multiple measures policy, including the cognitive skills on which it is based, as well as the subject areas to which it applies.

Table 3: North Carolina’s Multiple Measures for College Placement Policy

ASSESSMENTS USED AS MULTIPLE MEASURES	
Academic (Tiered System)	Tier 1. High School Grade Point Average Tier 2. SAT/ACT Scores Tier 3. Traditional placement test
Subjects	Reading/English, Math

Students are eligible for the multiple measures exemption if they have graduated from high school in the last five years and meet the first, second, or third tier of the multiple measures hierarchy (see Figure 2). At the top of the hierarchy is a student’s high school GPA and demonstrated completion of college prep math track. The second is a student’s ACT/SAT scores. Finally, students who graduated from high school more than five years ago or who do not meet the GPA or ACT/SAT threshold must take a placement test.

Figure 2: Multiple Measures Placement Process

TIER 1 HIGH SCHOOL GPA	TIER 2 SAT/ACT SCORES	TIER 3 PLACEMENT TEST
<p><i>(for students who graduated HS within the last 5 years)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum unweighted 2.6 GPA • College prep math track 	<p><i>(for students who graduated HS within the last 5 years)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT cutoff: Minimum score of 500 in Writing or Critical Reading, score of 500 in MathFour High School math courses • ACT cutoff: Minimum score of 22 in Reading (or 18 in English) and 22 in Math 	<p><i>(for older students and those not exempted via Tiers 1 and 2)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must take subject-area, state approved assessments in both reading and math

The hierarchy works as follows: Administrators first determine whether the applicant has graduated from high school within the five-year window. Then, they check students' high school transcripts to see if they met the 2.6 GPA requirement and if they have taken 4 math classes, including Algebra II or the equivalent, and one higher math course from a set list of high school and college math courses. If they do not meet both of these criteria, administrators then check students' ACT/SAT scores. Students who do not qualify for tier 1 or tier 2 of the hierarchy must take the diagnostic placement tests to place out of developmental education courses. Colleges will continue to use ACCUPLACER, Asset or COMPASS for English/Reading until the NC DAP English/Reading and math diagnostic assessments are implemented statewide in fall 2014.

Students who are beyond the five-year window, or who did not meet the thresholds set in the multiple measures hierarchy must take the placement tests. These students will be placed into developmental education courses or college-level "gateway" courses based entirely on the scores on the placement tests.

On the other hand, students who have graduated from high school within the five-year window and satisfy tier 1, 2, or 3 of the multiple measures hierarchy are considered exempted from developmental education courses. CPCC administrators noted that by June 2014, 1913 students had been granted a waiver, 338 of whom had completed spring 2014 courses.

CPCC started planning for implementation very soon after the policy was first announced. During summer 2013, college administrators met to discuss issues such as transcript review, interpretation of the state's "FRC Codes" regarding minimum requirements for high school math completion, and other technical issues.³⁰ CPCC began reviewing transcripts for multiple measures exemptions in October 2013. Throughout the fall semester, college administrators held informational briefings for various departments, explaining both the policy, as well as the research from the Community College Research Consortium (CCRC), which informed the NCCCS's decisions around the thresholds for exemption included in the policy. The policy was officially operational by January 2014, with the first students exempted by multiple measures enrolling in their gateway (i.e. college-level) math and English courses.

The following findings suggest that, while the placement process was straightforward, reactions to the policy were varied. While administrators were enthusiastic, faculty had reservations and students were largely unaware of the policy's existence.

The highly prescriptive nature of the North Carolina policy made the placement process itself straightforward. Administrators moved down the hierarchy of allowable measures to determine whether students would be exempted from developmental education coursework. Students who met the exemption received an email that they would be placed directly in college-level math and English courses, and were asked to meet with their advisors to discuss their college coursework. Meanwhile, non-exempt students took the ACCUPLACER placement test and then met with their advisors to discuss coursework.

³⁰ Information on FRC codes, or Future Ready Core transcript codes, from the original policy announcement: "FRC Codes 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicate that a student's high school course of study included Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a fourth math suitable for community college and/or university admissions."

Because CPCC is a large college with six different campuses, they had multiple transcript reviewers in the Student Records office use a common checklist with specific guidelines about evaluating GPA and the high school math requirement. Said one CPCC administrator:

“We are so large and so we have people evaluating them on every campus – sometimes the communication and oversight of that can be challenging and so the more consistent the approach then the more consistent and fair the outcome was.”

As this administrator explains, the policy itself was clear – the challenges were transcript review and policy implementation. CPCC overcame these challenges by training administrators and staff on transcript review procedures and expectations for their classes for the spring semester.

Administrators had high levels of buy in to the policy. The two administrators who played key implementation roles at CPCC both expressed enthusiastic support for the multiple measures policy. These individuals believed that the overall implementation process went smoothly, and there were “no waves generated across the college” as a result of the policy. Other administrators expressed some hesitation about the policy specifics – for example the GPA thresholds or the high school math requirements. But they also cited that it was an “excellent start” and that they thought students would “rise to the challenge.”

Faculty did not believe students placed through multiple measures were prepared for college-level courses. Faculty did not share the enthusiasm of the two implementation leaders. They expressed doubts about the validity of the 2.6 GPA threshold in the policy, believing that this cutoff was far too low. One college-level faculty member said that he believed his students overall performed at markedly lower levels on their first assignment during the spring 2014 semester than in any other semester during his time as faculty. Another faculty member expressed frustration at the fact that so many faculty members were now required to teach gateway courses when that was not their training or professional preference. This same faculty member, however, admitted that she feels resigned to the policy at this point, saying “I let it wash over me.”

Students were mostly unaware of the policy. Most students were unaware that the exemptions based on high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores existed. When it was explained to them, students expressed theoretical support for the policy, citing their dislike of the long placement tests, which they said caused them substantial anxiety in their first year. However, when students were asked if they felt they had been appropriately placed into their classes, students in both gateway and developmental education classes generally believed that they had been appropriately placed.

The simultaneous implementation of various statewide reform efforts confuses the implementation process for multiple measures. At the same time that CPCC is working to implement the multiple measures policy, it is also implementing a new state mandated re-sequencing of the developmental education curriculum, as well as anticipating reforms to the state placement test. Currently the diagnostic test provider at CPCC is ACCUPLACER, but that will soon change when the state unveils the NC DAP, a new statewide diagnostic assessment for reading/English and math in fall 2014. Administrators specifically cited the challenge of assessing the effectiveness of the multiple measures policy when so many other significant reforms were occurring simultaneously.

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: No Major Customizations to the State's Centralized Policy

The multiple measures policy in North Carolina is highly centralized and does not leave much leeway for college-level customization to fit local context or needs. CPCC's role as early adopter, however, afforded the college a small degree of flexibility to interpret the policy in several areas.

CPCC's close relationship with the NCCCS office allowed for greater flexibility in interpreting the policy. Given his leadership role as the leader of the state's Multiple Measures Working Group at the system level, Dr. Bostian was also the leader for the implementation of the policy at CPCC. Said one CPCC administrator, "it was very helpful that Brad was part of the state committee, because he had some communication coming even sometimes before new revisions were coming down. And that helped us to capture the spirit of the policy, where the policy is a little bit vaguer." An administrator in the Student Records office later joined Dr. Bostian as another key implementation leader of the policy at CPCC.

Campus customization occurred around policy interpretation and transcript review procedures. Despite the highly prescriptive nature of the policy, CPCC customized the policy in a few small ways, which the NCCCS office allowed because of CPCC's role as an early implementer.

The three ways that CPCC customized the policy were:

- 1) Administrators opted to disregard the codes formerly used to indicate preparedness (Future Ready Core Transcript Codes, or FRC) that were part of the original policy because the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction announced that it would not be assigning FRC codes beginning with spring 2014 graduates. One CPCC administrator explained:
"We just paid no attention to the FRC code. I let them know that the FRC code is a passing thing, but some colleges literally went by that FRC code thing and stuck to that. So that meant that very few of their students got credit for their high school work and that is a shame."
- 2) CPCC made determinations as to whether out-of-state, homeschooled, and foreign students had met the requirements for the exemption. These determinations were mainly around whether the student had completed sufficient high school math courses to qualify for the math-related coursework requirement in the policy. It was decided that international transcripts would not be included.
- 3) Given the large student body and the tight timeline for implementation in fall 2013, administrators couldn't review all existing transcripts at once, and therefore allowed students to self-identify for the multiple measures exemption in the fall semester of 2013.

IV. Multiple Measures Assessment Data Use: Data is Coming In, but It's Too Soon to Determine Impact

Since the multiple measures policy has yet to be fully implemented statewide, the System office's plans to systematically collect and analyze college-level placement data are not fully developed.

Data collection and analysis efforts are still in progress. At the time of our site visit (March 2014), no state data requests had been made of CPCC. One CPCC administrator said, "I haven't been asked for any number specifically. I think they are more asking for schools voluntarily to give some sort of idea as to how it is going." Instead, they reported that the System office was focusing its data efforts on uploading standardized North Carolina high school transcripts directly into students' community college applications. This way, college-level administrators would easily be able to see many students' un-weighted GPAs and determine if students have met the high school math requirement.

CPCC's research office found mixed preliminary student results. In looking at the percentage of students earning a grade of A through C who were placed in introductory English and four reading intensive courses in spring 2014, success rates were higher in each class among students placed based on their high school GPA than students placed based on other measures, including SAT/ACT scores and placement testing. Across six math courses, however, looking at the same student outcomes during the same time period, students placed based on high school GPA had somewhat lower one-term success rates compared to students placed based on other measures.

Individual placement results are reported to students; aggregated data are reported to department heads. Students who qualified for the multiple measures exemption were notified via email that they would not need to take the placement tests. At the administrator level, reports about the overall number of students who qualified for the exemption were given to department heads for the purposes of planning the number of gateway and developmental education classes, as well as shifting staffing needs based on new student placements. Faculty did not receive specific information on which of their students had placed into their classes through the exemption versus the placement tests.

V. Academic and Student Services based on Placement: Some Additional Supports in Math, but Students Want More General Support around Placement

The student experience at CPCC points to the need for additional advising and support services around the multiple measures policy.

Students want more information from CPCC around placement. Non-exempt students in particular cited the need for greater transparency from college administrators and academic advisors around the placement process. Specifically, students said that they took the placement tests before they had a chance to attend orientation sessions, which meant that they took the test with very little idea of what to expect. Said one developmental education student, "Before I did anything else I had to do my placement test....when I took it I didn't know what was on it or what it was going to be about."

Students reported high levels of variation in the quality of the advising process. Some students reported positive, productive relationships with their advisors, in which the advisors walked them through the placement process before they took the placement tests (or received an exemption through the multiple measures policy) and helped guide them through the class selection process. Other students, however, reported that their advisors were so busy that it was difficult to schedule meetings with them. One student in a gateway math course said, “I think it should be mandatory to meet with advisor to see where you’re at. I know we can but it’s always so busy, always so hard to find a time to meet.” Furthermore, one faculty member said that he had more than 50 advisees, which made it difficult to find time to focus on the needs of all his advisees.

Students who qualified for the multiple measures exemption and were struggling in gateway college-level math classes had access to extra support. Administrators created a supplemental math lab for students in gateway math classes who were struggling to keep up with the pace of the class. This math lab was designed to be integrated into the course itself, since students rarely have time to attend extra tutoring classes. The administrator who designed the lab described it as “more like an assignment within the class” than a separate tutoring obligation. A similar support is not in place for students in English gateway courses, however – struggling students in gateway English courses have access to more traditional forms of tutoring, but they must seek out these services on their own.

VI. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Early Adopters are on their Own

Both the system office and the college administration can play key roles in implementation by providing supports to those involved at the campus and classroom levels; our key findings in this area include the following:

The System office has provided very little training or oversight to colleges regarding multiple measures implementation. The NCCCS has not provided a heavy hand in guiding the implementation of the multiple measures policy on the CPCC campus. Some administrators, however, mentioned that they wished NCCCS had given more guidance. One administrator said:

It would have been helpful if the state had given more specific direction. The policy was very vague and written with the language of FRC codes and it was difficult to define a definition of what that was - it was searching for treasure to find the definitions. The policy was changing often as well. The System office was not giving more clarification.

Administrators held internal training sessions for administrators, staff, and faculty. The two implementation leaders at CPCC – one in the First Year Experience office and the other in Student Records – led the efforts to conduct internal trainings college-wide. For administrators and staff in the student records office, they focused their training on transcript review and evaluation using the multiple measures policy. For department heads and other administrators, they focused on explaining the policy and how it might affect staffing and instruction.

Other colleges are beginning to look to CPCC for advice on how to implement the policy on their own campuses. In advance of the fall 2015 statewide deadline, administrators at other

colleges around the state have begun to ask CPCC administrators to advise them transcript review for non-traditional student applicants (i.e., out-of-state students, private school students). One CPCC administrator stated that the multiple measures policy was a “very popular topic of conversation” among community college registrars, and that she often fielded questions about the implementation successes and challenges at CPCC.

VII. Successes and Challenges

The state and system policy environment as well as the local college context provide a particular set of both opportunities and challenges for implementation:

Successes

Involvement in the development of the policy at the state level helped administrators adapt the policy at the college level. Dr. Bostian’s role as the leader of the NCCCS Multiple Measures Working Group allowed the college to lean on his expertise and turn CPCC into an early adopter of the policy. The minor customizations of the multiple measures policy – specifically the interpretation of the FRC codes and the review process for out-of-state, homeschooled and foreign transcripts – were guided by Dr. Bostian’s knowledge of the System’s intent, as well as his frequent contact with others who were involved in the development of the policy.

The transcript review process went smoothly. Despite the large number of transcripts for review, the Student Records office implemented a checklist for transcript review that enabled administrators across CPCC’s six campuses to determine eligibility for the multiple measures exemption.

Challenges

The multiple measures policy is competing with many other initiatives also being implemented for time and attention. At the same time that CPCC implemented the multiple measures policy, the NCCCS was also overhauling the developmental education curriculum and re-sequencing developmental education courses statewide, as well as working to replace ACCUPLACER as the placement test vendor. With so many new initiatives underway at the same time, administrators said that it would be difficult to determine the singular effectiveness of the multiple measures policy, and faculty did not like that the many different changes required them to process many new policies and procedures all at once.

The advising and placement process is poorly aligned to student needs. Students cited the need for more support from administrators and their advisors to help them navigate the placement process. Students’ general lack of awareness about the multiple measures policy also suggested that greater efforts could be made college-wide at educating students about the state’s policy, and how it might affect their academic trajectory at CPCC.

Faculty felt that internal support on policy implementation was insufficient. Faculty reported that they would have appreciated more contact from administrators throughout the policy

implementation process. They said that the informational sessions did not fully answer their questions about the intricacies of policy implementation. Several faculty members, for example, said they did not understand the research base that supported the System's decision to set the GPA threshold at 2.6. "The faculty voice has not been heard," said one faculty member.

VIII. Conclusions

Policy implementation at CPCC exemplifies the benefits and challenges of being an early implementer of a new statewide policy. High levels of administrator buy-in to the policy aided implementation. However, given the low levels of faculty buy-in to the policy and the hesitation on the part of some department heads and other administrators, CPCC administrators and staff across the board acknowledged that it would be helpful to have data showing that exempted students were, at the very least, no worse off by the policy than their non-exempted counterparts.



Multiple Measures for Student Placement Campus Case Study: University of Wisconsin-Marathon County's Experience as the Campus Pioneer

The following profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide multiple measures policy for student placement at the **University of Wisconsin Marathon County (UWMC)** in Wisconsin.

This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of multiple measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges across three states. Study sites were selected based on characteristics such as longstanding experience with multiple measures reform, diversity in state- and/or system-level policy, and student demographics. UWMC was selected as a Wisconsin case study site because the college was the first in the state to implement multiple measures and continues to lead the work across the state, which provides important insight on the implementation experience of an early adopter.

To develop a deeper understanding of how the UW system's multiple measures reform efforts have played out at the campus level, RFA conducted field work at UWMC in spring 2014 to explore the implementation and impact of multiple measures on student placement. The field work included interviews with three college administrators, six English faculty members, and four student focus groups. Interview protocols were informed by background research using institutional websites, documents, and phone and email conversations with college administrators.

THE WISCONSIN STATE CONTEXT

Wisconsin has two public higher education systems: the University of Wisconsin (UW) System and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The UW System includes 13 public four-year universities as well as 13 two-year colleges (UWC).

Multiple Measures reforms have taken place within the University of Wisconsin Colleges English Department, which spans all 13 UWC campuses. It began as a pilot project at one UW College in 2007 and had expanded to seven additional campuses by 2012-13 as a voluntary initiative.

The Wisconsin English Placement Test (WEPT) must be included as one of the measures, but the use of Multiple Measures is not a requirement. While the UWC English Department has recommended a standard set of Multiple Measures for campuses adopting the reform, measures may vary by campus.

This profile provides important background on UWMC’s experience with multiple measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.³¹

KEY FINDINGS FROM UWMC

- The UW Colleges’ Multiple Measures work began at UWMC with a campus-led pilot. Research has documented the program’s benefits relative to student success and retention.
- Administrators and faculty at UWMC have played a significant role in scaling the initiative to other campuses.
- Both administrative and faculty perspectives concerning the program were positive; student views were more mixed.
- Teams of readers weigh all available evidence—standardized and open-ended, academic and non-cognitive in reaching placement decisions.

I. Local and Community College Context: Serving a Rural Economy

UWMC is situated within Wisconsin’s largest county, where agriculture and manufacturing remain the main drivers of employment and economic activity.³² The county’s median income is slightly higher than the state’s. Twenty-two percent of the population holds a four-year degree; almost 90 percent of county residents have a high school diploma (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1. Marathon County Demographic Information (2012)



³² <http://www.co.marathon.wi.us/Portals/0/Site/Documents/LifeReportFull.pdf>

Table 1. Marathon County Demographic Information (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	89.8%
African American	0.7%
Hispanic	2.4%
Asian	5.6%
Other	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

In 1964, the University of Wisconsin College System was created to include all two-year colleges in the state; the Marathon County site officially became part of the University of Wisconsin Colleges (UW Colleges) in 1997. It is the third-largest campus of the UW Colleges (Table 2). UWMC offers associate's degrees and various certificates, as well as bachelor's degrees through joint efforts with UW-Stevens Point and UW-Oshkosh.³³ As part of the UW Colleges' partnership with the University of Wisconsin System, UWMC participates in the Guaranteed Transfer Program that offers its college students guaranteed admission to a UW System institution with junior standing. This program is available to students attending any one of the two-year UW colleges in the system.

Table 2. Student Characteristics (2011)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ⁴				
Full-Time Equivalent: 10,568			Total Headcount: 18,975	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 61%			Part-Time: 39%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 87%	African American: 2%	Hispanic: 4%	Asian American: 3%	Other: 4%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 38%	Associates Degree: 32%	Certificate: Not Reported	Other*: 41%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

*Other is the sum of the non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

³³ <http://www.ci.wausau.wi.us/Home/AboutWausau/GeneralInformation.aspx>

³⁴ UW Colleges combines all 13 campuses' information when reporting on IPEDS so individual campuses' data is unavailable. However, according to their 2012-13 Fact Book released by the University of Wisconsin Colleges' Central Administrative Offices, UW-Marathon County has an enrollment of 1,279 students with 43% part-time students and 57% full-time students. Source: http://uwc.edu/sites/default/files/imce-uploads/about/overview/factbook/uwc_factbook.pdf

II. Features of Multiple Measures for Student Placement at UWMC: Marathon is the Multiple Measures Pioneer in Wisconsin

The development of a multiple measure system of placement in English at University of Wisconsin Colleges (UWC) has been a largely organic process driven by local campuses, with UWMC playing an especially vital role. Between 2007 and 2010, two UWMC English professors—Joanne Giordano and Holly Hassel—piloted a new process for using multiple assessment measures to determine student placement. The process was first used with “at-risk” students, and then expanded to all incoming freshman.

Identification and development of the assessments took place over time and include academic and non-cognitive measures. The work began with the incorporation of a short writing sample in addition to the required, system-wide Wisconsin English Placement Test (WEPT); this test is still required across colleges in the system. Over time, other measures of readiness have been added, including non-cognitive measures such as a student self-assessment survey.³⁵ Table 3 provides a detailed list of the academic and non-cognitive measures used for college placement at UWMC.

Table 3: Multiple Measures for College Placement Policy in English at UWMC

ASSESSMENTS USED AS MULTIPLE MEASURES	
Academic	Wisconsin English Proficiency Test (WEPT) High School Grade Point Average SAT/ACT Scores High school grades in English courses High school curriculum (e.g. advanced placement and International Baccalaureate) Writing prompt
Non-cognitive	Student college readiness questionnaire Student’s home language TRIO eligibility
Subjects	English/Language Arts

Along with the WEPT, academic measures include high school GPA, high school English grades and course-taking, and SAT/ACT scores. Writing prompts used for multiple measures assessments are developed, and the student responses scored, based on the First-Year Composition Learning Outcomes which are developed by UWC English faculty from across the state. Outcomes have been created for each level of composition a student may take in their first year of study, including the developmental education course, English 098, and credit bearing courses, English 101 and 102. Outcomes are defined

³⁵ Hassell, Holly, and Joanne Baird Giordano. “First Year Composition Placement at Open-Admission, Two-Year Campuses: Changing Campus Culture, Institutional Practice and Student Success.” *OPEN WORDS: Access and English Studies* 5. 2 (2011).

in four key areas: rhetorical knowledge; knowledge of conventions; critical thinking, reading and writing; and processes.

Non-cognitive measures include student home language selection, TRIO eligibility, and a student questionnaire. The questionnaire asks students to report on some background characteristics and asks students to:

- Assess how well they think their high school grades and test scores reflect their academic ability;
- Report any additional services or needs they may have to be successful in college;
- Identify their first language; and
- Indicate their TRIO eligibility because there are additional student services available to those who are eligible.

Faculty and staff coordinate the placement process. The placement process is led by English faculty and student services staff members who review assessment results and other measures to recommend placement for each student. It is recommended that placement review teams include two or more English Department members who have been trained in multiple measures placement. Reviewers look at all results and measures as a whole, and no single measure is prioritized, though student questionnaires that include self-assessments of college readiness may help determine borderline cases. Placement recommendations made by the team may include: Developmental English, ESL, College English 101 or 102, and possibly academic support courses and services in reading, study skills, learning skills, and/or conversation classes for non-native English speakers.

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: No Formal Policy but System Still Makes a Contribution

The multiple measures policy in Wisconsin is highly decentralized and thus, campuses have great autonomy on how to implement the initiative. Although the policy itself is decentralized, the UWC English Department, a system-level department that spans all UWC campuses, has been driving this work forward. The English Department is composed not of administrators but of campus-level faculty that have administrative duties. Below are key findings related to how this high level of decentralization and the campus characteristics themselves, influences the implementation of multiple measures on the UWMC campus.

In the absence of extensive formal, system-wide policy on multiple measures, individual colleges, including UWMC, have taken the lead. While the UWC English Department has taken a leadership role in implementation, the UW Board of Regents and state policymakers have not become involved in this reform to date. As a result, campus leaders and faculty lead much of this work on the campus level. The most significant cross-campus coordination is a function of department-level initiatives, including efforts by English faculty to design common writing prompts for the essay portion of the multiple measures.

The relatively small size of the campus facilitates student services and placement processes. The college enrolls about 1,300 annually, which allows the college to provide services to students on an individual basis. Several faculty members noted that UWMC staff members have a good

understanding of the local feeder high schools and the level of preparation that students receive in given courses; they use this qualitative information to buttress placement decisions.

IV. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Faculty Feel Supported

Although no formal system policy exists for multiple measures, there has been some funding to help UWMC faculty and other faculty around the state with multiple measures implementation.

UWMC faculty that also have UWC administrative duties play a lead role in training staff and faculty across the University of Wisconsin campuses via system funding. The UWMC Developmental Reading and Writing Coordinator and the Writing Program Administrator both provide training each spring on multiple measures placement for staff at UWMC and across the entire UWC system. They have received financial support from the UW system to do this work. One administrator explained the financial support for this work and the different workshop components:

We applied for funding from the UW system and got some funding to do a two-year intensive PD [professional development]. This year we developed some online workshops—for developmental education writing, for English 101, for our core transfer research course...Next year, one of the online training workshops will be placement trainings—one-on-teaching and one-on-one writing. And then, we'll have one as part of the UW system—we'll bring people from other institutions to talk about placement, course development, and transfer issues.

Faculty members feel they have adequate support from the UWMC administration.

Although the majority of faculty members interviewed have not been involved in the development of the multiple measures process, they all felt they had support from administrators in terms of understanding the rationale for the work and professional development as needed.

V. Multiple Measures Assessment Data Use: Data is Available But Not Used by All

Although UWMC administrators have begun to examine the impact of multiple measures on student outcomes, data has not been widely shared with faculty or students. Key findings concerning multiple measures data use at UWMC include:

UWMC administrators examine the impact of multiple measures on student outcomes.

Multiple measures are now used campus-wide, and administrators have been capitalizing on the available data for curriculum planning and refining the multiple measures process since 2009-10. As one administrator noted, “we use it here on campus systematically and collect data to improve the process and inform the work.” As the initiative continues, they hope to continue to expand the utility of data collected to understand more long term impacts on persistence and graduation rates.

There is no prescribed formula or algorithm for weighting measures. Placement teams make decisions by looking at results in the aggregate, and avoid privileging any single measure over another. Administrators and faculty noted that, typically, measures reinforce one another, and lead to a compelling evidence base for the placement decision. As one administrator explains, “We would look at

everything, the test scores, the grades, the writing sample...for about 80 percent of students it's pretty consistent." The administrator further went on to explain the other 20 percent of students may have some discrepancies between their WEPT scores and the other measures, such as the ACT and the writing sample. In these cases the placement decision becomes a bit more challenging.

Neither students nor faculty have routine access to placement data. During interviews, faculty noted that they did not receive placement data for students enrolled in their classes. Most faculty members believed that student data would be made available if requested.

Student focus group participants also indicated that they did not see the actual results of their placement exams or essays; nor did they receive any explanation of how these measures were scored. Some students expressed interest in reviewing the results of their exams and essay. A student shared the following experience: "When I came in to set up [schedule] classes the advisor told me 'this is where you're placing'...I said 'Well, can I see the results?' but he didn't have them. I guess they just don't show students the results. It concerns me a little that you don't get to see your own test scores."

Students typically did not challenge their placements. Among the 40 students we spoke with via our 4 focus groups, over half expressed concern about some aspect of their placements but very few challenged them formally. One student suggested that it was too late to change once in the course for more than a few weeks. The student explained that, "If you want to move up higher you can but I have been in for a month so I do not want to fall behind. The placement tests are not always doing the correct thing. I had no say in the classes but I am already taking it so why would I skip to something else."

VI. Academic and Student Services based on Placement: Administrators and Students Don't Always See Eye to Eye

Access to high quality advising services can help ensure students are receiving adequate support to understand the multiple measures placement process and ultimately placed in the appropriate courses. Key findings concerning the relationship between multiple measures and student advising and support at UWMC include:

Administrators and students reported differing levels of advising during the registration process. Administrators explained that on the day students register for courses "advisors work individually with small groups of students...and then the placement team works with students one-on-one to give help." Students, however, reported that they only experienced fairly large group advising, typically groups of ten or more, once they received their placement scores on the same day they signed up for classes. Overall, a majority of students included in focus groups reported that they could have used additional advising and explanation of their placement results. Said one student, "They just gave us our scores and told us what classes to take. After we picked the classes, we picked other classes we want and the advisors check."

Some students also mentioned that they would benefit from more long-term advising, or additional information about how placements for their first semester may or may not impact a course of study for the next several years. One student explained, "I wish they would talk more long-term because there are classes only offered...once every two years, and I may need them."

Student reviews were more mixed. Some felt they were placed correctly; others disagreed. Placement decisions and the process were also not clear for a number of students as they were not provided information on the rationale for the placement.

Faculty members believe the addition of writing tutorials has been critical for student success. English 099, the composition tutorial class, is an additional one credit, one hour per week course that, based on the level of placement, is either a mandatory or recommended course for students. Faculty believe this is a critical piece in the developmental education course series, as it gives students the opportunity to work one-one-one with an English faculty on their writing skills.

VII. Successes and Challenges of Implementation

The decentralized multiple measures model in Wisconsin presents a particular set of opportunities and challenges related to implementation and scalability of the initiative. Key successes and challenges related to multiple measures implementation at UWMC are summarized below.

Successes

Institution-level research found that multiple measures improved outcomes for at-risk students. During 2009 and 2010, Giordano and Hassel conducted research on the impact of multiple measures placement at UWMC and found that the number of at-risk students who remained in good standing at the end of their fall semester increased from 59% in 2006 to 73% in 2009.³⁶ Based on the success of the initiative, other UWC campuses were encouraged by Giordano and Hassel to become involved and have determined campus by campus whether to use multiple measures for English placement.

Significant professional development is provided by the college. There are many opportunities for faculty and administrators to participate in professional development related to multiple measures at the UWMC campus, along with additional resource materials and guidance documents. This has been due in large part to the fact UWMC administrators have led the multiple measures effort system wide and have contributed to the widespread buy-in for the initiative among faculty.

The initiative serves as a model for collaboration across academic and administrative units. UWMC administrators believe the success of the multiple measures initiative is due in part to the collaborative nature of the relationship between English Department faculty and student services staff. Their work together has prompted additional thinking about how to best improve student outcomes.

³⁶ Hassell, Holly, and Joanne Baird Giordano. "First Year Composition Placement at Open-Admission, Two-Year Campuses: Changing Campus Culture, Institutional Practice and Student Success." *OPEN WORDS: Access and English Studies* 5. 2 (2011).

Challenges

A lack of system support places heavy burdens on campus administrators and faculty. The absence of system support for this work has required UWMC administrators and faculty to take on additional duties that can bleed into already busy schedules. Securing funding to support this work, especially funds related to faculty development, can be difficult as well when it has not been recognized as a needed policy at the system level.

Student completion continues to be an issue for some students. One faculty member noted that students fail at both ends of the spectrum—*i.e.*, in English 098, as well as English 102. One faculty member explained, “When you have students on the one hand not making it through 098, and on the other not making it through 102, there are problems on both ends. We have students coming here from high schools that are very strong and others that are not.” As if recognizing the progress to date and reflecting on the challenges of serving a student population that includes high numbers of vulnerable students, this same respondent remarked: “Here you have to know off the bat that they are not coming from the same place so why treat them in the same way.” UWMC continues to work on improving the multiple measures used to address these failure rates but administrators fully acknowledge it is a work in progress.

VIII. Conclusions

UWMC is the leader and driver of the multiple measures initiative in Wisconsin due to the lack of support for this work at the system level. As leaders, they are responsible not only for moving the work forward on the UWMC campus but helping other campuses across the state implement the measures. High levels of administrator and faculty buy-in have definitely contributed to the success of implementation. However, student level buy-in and understanding of multiple measures could be improved—many students noted they did not receive information on their placement results nor had a full understand as to why they were placed in certain classes. As the effort continues to spread across the state, it will be important for UWMC administrators to continue to demonstrate the positive impact multiple measures can have on student outcomes to other campuses, while also being mindful of how to communicate this same message to their own student population.



Multiple Measures for Student Placement Campus Case Study: University of Wisconsin-Waukesha's Experience as an Early Adopter

The following profile outlines the local context and implementation of the statewide Multiple Measures policy for student placement at the **University of Wisconsin Waukesha (UWW)** in Wisconsin.

This case study is part of Research for Action's (RFA) study of Multiple Measures for student placement decisions at six public two-year colleges across three states. Study sites were selected based on characteristics such as longstanding experience with Multiple Measures reform, diversity in state- and/or system-level policy, and student demographics. UWW was selected as a Wisconsin case study site because the college was one of the first campuses in the state to implement Multiple Measures, which provides important insight on the implementation experience of an early adopter.

To develop a deeper understanding of how the UW system's Multiple Measures reform efforts have played out at the campus level, RFA conducted field work at UWW in spring 2014 to explore the implementation and impact of Multiple Measures on student placement. Research efforts included interviews with four administrators and four faculty members; four student focus groups were also conducted. In addition, RFA conducted background research using institutional websites, documents, and phone and email conversations with college administrators.

This profile provides important background on UWW's experience with Multiple Measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising

THE WISCONSIN STATE CONTEXT

Wisconsin has two public higher education systems: the University of Wisconsin (UW) System and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The UW System includes 13 public four-year universities as well as 13 two-year colleges (UWC).

Multiple Measures reforms have taken place within the University of Wisconsin Colleges English Department, which spans all 13 UWC campuses. It began as a pilot project at one UW College in 2007 and had expanded to seven additional campuses by 2012-13 as a voluntary initiative.

The Wisconsin English Placement Test (WEPT) must be included as one of the measures, but the use of Multiple Measures is not a requirement. While the UWC English Department has recommended a standard set of Multiple Measures for campuses adopting the reform, measures may vary by campus.

and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement, and successes and challenges.³⁷

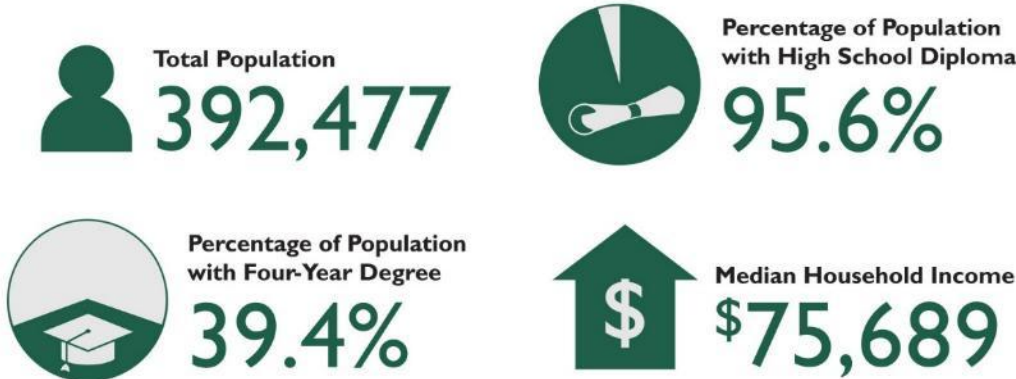
KEY FINDINGS FROM UWW

- UWW administrators and faculty credit close collaboration between the system-wide English Department and the Enrollment Services unit as a major contributor to the success of the initiative.
- Both administrative and faculty perspectives concerning the program were positive, while student views were more mixed.
- In the absence of formal state or system policy governing Multiple Measures, UWW – and all participating campuses – enjoy important flexibility in implementing the program. However, informants cited increasing efforts across the UW Colleges to standardize elements of the initiative.
- Teams of faculty readers weigh all of the available evidence—standardized and open-ended, academic and non-cognitive in reaching placement decisions.

I. Local and Community College Context: Largest Campus in the UWC System

Just outside the borders of Milwaukee, Waukesha is projected to be the state’s fastest-growing county over the next five years. The county has the highest median household income in Wisconsin, with a local economy centered on health care and other knowledge and service sectors. Nearly 40 percent of the population holds a four-year degree and more than 95 percent of county residents have a high school diploma (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Waukesha County Demographic Information (2012)



³⁷ The profile was verified by the point of contact at the college; data included in the profile offers a stand-alone summary and will be used for cross-site analyses.

Table 1: Waukesha County Demographic Information (2012)

DEMOGRAPHICS	
White	90.0%
African American	1.4%
Hispanic	4.4%
Asian	3.0%
Other	1.2%

Source: U.S Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/>

In 1965, Waukesha officials purchased an 86-acre campus to fill the demands for higher education in the city; the first classes were held in 1966. As of 2012-13, UWW enrolls the highest number of students among the 13 UW Colleges. The college awards an Associate of Arts and Science degree once students complete the required 60 units, and guarantees all general education credits will be accepted by any of the UW Colleges. UW-Waukesha also offers students the opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree by partnering with UW’s four-year system. See Table 2 for a summary student profile of the UWC System.

Table 2. Student Characteristics (2011)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ²				
Full-Time Equivalent: 10,568			Total Headcount: 18,975	
PERCENTAGE OF FULL AND PART TIME STUDENTS				
Full-Time: 61%			Part-Time: 39%	
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS				
White: 87%	African American: 2%	Hispanic: 4%	Asian American: 3%	Other: 4%
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES				
Transfer: 38%	Associates Degree: 32%	Certificate: Not Reported	Other*: 41%	

(Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS))

*Other is the sum of the non-completers who are still enrolled in the institution plus those who are no longer enrolled.

³⁸ UW Colleges combines all 13 campuses’ information when reporting on IPEDS so individual campuses’ data is unavailable. However, according to their 2012-13 Fact Book released by the University of Wisconsin Colleges’ Central Administrative Offices, UW-Waukesha has an enrollment of 2119 students with 58% part-time students and 42% full-time students. Source: http://uwc.edu/sites/default/files/imce-uploads/about/overview/factbook/uwc_factbook.pdf

II. Features of Multiple Measures for Student Placement at UWW: Following Marathon County’s Lead

The development of a Multiple Measures system in Wisconsin has grown from a faculty-led effort at UW-Marathon County (UWMC) to reach eight campuses statewide via the UWC English Department. The UWC English Department formally endorsed the Multiple Measures approach in 2010, and is currently working to scale the initiative to every two-year campus. Multiple Measures reached Waukesha in 2009. Over the past five years, UWW faculty members have played a unique role in Multiple Measures placement by working to support the system at both the college and UWC levels. For instance, Greg Ahrenhoerster serves simultaneously as both a UWW faculty member and as English Department Chair for all two-year campuses across the UWC. His colleague, Cassie Phillips, likewise balances responsibilities at UWW with system-wide responsibilities in composition studies. These unique vantage points ensure that implementation at UWW—like efforts at UW-Marathon County—have relevance far beyond the campus’ immediate boundaries.

Both academic and non-cognitive measures are included in the placement process at UWW. Placement decisions at UWW are based on four elements, including two sets of test scores (Wisconsin English Placement Test or WEPT and the ACT in English and reading), an essay prompt, and a questionnaire that allows students to indicate their readiness for credit-bearing coursework; see Table 3. Although UWC administrators at different campuses share ideas about what measures to include, a majority of the instruments are developed locally at the campus-level.

Table 3: Wisconsin’s Multiple Measures for College Placement

ASSESSMENTS USED AS MULTIPLE MEASURES	
Academic	Wisconsin English Proficiency Test (WEPT) High School Grade Point Average ACT Scores Writing prompt
Non-cognitive	Student college readiness questionnaire
Subjects	English/Language Arts

The placement process uses a team approach. Results from assessments and high school transcript information are populated in a spreadsheet by the Enrollment Services Office and provided to English faculty. Faculty members review each student’s essay and questionnaire individually and then “come together” to discuss and determine placement by consensus. Placement recommendations made by the team may include: Developmental English, ESL, College English 101 or 102, and possibly academic support courses and services in reading, study skills, learning skills, and/or conversation classes for non-native English speakers. It is recommended that placement review teams include two or more English Department members who have background in Multiple Measures placement.

III. Influence of System Policy and Campus Characteristics on Implementation: Cross-Campus Implementation Becoming More Uniform

While the UWC English Department has been working to standardize the Multiple Measures process on all of the campuses in the two-year system, individual campuses continue to have the ability to customize the measures that are used for student placement based on individual campus characteristics.

In the absence of formal state- or system-level policy governing the placement system, individual colleges, including UWW, have had wide latitude in implementation efforts. In reflecting on UWW’s experience, and the approach of other campuses statewide, one administrator explained:

“You can just take the canned approach if you wanted to. If you want to tweak it for your campus for whatever reason, you are allowed to do that. That may sound strange, but the UW system has a really seriously long tradition of faculty governance and we are a very ground-swell sort of entity...when things happen, they happen better from the ground up rather than from the top down.”

Without deviating from an approach that allows for local customization, a more “institutional approach” has been developed, with increasingly uniform implementation across campuses, based on recommendations from the UWC English Department. Efforts include cross-campus professional development and English Department-level design of the placement essay prompt; UWW personnel have played an active role in both.

Campus characteristics also have bearing on Multiple Measures implementation. As the largest two-year campus in the UWC system, Waukesha draws a student body from across the county, nearby Milwaukee, and elsewhere—many of which are unprepared in some way for college. The campus’s size means a high volume of placement decisions for UWW readers. The paper-based and individualized placement process used on campus can exacerbate this challenge, especially in the final crunch before the start of a semester.

IV. Implementation Support for Multiple Measures: Faculty and Administrators Believe the System is Working

Given the voluntary nature of participation by UW Colleges in Multiple Measures, the highest level of coordination sits with the cross-campus English Department. This role is focused on providing faculty supports, including professional development and developing standard writing prompts and a scoring rubric based on the First-Year Composition Learning Outcomes used across UWC campuses. Starting in the fall 2014 semester, participating colleges will also move towards common questionnaires and recordkeeping systems. Given the 13-campus nature of the Department, much of this work occurs remotely, with staff from participating colleges, including UWW, communicating by email and phone. As the coordination between campuses continues, administrators and faculty at UWC believe they have support at the campus level and work well together to carry out the Multiple Measures implementation.

Administrators and faculty were broadly positive in their assessments of the system. One junior faculty member, who had worked previously at a public university in a nearby state noted broad consensus around the use of Multiple Measures, and *“support from [the] administration to continue to do this and make it better.”* This same faculty member noted that while employing Multiple Measures requires additional time and resources at the start of the semester, the investment pays off in terms of student success and improved retention rates. A lecturer with a longer tenure on campus agreed, and invoked her five years of experience and exposure to the earlier placement process in arguing that measures of college readiness have improved markedly, and that students are therefore experiencing a *“much better start on campus, especially in writing that impacts so many other classes.”*

Effective implementation is a campus-wide effort. At UWW, there is close collaboration between the English Department administrators and staff and UWW’s Enrollment Services Office to ensure the placement process goes as smoothly as possible. The work of the student affairs unit is especially intensive on the front-end, including *“facilitat[ing] all the registration and testing,”* processing tests for scoring, and assembling the spreadsheets discussed in Section II, above.

UWW administrators believe support courses can increase students’ chances of academic success. Placement measures can also inform specific decisions to enroll in “support courses” that can be taken alongside other English classes. UWW offers multiple tutorial support classes in reading and composition (English 099, LEA 101 and 103) to supplement regular coursework. While these are similar across campuses, they are not uniformly offered across the UW college system. At UWW, English faculty can either require or recommend these courses for students as part of the placement decision; a student’s placement may be affected if they do not agree to take a recommended support course. One administrator described the strategy this way: *“The push...is to get as many students as possible starting in [English] 101 with the support courses. If a student is borderline between English 098 and 101, we really try to start them in 101 with the English 099 support course. If you can start them in credit bearing courses it is just better for retention and academic success so we try to do that.”*

V. Academic and Student Services and Placement: Mixed Reviews From Students

There is a clear segue between placement measures and early-stage student advising. A majority of the students in the focus groups enrolled in developmental education and support courses provided by the college (see description below) reported that they had access to advisors when they first selected their classes, and in some cases an ongoing relationship with their advisors. One student explained, *“When I first came in she [the advisor] let me know what classes I was ready to take based on my placement tests. They are really honest and they are really nice...I believe they are really helpful.”*

There was greater variation in experience with advisors for students placed in credit bearing courses; some reported that they simply registered for courses online without directly interacting with advisors. **Student perceptions of Multiple Measures placement were mixed**, with some stating that they were satisfied with the appropriateness of the courses they were taking and others expressing the belief that their placement was too low. Said one student, *“I believe it was fair. They did ask questions*

that were hard on the placement test. Some of the things they asked I did not necessarily learn in high school. Some of them were kind of difficult but not all of them so I believe I was fairly placed.”

Another student stated *“I don’t believe I was placed fairly. I think after taking the LEA class I feel like I didn’t need it. Most of the stuff that we did I feel like I already knew.”*

In addition, some students **reported that they did not understand the process leading to their placement.** While students who question their placement can appeal the decision, students who did not appeal still appeared interested in knowing *how* their placement decision was made. Some students expressed frustration at the lack of information they received on the rationale for their course recommendations. One explained: “If you knew you were placed in lower English because of the grammar section of the test or the essay you wrote, at least then you would know [why]”.

VI. Successes of and Challenges of Implementation

While our research efforts are still at an initial stage and there is much more to learn about the ongoing work of Multiple Measures at both UWW and across the University of Wisconsin Colleges, several key successes and challenges emerged from our document analysis and field work.

Successes

The use of Multiple Measures for placement has narrowed the band of student skill levels faculty encounter in given classes. Multiple UWW faculty reported that Multiple Measures is a better process for placing students appropriately based on their English skills. One faculty member reported, “It is helpful to have students in your class who are mostly on the same level...some students are still a little weaker and stronger in classes but it is much better.”

Another with administrative responsibilities summed it up by saying:

It makes a difference when you don’t have students who are woefully misplaced. We need to keep that range of ability as narrow as possible so I think that we are really seeing a more clear sense of these people should be in this class. I say all the time to students that ‘you are supposed to be here.’

Multiple departments at UWW work together to coordinate the process of collecting and reviewing student data. Enrollment Services gathers assessment (ACT and WEPT) data and other measures; populates spreadsheets; and provides this information to English faculty to smooth their process of reviewing student files. Faculty in turn work in teams to make placement decisions, sometimes turning materials around within a single day, and provide placement decisions back to Enrollment Services. An administrator from the English Department commented that Enrollment Services “really got all the ducks in a row” on Multiple Measures.

Another detailed the close and iterative partnership like this:

I work with [one of the English Chairs]...I tell her the dates we have available for placement testing and she coordinates with the English faculty who will be scoring essays...for example, we had a placement test last Saturday so I get them the essays on Monday. I tell the faculty when I expect to have the spreadsheet [with WEPT and ACT scores] done. Then I tell them when I need the placements back.

Challenges

The lack of a central, electronic system for student assessment data creates challenges for collecting and reviewing placement results. The measures used for placement are not scored and reported from a central database, but are submitted from the college to the UW system office, and then reported back to the college in hardcopy. In this way, successful implementation requires a series of relays between the system and campus, and then within the campus. One administrator stated: “We cannot advance technologically [and] that is a big struggle. It is hard to do this on paper.”

Another administrator explained: “It is a logistical nightmare. There is a lot of back and forth...and data crunching. Right now, the way that central (the UW system office) sends the results back to me is actually by fax; it is not electronic, so I have to sit here and type in the numbers into the spreadsheet.”

In addition, **the turnaround time between testing and placement is reported to be too tight.** “It’s always a time crunch” between when students take their placement tests and the target for providing results. “We try to keep it at a 10-day turnaround,” explained one respondent. That often requires English faculty to review student essays, other assessment data, and survey results; make placement decisions; and report back to Enrollment Services Office within a matter of days. This issue is only exacerbated by the fact that UWW does not have an on-line system where all student information and data could be merged seamlessly.

Another administrator explained,

The biggest challenge comes at the very beginning of the semester, for the last group of students [who] come in and we have to turn them around really quickly. We’ll get a group of 50 to 60 students to be placed. The Enrollment Services Office will say that we need the results tomorrow.

Finally, the absence of formal state policy governing Multiple Measures, while not identified as a specific obstacle at Waukesha, does mean more gradual adoption across the UWC. This creates both challenges and opportunities. One administrator explained, “Everybody has to believe in it. You have got to believe in it, the faculty and staff has to believe it is a good idea...they’ll sell it to the students and the students will believe it’s a good idea. The buy in just has to happen.”

This burden is balanced by the opportunity to engage faculty in meaningful change.

VII. Conclusions

Although UWW is not necessarily the campus pioneer of Multiple Measures in Wisconsin, they were definitely at the table as early adopters. High levels of administrator and faculty buy-in have definitely contributed to the success of implementation at this campus. Although student level understanding of Multiple Measures could be improved, faculty and administrators believe the system is working. With that said, the system is complicated and outdated. Even though UWW is one of the largest campuses in the UWC system, they still rely on a paper-based process to make placement decisions. As the effort moves forward, UWW should consider updating their system to make the placement process more efficient and effective. With an update, administrators and faculty can use the system as a powerful tool to show the positive impact Multiple Measures may have on student outcomes.

Appendix B: Methodology

The analysis outlined in this report is based on a set of cross-site comparative case studies on six two-year colleges; two in each of the three study states (see Appendix A for case studies). Site visits were conducted during the spring 2014 semester (see Table 1B).

Table 1B: College Study Site Visits

TWO-YEAR COLLEGE STUDY SITE	DATES OF SITE VISIT
CA California	
Bakersfield College (BC)	May 1-2
Long Beach City College (LBCC)	April 29-30
NC North Carolina	
Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)	April 28-29
Davidson Community College (DCCC)	March 26-27
WI Wisconsin	
University of Wisconsin Colleges – Marathon (UWM)	March 26-27
University of Wisconsin Colleges – Waukesha (UWW)	April 7-8




The case studies provides important background on each site’s experience with Multiple Measures reform, including measures and placement processes, policy drivers, use of assessment data, student advising and academic services, implementation training and support, levels of reform involvement and successes and challenges. These same issues, along with lessons from the field, are the focus of the cross-site analysis, based on the following set of overall research questions for Phase 2 of the project:

1. What aspects of the state/system policy are especially influential in affecting institutional implementation, and why?
2. What aspects of institutional practice, culture, and student demographic characteristics are affecting institutional implementation, and why?
3. How are faculty and administrators responding to the movement towards Multiple Measures? To what degree have they been involved in the development of the policy, or its implementation?
4. What are the placement experiences of students? Do they feel that their placement is fair and accurate?
5. What similarities and differences in institutional response exist within states? Across states? What factors contributed to these differences?
6. What lessons might be drawn from the experiences of the case study institutions that are applicable to other schools?

Data for our analyses and the development of the case studies on each of the campuses included the following:

1. **Document Review:** A review of college level documents outlining the processes used and assessments identified for the Multiple Measures reforms was conducted. Such documents included college placement guidelines, reports and presentations on individual college initiatives, summaries of internal data analyses conducted by the colleges on the impact of the reforms and web-based resources describing college policies around Multiple Measures implementation.
2. **Interviews:** College administrators and faculty members involved in the development and implementation of Multiple Measures policies on their college campuses were interviewed to gather both factual data and respondent perspectives.
3. **Focus Groups:** Students were included in focus groups, with four scheduled on each of the six study campuses. The focus groups represented students placed into both credit bearing and developmental courses in reading, English and math. The focus groups were designed to include four to six students each to develop an understanding of student perspectives around the accuracy of the assessments used for initial placement, the utility of the placement process and the supports students received before and after placement (see Table 2B).

Table 2B: Data Sources for Case Studies

DATA SOURCES	CALIFORNIA 		NORTH CAROLINA 		WISCONSIN 		TOTALS
	BC	LBCC	CPCC	DCCC	UWMC	UWW	
Interviews with Administrators	5	4	4	4	3	4	24
Interviews with Math Faculty	2	2	2	2	–	–	8
Interviews with English/ESL Faculty	2	2	2	2	6	4	18
Focus Groups with Math Students	2	2	2	1	–	–	7
Focus Groups with English Students	2	2	2	1	4	4	15
TOTALS	13	12	12	10	13	12	72

The case studies were sent for review to our point of contact at each of the case study sites to ensure factual accuracy. Feedback was incorporated into the case studies and reflected in the cross-site analysis.