Check out the new web site that holds the materials we have been collecting and discussing: [https://myweb.dmacc.edu/personal/sdmcgregor/instructor/placement/SitePages/Home.aspx](https://myweb.dmacc.edu/personal/sdmcgregor/instructor/placement/SitePages/Home.aspx). This will do until we have a Blackboard Community to use. It’s public and everyone has access to the materials.

**COMPASS Changeover to ACCUPLACER and Mandatory Placement**

COMPASS ends December 2016. DMACC has not created an official DMACC changeover date. It was mentioned last meeting that mandatory placement will begin Fall 2016. No one has heard anything official from Kim or Laurie W., so we will hopefully have more information for the next meeting.

**ALEKS Placement and Math Data (Handout/Appendix A)**

During our discussion, we discovered that we needed to define what ALEKS is. ALEKS is a placement mechanism and a remedial module system. Students who place low have the chance to work on those skills and retest. If they improve skills enough to test into the next level of math class, then they can register for the math class appropriate for them. If they place in remedial classes again, they can continue to take ALEKS for remediation or they can enroll in the appropriate developmental class. It fits the developmental model practices because it allows multiple options for student to remediate, using its own tools as well as class supports if needed. (For a description of math’s success with ALEKS, see Randy Smith and Dan Petrak’s advice in Appendix A. It’s the same as the one I emailed with the agenda and September notes.)

English has such mechanisms for grammar and mechanics as well as reading skills, but writing does not have such remediation mechanism. A person ultimately must read and discuss the paper and improvements with the students. We have such people in the Writing Lab and Language Arts/Study Skills Labs in the AAC, and we have sample prompts in those labs. However, we do not have a series of people who regularly talk with those students about their improvements and whether they are ready for Composition I.

**NIACC’s Writing Submissions Placement System**

The instructor is getting permission from his college to talk with us about it. Hopefully, we will have more information for the next meeting.

**Grand View’s Writing Submissions Placement System (Handout/Appendix B)**

See Appendix B for the description of their plan and structure. We agreed that this would be a good system for Writing Placement if we have faculty evaluating the essays.

Last month, Bret asked the Institutional Research/Assessment Office for numbers of students in all ENG composition sections for Fall 2015, which is about 5,000 students to evaluate. That does not count students who assess do not enroll—it’s only number of students in composition sections. Concerns include 1) having the faculty to evaluate the essays, 2) having the faculty to help at heavy registration
times, 3) writing the right prompt, and 4) communicating with advising to ensure the students are placed properly, and 5) clarifying the turnaround time with students who register late.

Judy drew a plan for faculty who want to evaluate placement essays: Faculty would be given a load of four courses plus 3 hours of release each semester and 3 credits in the summer to capture students who register for fall. The evaluators would need to evaluate essays during the breaks, too, which might mean some faculty are not interested. However, if we follow a system like Grand View’s using Blackboard or another online system, a faculty member can complete evaluations anywhere.

**Test the Computer-Based Writing Submissions Placement Systems**

After the last meeting, several concerns appeared regarding switching to a computer-based assessment system for writing, and several people sent articles about computerized assessments, including the CCCC’s Position Statement on Writing Assessment, the WPA’s “Uses and Limitations of Automated Writing Evaluation Software” and “Directed Self-Placement” research, and the articles at the bottom of the **Links list** on the site. To clarify, we are not necessarily adopting computerized assessments: That is yet to be decided. But, we do need to investigate them as part of the evaluation of products and options—to show that we have not left any options un-researched. If we decide they would work and add the level of placement assistance we want, then we know and can communicate that effectively to the department and administration. If we decide they do not, we can show the department and administration the research as well as what we found ineffective from a hands-on point-of-view.

Lynn has contacted ACCUPLACER’s WritePlacer and ETS Criterion/e-rater. (WritePlacer is the writing submission component for ACCUPLACER. See page 7 for a description of the holistic scoring as well as a sample passage we could use to send through the system. ETS e-rater/Criterion is both a placement mechanism with holistic scoring and a bank for remedial connection into the composition classroom—about the closest thing to ALEKS remediation opportunity as we have seen yet. See “The e-rater Engine” on pages 2-3 of the brochure for a description of the feedback loop.) They have set up an instructor account for her to load students, so now we need to get the rubric, have students write an essay and maybe write some ourselves, and test the software. For the next meeting, we should have the rubric and essays for us to evaluate.

We are also contacting other programs, such as McCann’s Measured Success/College Success/My Access. If you know of other companies, please let Lynn and Shannon know, and we will set up contact with the company to test their products.

**Placement Scores on Competencies**

We reviewed the concordance Sharon sent (Thank you, Sharon!) and compared the levels of placement to add the ACCUPLACER and SAT scores. Since COMPASS is being eliminated in December 2016, we will delete the COMPASS scores when we are no longer using it, of course. The COMPASS and ACT scores DMACC uses are offered below. The yellow highlighted numbers are the ones added from the concordance—they have not been approved. Is this accurate, or do the ranges need tweaking?

- ENG 060: COMPASS, 01-37; ACT Score, 01-13; ACCUPLACER, 29-65; ASSET, 0-37; SAT, 200-290
The group questioned whether we should take reading and writing scores to improve placement in writing courses.

**Potential Pilots**

- **Writing Submissions Pilot**: Judy and Sam talked us through a 50 min. placement/diagnostic paragraph/essay pilot that DMACC instructors will score. The aim is to pilot Fall 2016. _For the next meeting, could everyone write a prompt and either email it to Shannon or bring it to the meeting?_ We leaned toward only requiring a paragraph of writing because of the 50-minute time constraint of a class period, but we can discuss essay prompts, too.

- **STRETCH Pilot**: This is a course plan that extends Composition I over two semesters for the student. The same competencies are taught, and the course would not look different on a student’s transcript. The problems could be with 1) awarding credit for financial aid/veterans affairs and 2) scheduling issues in _Banner_ (breaking from traditional time frames). However, other colleges (e.g., Johnston County Community College) 6-8 month self-directed sources, and they have worked with Veterans Affairs, Financial Aid, Admissions, and other campus groups to ensure everything connects properly in the system for these students. Bret mentioned it’s a good plan but that pursuing ALP might be a stronger option.

- **ALP Pilot**: We agreed that we should plan Writing ALP plans for Fall 2016/Spring 2017. Does this mean developing a course or scheduling the support frameworks without a credit class? (If developing a course, we are nearly too late to make the catalog and Curriculum Commission.) Could we use ENG 104 as the ALP, or do we want to revise to a 1-credit hour plan? Who is willing to teach an ALP section along with their ENG 105 course in the fall and spring of next year?
**Systematic Approach**

We discussed in the September Meeting that these are our priorities, based on the Morante and Saxon Systematic Approach article. If we can keep them at the forefront of our talks, it will help our progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Multiple Measures</strong>—high school rank,</td>
<td>1. Assessment (rubrics/norming/samples)--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grades?, ACT/SAT scores, others?—We need</td>
<td>reassessment of scores/materials/processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this information from Student Services and</td>
<td>2. College Writing Portfolio?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Support Materials</strong>—links to ACCUPLACER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sample tests (have) and test prep sessions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(requires personnel), AAC? Classes?,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reassessment of scores/materials/processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Testing for Reading and Writing</strong>—MC,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adaptive, retakes?, cut ranges, remediation in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAC/classes?, wait time between retakes?,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reassessment of scores/materials/processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Writing Sample</strong> (requires exam or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personnel)—prompts, rubrics/holistic grading,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>norming, reassessment of scores/materials/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Classes/ALPs/Stretch</strong>—integrated and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system, reassessment of scores/materials/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. College Writing Portfolio?—Not discussed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet but an option.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next Steps**

1. **Approve/Adjust the Placement Scores**: Please review the Placement ranges above and tweak them. You are welcome to email Shannon or bring the tweaks to the meeting.

2. **Test out the tests**: We will have sample essays and materials at the next meeting to evaluate and discuss. If you want a separate ETS/ACCUPLACER/McCann’s account to run your own evaluations, email Lynn to let her know you want an account.

3. **Discuss the pilots**: Please read email/bring prompts to the next meeting and decide if you want to work on the ALP Pilot. (See the pilot section.)

**Next Meeting**: Monday, November 9th, 3:00 p.m. in Ankeny 02-19.
Appendix A – **Math Placement Notes** – October 2, 2015

**Randy’s Comments**

- The college is not running statistics—not measuring formally until they have a consistent population, so he cannot share data with us.
- He can say that ALEKS has reduced D, F, W rates by a substantial number.
- The number of students in developmental classes has decreased, likely because of the prep modules. They are getting the remediation they need and moving along in the math progression.
- The bumps along the way were in communication and student buy-in/fear of failing, taking assessments, and taking them in timely fashion for their degree.
  - Drop 55% enrollment first semester of instituting ALEKS in Fall 2016
  - 85% in Spring 2015
  - 90% of the enrollment before ALEKS—students are being placed correctly
- For students taking assessment 2nd time, they are averaging 7-11% higher.
  - They are taking the assessments and placement more seriously.
  - “The teachers are so much happier with the quality in focus in the classes. Everyone in the department feels good about that.”
  - “I don’t know of a faculty member who is not happy with the changes.”
  - Setting pre-requisites and offering ALEKS in combination makes the difference.
- Wade Robinson has been a “breath of fresh air and assistance.” He understood the “same voice, same page” concept of selling the assessments and timing to students. He understood the math faculty were the content experts and trusted the faculty to make the right decision. He communicated it through advising.

**Dan’s Comments**

- Dan offered the same comments as Randy about the dip in math enrollment and the correction.
- ALEKS is a third-party, untimed, adaptive assessment that allows multiple, specifically five attempts for math, plus remediation, and it aids the students well.
  - Students are making informed self-assessment decisions: The adaptive test has been a reality check for many. They are becoming reassured and are reflecting honestly about their skill levels. They are self-assessing that they are not ready and see that “if they do not have the basic skills, then they are not ready.”
  - They are not blaming instructors because the students have the data/results/scores with remediation options to see—not “the instructor is failing me” mentality.
  - They also have better information to see what they need to strengthen through the ALEKS prep modules and in their classes.
- The faculty no longer have the bottom student in the wrong class.
  - Students are getting placed better.
  - The skills and ability spread in the classroom is tighter, which makes for a better learning environment for the students. They no longer have to teach to such a diverse level of skill sets.
- Students are saving time and money 1) not taking and failing classes or 2) enrolling in classes above their skills.
  - about 30-50% were misplaced previously
  - hardly any are misplaced now
- The cost to the college for ALEKS about $20/student.
- The human element is most important: Instructors and students are happier with the changes.
During the meet-and-greet at Grand View University in September, Eden Pearson and Judy Hauser spoke with Amy Getty, Professor of English, at Grand View, and learned that they have a placement system through Blackboard. Eden Pearson and Shannon McGregor were able to meet and speak with Amy and John Call, Writing Program Administrator (WPA), regarding the Writing Placement process. John receives one course/three credit hours of release for Placement duty, which rotates around the department. He says it takes about 20-30 hours of work per year plus time he spends ensuring everything is working properly or communicating issues with Blackboard or Datatel to the staff in charge.

Grand View has approximately 350 incoming freshmen whom they must place in the proper writing sequence. The college dedicates one Blackboard course account--Writing Placement. As students are accepted to the college, Datatel (equivalent to Banner) and Blackboard communicate to populate the Blackboard course automatically. It only adds students who have not transferred composition courses from other institutions. John watches for students who are added into the system and pulls names.records from student records to ensure the right students are in the course, occasionally communicating with the Blackboard (Karly Good in CETL) and Datatel/Admissions staff at GV to ensure students are loading properly.

Within Blackboard, they have set up the prompt and space for the student to write as an essay question within the Assessment tool. The prompt is not a research-based prompt. In the course, the student sees:

- GV’s Academic Integrity Policy
- The link to the Assessment
- A help link with email contact
- A survey to complete when finished

As the registration dates approach (four throughout the year), students are notified. Students who need to take the assessment are automatically emailed with instructions about the Writing Placement Assessment (see next page for the email). If they choose not to take the assessment, they are placed into ENGL-100 Elements of English before entering ENGL-101 First Year Composition. Few choose not to take it. They have started allowing the students to see the prompt in advance, and they have found students are more willing to take the assessment. They can take it from anywhere—home, GV, anywhere. The exam is open for five hours, and they can save and exit, coming back to the exam later if they want or have Internet issues.

After they submit the exam, John designates the completed assessments to go to certain faculty members, so if he has four graders, each will receive about 10 essays to evaluate. The grader
adds his or her comments into the Grading Notes area where students cannot see the comment, and they typically only write the number of the class they recommend—100, 101, etc. The WPA reads all of the essays and enters a placement score (100, 101, etc.) into the grade box. In the case of a disagreement, a third reader reviews the essay, but that rarely happens. The score is sent to Datatel, and the advisors can see the placement for each student. (Like Blackboard and Banner, the system runs multiple reports throughout the day, so it might take up to 24 hours before the two update.)

The department discussed using a rubric, but they do not use one—they evaluate holistically. Their department members know one another well enough to know they are not grading on grammar alone and that John might evaluate a student into 100 because of organization issues whereas Amy recommends 101 because of support and elaboration. They did recommend using a rubric, norming, and talking regularly to ensure everyone is evaluating similarly. They also recommend showing the rubric and the appeals process.

They recommend forming a Placement Council/Cohort of instructors to prep prompts, rubrics, and norming structures. They also suggest focusing on full-time, transfer students on one campus first.

**Automatically-Generated Email—Sent to Incoming Freshmen as They Prepare to Register for Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Your response to the following prompt will help the English Department determine your placement in one of two writing courses. Please note you will write only one essay. You may take up to 5 hours to draft, write, and revise your single essay.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>You will have 5 hours to complete this test. You will write only one essay. This test is used for writing placement only. You will receive no feedback on this test other than the suggestion of which writing course you will be enrolled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Writing Placement Guidelines</td>
<td>When writing the essay, please observe the following guidelines: Limit the length to 500-750 words (which translates to between two and three double-spaced pages). Be sure to include your name on the top of your essay. Be sure to argue a single, clear position that directly responds to the prompt. Be sure to carefully proofread your response before submitting it. Compose your essay without any assistance, in the form of either other people or outside commentary. Don’t use the web or the library for research. You are, however, permitted to use a dictionary (online or hardback) for words which are unfamiliar to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timed Test</td>
<td>This test has a time limit of 5 hours. You will be notified when time expires, and you may continue or submit. Warnings appear when half the time, 5 minutes, 1 minute, and 30 seconds remain. (The timer does not appear when previewing this test)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Attempts</td>
<td>Not allowed. This test can only be taken once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force Completion</td>
<td>This test can be saved and resumed later. The timer will continue to run if you leave the test.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AND**

Do not complete from mobile device—computer.