

Chapter 10.A Complement to Educational Reform: Directed Self-Placement (DSP) at Cochise College

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Abstract: While many two- and four-year institutions have pivoted to directed self-placement (DSP) as a response to ethical and social justice concerns (Toth, 2019), at Cochise College, DSP was initially implemented as an emergency alternative to ACCUPLACER in the face of a worsening COVID-19 crisis and impending restrictions to in-person test proctoring. With support and buy-in from upper administration, the English department launched a full-scale pilot of DSP as a placement approach for all incoming Fall 2020 students. This case study describes the institutional context and Cochise's history of developmental reform from which the DSP emerged, the development of an "emergency" DSP and its evolution to a full-blown pilot alternative placement process, and our preliminary conclusions about DSP effectiveness and sustainability. Through the process of designing and implementing DSP, we have come to a fuller understanding of how placement testing works in concert with other developmental education reform initiatives and how it correlates with student success. In reflecting on this process, we've begun to see that while institution-wide buy-in and collaboration are necessary for placement reform, our collaborations have also exposed other practices and policies that must be addressed in order for DSP to be successful. We have come to understand that the COVID-19 pandemic provided us a rare opportunity for both immediate and continuing educational reform. Our preliminary data supports our decision to abandon our status quo placement tools in favor of the holistic and more personalized placement approach of the DSP.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia Teachers College created a dedicated webspace for resource-

es and research on the impact of COVID-19 on the nation's community colleges. Unsurprisingly, many of the early reports, blog entries, and news items posted center on concerns about remote learning, inequity in attainment, enrollment, transferability of pass/fail grades (a measure implemented by many higher education institutions), and the effect of all the above on fiscal stability (Glatter, 2020). Less apparent in these early conversations is how the pandemic would wreak havoc on two-year (and four-year) institutions' placement testing capabilities. A blog entry from September 2020 briefly notes adjustments a few colleges made in response to limited or no in-person testing (Lopez et al.), but by and large, we lacked a full picture of what such adjustments looked like.

A year into the pandemic, the on-the-ground stories of placement and testing professionals who had to pivot quickly in Spring 2020 began to emerge (Bickerstaff et al., 2021; Ockey, 2021). Cochise College, a two-year Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in rural southeastern Arizona, faced a challenge similar to what we see in these emerging stories: How do we develop or adopt alternative placement exams in the event that social distancing protocols or remote proctoring limitations would prevent us from proctoring students taking the ACCUPLACER/WritePlacer exams?

While Cochise had already been using multiple measures placement for a few years, students who didn't meet the requirements of that process typically had to sit for the ACCUPLACER exam in the college's testing center to receive a placement in a writing course. Faced with a severely limited timeline—Fall 2020 students would begin taking placement tests in less than two months—the English department made a decisive move to implement a directed self-placement (hereafter, DSP) process as an alternative for students who could not be placed by multiple measures.

In this chapter, we will describe the institutional context and Cochise's history of developmental reform from which the DSP emerged, the development of an "emergency" DSP and its evolution to a full-blown pilot alternative placement process, and our conclusions about DSP effectiveness and sustainability. In sharing our story, we focus on how this process informed many of our unquestioned assumptions about what determines student readiness and success. While DSP was originally a response to an institutional challenge to provide alternative, remote placement options, the process of designing and implementing our DSP process allowed us to understand more fully how placement testing works in concert with other developmental education reform initiatives and how it correlates with student success. In reflecting on this process, we've begun to see that while institutional buy-in and collaboration are necessary for placement reform, our collaborations have also exposed other practices and policies that must be addressed in order for DSP to be successful.

Background

Institutional Context

Cochise College is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) comprising two main

campuses in southern Arizona—Sierra Vista and Douglas—and maintaining centers in downtown Sierra Vista, Benson, Willcox, and Fort Huachuca. Cochise College continues to develop as a learning community by focusing on teaching and learning, access and diversity, and the use of technology and innovative instruction. Cochise College's 255 faculty members and 321 staff members provide education and training, in both online and face-to-face formats, including degree and certificate-level programs, community education, skills upgrading, developmental education, and educational programming for special populations to address barriers to participation in education and employment.

Our mission is largely shaped by the needs of the surrounding communities: rural southern Arizona communities, as well as border commuters from Mexico. Since we are situated so close to the U.S./Mexico border, the majority of our students are Hispanic/Latinx (44.5 percent in Fall 2020); many of these students are served by our Douglas campus, but we also serve a large contingent of military students on the Sierra Vista campus (from the Fort Huachuca military base). In Fall 2020, our total enrollment was 3,327 (excludes some active-duty military students in specified training programs, department of corrections students, and high school students). Of these students, 42.3 percent identify as male and 57.7 percent identify as female.

The English department at Cochise College is part of the Liberal Arts division. Often, the English and reading departments work closely on curriculum reform; student success initiatives; and placement testing research, implementation, and monitoring. Further, collaboration occurs between the English department and the Cochise College writing lab, which falls under the purview of the student success division.

As of Fall 2020, the English department employed nine full-time faculty members, six of whom identify as female and three as male. The faculty's educational backgrounds include eight masters degrees in a related field (e.g., literature, creative writing, English) and one Ph.D. in rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English.

History of Curriculum and Placement Reform at Cochise

Before our introduction to DSP, Cochise College English faculty were already engaged in curricular and placement reforms to more effectively serve our population. We have been actively using research to guide our developmental education reform. Cochise College's reform movement contextualizes our transition to DSP and positions us to recognize DSP as a complement to our other reform initiatives. Prior to 2017, the English composition sequence at Cochise College consisted of three developmental education writing courses (Figure 10.1) into which students were placed via ACCUPLACER, followed by the for-credit, required writing courses.

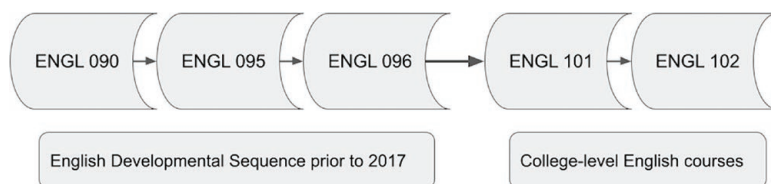


Figure 10.1. English developmental sequence prior to 2017. Note. ENG 096 was originally ENG 100, but articulation agreements with other AZ institutions forced a course number change to ENG 096 in 2018. The course outcomes are exactly the same.

Developmental English students, however, were languishing in lower-level courses in this period prior to any developmental education reform. A review of data from 2014–2016 reveals the adverse impact of a multicourse developmental program: We tracked transfer rates of students enrolled in developmental courses (reading or English) as well as students not enrolled in these courses. After tracking students over a six-year period (beginning in 2014), we found that students who had not enrolled in a developmental reading or English course achieved a transfer rate of 22.2 percent, while students enrolled in these courses achieved a 15.4 percent transfer rate (see Tables 10.A1 and 10.A2 in Appendix A). We saw this same trend continue with each tracked developmental and non-developmental cohort in subsequent years.

Further, from 2014–2016, students who began at the very lowest-level developmental course (i.e., ENG 090) had a lower rate of successful completion of ENG 101 than students who began the developmental sequence in higher-level developmental courses (i.e., ENG 095 or ENG 096)—31 percent versus 47 percent or 70 percent (Table 10.1).

Recognizing that these programs were not adequately serving or meeting the needs of its students, Cochise College began to engage in researching and implementing different support models to make its writing and reading programs more effective for its population. A 2014–2015 annual report to the governor stated that Cochise College had “begun exploring ways to reinvent developmental education because a high percentage of incoming students require pre-college-level instruction” (Rottweiler, 2015). At the time, Cochise College was specifically interested in redesigning its developmental and general education reading and English course offerings. Cochise asked Hanover Research—a private research and analytics firm—to study best practices in community college English and literacy instruction, particularly as they relate to developmental college preparation courses and their impacts on student outcomes. Hanover Research provided Cochise College with an overview of trends and issues in developmental education, as well as an overview of best practices in developmental English placement and course and curriculum design (Hanover Research, 2016).

Table 10.1. Average Percent and Time to Pass ENG 101 for Students Enrolled in Developmental ENG

	Initial Course Placement		
	ENG 090	ENG 095	ENG 096
Average % of students completing ENG 101 with a passing grade (A, B, C)	31%	47%	70%
Average # of terms to complete ENG 101 with a passing grade (A, B, C)	5.6	4.6	3

Additionally, we looked at various developmental education models at other community colleges in the state of Arizona, reviewed the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) scholarship, and attended several conferences held by the Arizona Association for Developmental Education. In 2018, Cochise College signed a contract with Complete College America (CCA), a national organization that helps colleges and universities reshape their policies, perspectives, and practices as a way to increase economic opportunity, social mobility, and racial justice. CCA initiatives focus on improving retention, completion, and transfer rates of students. A push to align with the CCA framework initiated conversations about strategies to reduce the number of courses in our developmental sequence. During two waves of developmental education reform (Figures 10.2 and 10.3), the developmental English courses were ultimately reduced from a sequence of three to two: We now only offer ENG 095, a basic writing course focusing on grammar and paragraph development, and ENG 096, an intermediate writing course that focuses on grammar, essay development, and research skills.

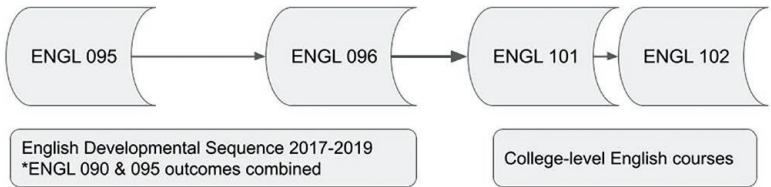


Figure 10.2. First-wave reform English course sequences (2017–2019).

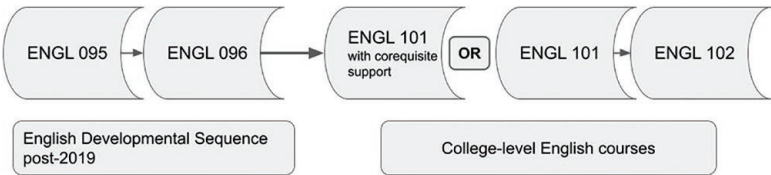


Figure 10.3. Second-wave reform English course sequences (2019–2021).

In Fall 2020, we opened corequisite English 101 courses on both the Sierra Vista and Douglas campuses. The corequisite ENG 101 course incorporates a separate support lab that is capped at nine students. The English department implemented corequisite support models as a way to improve retention, completion, and transfer rates of students in developmental education programs.

During the first-wave reform (Figure 10.2), multiple measures were implemented for placement into the English composition courses. Students must have received one of the following within the last three years to be placed into first-year writing courses:

- a score of 480 or above in the SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) section
- a score of 20 or above on the ACT
- a grade of B or better in a 12th grade English Honors course

If a student could not be placed using the multiple measures criteria, then the student took the ACCUPLACER exam to determine first-year writing course placement. The majority of our students were placed by ACCUPLACER.

It was during this second-wave reform (Figure 10.3)—in which multiple measures/ACCUPLACER placement was in place—that the COVID-19 crisis forced us to reconsider and redesign our placement protocols. After adjusting multiple measures cut offs for COVID (i.e., changed SAT/ACT currency from three years to five years), we still had a significant number of students who needed to be placed by ACCUPLACER. However, amidst quarantines and shutdowns, ACCUPLACER's proctoring requirements posed potential problems for students accessing the exam. Our exploration and subsequent adoption of DSP was initiated by the need to create remotely accessible placement exams that would not require active proctoring.

Furthermore, while DSP was initiated as a temporary measure, we began to see it as a viable replacement option for ACCUPLACER/WritePlacer, with which we had never been fully satisfied due to the length and taxing nature of standardized testing. Our students often take the mathematics, English, and reading placement tests in consecutive sessions which can lead to testing fatigue and disengagement from the placement exam. Students reported randomly answering questions and quickly moving through the placement exams when they begin experiencing testing fatigue. We wondered whether this unfocused response to the placement exam may contribute to inaccurate placement, but rather than seeking out an alternative placement tool, we adjusted cut scores or switched back and forth between ACCUPLACER and WritePlacer. The COVID-19 crisis both forced us and provided us an opportunity to explore, with administration support and buy-in, other placement options.

Designing DSP: Collaboration is Key

While many scholars have begun to view DSP as a way to address ethical and social justice concerns (Inoue, 2009; Kenner, 2016; Poe & Inoue, 2016; Toth, 2019), at

Cochise College, DSP was initially a temporary response to a crisis. In the thick of this crisis, we understood only that we had to act swiftly and decisively. We implemented DSP as a standalone project with the mindset of returning to the status quo placement procedure once the pandemic subsided. DSP was poised to launch after a three-week development phase. The English DSP Pilot Phase I began on May 13, 2020, and ended on June 8, 2020, with over 100 students participating. The dean of liberal arts then supported the English DSP's launch as a full pilot (DSP Pilot Phase II), requiring all incoming placement-seeking students to participate in the DSP.

In this section, we will describe how we developed the Cochise College English DSP, where it “lives,” and how students enroll in the English course once they have chosen a course. Given that we had just two months to design and implement our “emergency” procedure, we have chosen to focus on the cross-institutional collaboration and institution-wide partnerships that were integral in ensuring its swift creation, rollout, and accessibility. Without this collaboration, the DSP could never have been functional in such a short time.

Cross-Institutional Collaboration

Serendipitously, Cochise College English faculty members had recently been introduced to DSP through two key sources: a presentation on DSP by Christie Toth at an annual statewide gathering of university and community college English instructors and the *TYCA White Paper on Placement Reform* (Klaussman et al., 2016). Recalling what we'd recently learned, in early April 2020, the English department chair contacted the University of Arizona (UA) writing program, which had been employing a directed self-placement approach since Spring 2018, to explore their tool as a model for those students the testing center could not accommodate.

While the University of Arizona's own DSP was developed over a nearly three-year period, it grew out of a similar “kairotic moment” (Toth, 2019): when the College Board announced a new scoring system for the SAT to be implemented in March 2016, UA's writing program was using a combination of SAT/ACT scores and high school GPA to determine writing placement. However, writing program administrators had been considering DSP since 2015 for a variety of reasons: to address a lack of curricular awareness and agentic educational decision-making in our incoming cohorts, to gather more information about students reporting dual enrollment, and to re-examine and re-articulate the intended audiences and purposes of the first-year writing course sequence.

Initially, the most salient feature of UA's placement process for Cochise was the fact that the entire process is completed online (using Qualtrics, a robust survey-building platform). Being able to provide the process online to any student would address Cochise's immediate need for accessible, remote placement. Further, the specific components of UA's DSP also appealed to Cochise DSP developers and appeared adaptable to our local context, specifically, course information, the self-assessment survey, a course recommendation (based on self-assessment

responses), and a writing task where students are asked to reflect on the information they've been provided and state which course they wish to take.

In partnership with the University of Arizona writing program's assistant director for placement, the Cochise English department began developing the DSP "course" in Moodle, our learning management system (Figure 10.4). The English DSP course guides students through a series of videos that acquaint them with each of the first-year writing courses Cochise College offers. Students taking the English DSP course then participate in self-reflective activities that ask them to think about previous writing experiences and their learning preferences (see Appendix B), culminating in a reflective writing activity (Figure 10.5).

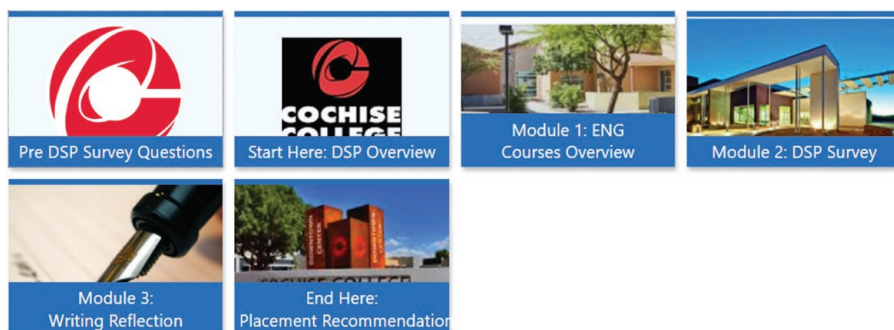


Figure 10.4. Cochise College tile design for DSP course.

Module 3: Writing Reflection

Restricted

Not available unless: You achieve a required score in Pre DSP Survey Questions

WRITING REFLECTION

Your final task is to write a brief reflection. You may submit/upload your reflection in various file types, such as PDF, .txt, .rtf, .Doc. Please present your own best work. The DSP can only accurately provide a placement recommendation based on a writing reflection you compose independently. Your reflection should:

- Be written for an audience of writing instructors.
- Clearly state which writing course you think you should take: ENG 095, ENG 096, ENG 101 with Corequisite Support **or** ENG 101.
- Discuss how the information provided in this evaluation (Course Descriptions, Sample Assignments + Activities, and Self-Assessment Questions) influences your course decision.
- Describe previous educational experiences and background that might impact your course decision.
- Be no more than 500 words

Note: You are welcome to go back to any or all of the previous modules to review materials.

Figure 10.5. Post-DSP survey writing reflection.

When the student completes the DSP course, a specific course recommendation is generated. Once a student receives a placement recommendation, an alert is sent to the testing center director, who removes enrollment blocks to enable the student to register. The testing center director and all advisors also have access to student placement recommendation equated scores (see Appendix C) in our student management system. Note: We are working to ensure the students do not see the raw placement scores; we want them to see only their *recommended* placement. The advisors have access to each student's responses to the DSP survey questions, raw scores, and writing samples housed in Moodle.

Institution-Wide Collaborations

As we moved from “emergency” design and implementation into full-scale pilot phases, we experienced a number of epiphanies about the far-reaching effects of DSP on the institution and its stakeholders. We fielded daily inquiries from our centers and departments on both campuses about how the DSP would affect their processes, policies, and programs, but were nevertheless inspired by the way the DSP pilot provided the opportunity for collaboration among many departments, staff, and administrators. Having initial buy-in from our dean of liberal arts and the student success dean very likely helped pave the way for DSP development and implementation; had we encountered resistance from upper administration, other critical partnerships might have been more difficult to establish. Despite what we've perceived as the critical role of buy-in in our own DSP implementation, this concept is relatively unexplored in DSP scholarship (see Moos & Van Zanen, 2019), especially as it relates to the myriad departments, staff, and other stakeholders who can make or break a placement reform like DSP. Ultimately, we learned that placement reform requires college-wide collaboration and buy-in. Furthermore, it is through such extensive collaboration and communication that we have begun to see how placement reform can expose the seemingly benign institutional processes and policies that can have adverse effects for our students. In some cases, our collaborations led to improvements, streamlining, and better communication; in other cases, we are still grappling with the issues surfaced by our placement reform efforts.

An early issue we faced was with access: Since Moodle is intended as a learning management system for already-enrolled students, we had to collaborate with our learning management administrator (LMA) to ensure the DSP “course” was accessible to incoming students, functioned properly, and adequately stored all the data we needed on each test taker. The LMA was able to find creative and viable solutions to allow incoming students access. Additionally, our web administrator (WA) created a standalone DSP website that introduces new students to the English DSP and provides buttons that direct students to the English DSP. The WA also added direct links to the English DSP on the testing center and counseling and advising websites. The testing center director monitors the DSP, directs

students to the DSP page, and ensures students are able to access DSP. Once a student has completed the DSP, the testing center director receives an alert via an email message prompting them to remove any enrollment block and add notes to the student's placement recommendation in Banner (Cochise's student management system).

We also recognized early on the critical role that advisors play in supporting students' placement decisions (see Saenkhum, 2016). Our advisors were given access to check the students' raw scores and placement recommendations from the DSP surveys and to read students' reflective essays, allowing them to gain a more holistic understanding of the student and their placement needs in order to support students' decision-making. To ensure that advisors and students resist applying a skills-based testing mentality to DSP (e.g., some students have requested to retake the DSP for a better score/placement recommendation), we developed training information for advisors. The training reiterates that the DSP is a tool designed to guide a student through self-reflection, so completing the process again to manipulate the result and recommendation is not ideal. We also emphasized both to advisors and students that if a student does not feel comfortable with their placement recommendation, they are permitted to select a different course option. If a student would like more help selecting a course, then they can discuss the placement with an advisor. In addition to this training, we provided advisors with a training video to help them navigate the English DSP housed on Moodle and access all student information related to DSP placement recommendation.

As we continue to use the DSP, we desire to create a culture among faculty and staff that fosters trust in students to select the first-year composition course that aligns with their overall educational goals. To do this, we understand the importance of keeping lines of communication open between the English department and the advisors. We are quick to respond when issues arise, such as old placement policies conflicting with the spirit/philosophy of the DSP. We invite our advisor who acts as the English department liaison to department meetings and DSP training events, and we host touch-base meetings to candidly discuss how placement affects advisors and their interactions with students.

An unforeseen, yet welcome, outcome of our collaboration with advisors was that it allowed us to promote the English corequisite pilots on the Sierra Vista and Douglas campuses. Using the DSP recommendation, writing samples, and collaboration with the student, advisors encouraged students to participate in the English corequisite pilot. If the DSP recommends placement into ENG 096, a developmental course, but the student does not feel ready for English 101 and wishes to bypass a developmental course, the corequisite course has emerged as a wonderful placement option; it is a nice compromise. The corequisite provides students more support and guidance throughout the semester in a transferable, credit-bearing course. When the student completes the English corequisite course, they receive credit for English 101.

Despite the training and conversations, we have still encountered entrenched mentalities regarding placement along with outdated placement policies that conflict with students' ability to self-place. We are just beginning to establish connections and open conversations with ArmyIgnitED advisors, for example, who treat the DSP placement recommendation as a hard-and-fast placement, and only allow enrollment into a higher course if the student goes through an approval process. We encountered a similar issue with one student in a particular program trying to enroll in ENG 101 when they'd received a recommendation for ENG 096. The program would only admit students who had received a placement of ENG 101. The student's advisor felt uncomfortable allowing the student to choose an English 101 placement and self-enroll in the program. The student was eventually permitted to enroll in the program by obtaining approval from the dean overseeing the program. While it is encouraging to know that students can get around such obstacles, these inconvenient approval processes undermine students' ability to make their own course decisions. While we want to protect students' choices, we also want to be sensitive to our current position; we are very much in a transition phase in that we are adopting a placement tool that is philosophically different from skill-based, standardized placement tools we have historically used on our campuses. Our goal is to build relationships through collaboration, education, and conversations so that when placement issues present themselves, we can work together to resolve them.

There have also been some concerns that there might be financial aid disbursement and allocation challenges associated with DSP recommendations, especially for those students who choose to deviate from the DSP placement recommendations when enrolling in courses. However, the financial aid advisor collaborated with the DSP development team to add information to the Cochise College catalog to address DSP recommendation and financial aid disbursements. Since the financial aid advisor supports allowing students to make placement choices, students may choose to enroll in English courses both lower or higher than the placement recommendation without fear of losing financial aid. If a student makes a course selection "higher" than the placement recommendation and fails the course, they are still eligible for financial aid; however, the financial aid advisor may request the student enroll in the original course the DSP recommended.

Perhaps one of the most complex and ongoing issues surfaced by the shift to DSP has to do with our English language learners (ELLs). The dean of student success and the English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty have worked closely with the DSP development team to ensure that we still identify students who may be ELLs at placement, since Cochise College does not have published English proficiency requirements (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS) for admissions. The ACCUPLACER exam at Cochise College was designed to capture demographic and ELL indicators (e.g., primary language, home language, primary language of instruction) at the beginning of the placement exam. If a student was iden-

tified as ELL, they were directed away from the ACCUPLACER exam and provided a separate ESL placement exam. Like many other institutions, Cochise College offers an English for Academic Purposes Program that helps students improve their skills in oral communication, reading, grammar, and writing as preparation for continued higher education at Cochise College and beyond. This is a for-credit program, and eligible students may receive financial aid. Our ESL courses in the English for Academic Purposes Program particularly serve and benefit students on the Douglas Campus, where we serve a significant population of students from Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico and Naco, Sonora, Mexico along with other international students. When we developed the DSPs in Moodle, we initially did not integrate a mechanism to identify ELLs for this program. While transitioning into a DSP Pilot Phase II (discussed in more detail below), we coordinated with the dean of student success to ensure ELL students were identified via an ESL pre-survey, which is housed on the DSP website. Once the pre-survey is completed, links to the DSPs are then visible and active. Because it is possible for students to bypass the ESL pre-survey and access the DSPs, the ESL pre-surveys are also embedded into both the English and Reading DSPs. While these testing redundancies are currently necessary, we hope to find a way to identify ELL students without also embedding the ESL pre-survey directly on the testing page website and into each DSP.

From Planning to Piloting

The Cochise College English DSP Pilot Phase I began on May 13, 2020, and ended on June 8, 2020, with 134 students participating. Although the sample size is too small to draw final conclusions about the effectiveness of the DSP, our initial data and informal student and administrative feedback suggest that allowing students to make placement choices did not seem to significantly change placement of students across our courses. Table 10.2 provides a snapshot of a comparison between ACCUPLACER and DSP placement.

Table 10.2. Comparison of ACCUPLACER Placements and DSP Placements

	Initial Course Placement		
	ENG 095	ENG 096	ENG 101
ACCUPLACER June 2017–June 2020 (<i>n</i> =3,805)	14%	47%	38%
Directed Self-Placement May 2020–June 2020 (<i>n</i> =134)	8%	41%	40%

We are beginning to see that DSP has the potential to challenge our notions of what determines college-level writing readiness and what predicts student success. A student's agency in course selection could increase their engagement and commitment in their courses (see Moos & Van Zanen, 2019). In one conversation with a student about placement and the effectiveness of their ENG 101 corequisite course, the student shared that the DSP ultimately helped them to commit to enrolling in courses. There was a significant gap between their high school experience and their interest in a college experience. They feared the academic gap would make their skills a little rusty and cause them to place into a developmental course. Their academic goals were clearly set—they wanted to get into college, get through coursework as quickly as they could, and enter the workforce in order to support their young family. They decided that if they tested into developmental courses, they would not attend college because degree completion would take too long and cause a financial strain. While the DSP tool did recommend a developmental placement, the student conversed with an advisor and determined that ENG 101 with corequisite would effectively meet their needs. Knowing they would receive academic support and ENG 101 credit, the student decided to enroll in the corequisite class and begin pursuing their degree. They went on to receive an "A" in ENG 101. By learning about this student's DSP experience—and others' experiences—we are given a glimpse into factors about a student that impact their success that cannot be measured by ACCU-PLACER scores, such as engagement, motivation, and learning preferences.

In addition to many discoveries as we implemented the DSP, our examination yielded important realizations about placement: 1) students typically follow the DSP's placement recommendation, 2) the DSP is responsive and dynamic, 3) the DSP fosters communication among students, advisors, and faculty, and 4) the DSP placement tool has potential to improve rates of completion, transfer, and disproportionate placement in relation to race, class, gender, and linguistic background.

First, we were initially concerned some students would self-place into a course they were unprepared for; however, we came to understand that many students would select the course that would best meet their skill level and academic needs. Early results from DSP Pilot Phase I are beginning to dispel some of our initial placement concerns. We discovered that 50 percent of students who participated in the DSP enrolled in the course the DSP recommended and only two percent of the students chose a higher-level course (the remaining percentage of students had not yet enrolled in an English course at the time data was collected). Knowing how students respond to DSP recommendations is important as we move forward in ensuring that students are getting the best possible placement experience.

Also, because our DSP tool was locally designed, managed, and administered, it is nimble. Asao B. Inoue and colleagues (2011) asserted that "DSP makes clear how course placement processes should be 'site-based' and 'context-sensitive'" (p. 1). We can make adjustments to the tool by adding or changing survey questions and altering cut scores for placement recommendations. We can do this based on trends, classroom experiences, and data. Recognizing that "successful course

placement may be measured differently than conventional validity inquiries” (Inoue et al., 2011, p. 2), we do hope moving forward to capture student satisfaction rates through student surveys. Student responses also have the power to drive DSP adjustments and changes (Gevers & Whittig, 2019).

We also found that the DSP fosters more holistic communication with students, especially student-advisor communication. As students move through DSP modules, they are not only exposed to the writing curriculum at the college, they are invited to reflect on their prior learning experiences. When students complete the DSP, they often meet with advisors to discuss placement options; advisors’ insight into the students’ abilities now goes beyond a cut score or standardized test score. Our hope is that students’ agency in course selection increases engagement and commitment in their courses.

Finally, while designing and implementing the DSP, we have been increasingly exposed to scholarship on DSP and placement reform (see Kelly-Riley & Whithaus, 2019; Klausman, et al., 2016), so we are now beginning to recognize how placement is potentially pivotal in improving transfer and completion rates and disproportionate placement of students of color and students from low-income and working-class backgrounds into developmental courses. Currently, we can provide only a broad picture of results, but we’ve learned a valuable lesson about data collection, and we now understand the importance of disaggregating data to determine disproportionate placement of students related to race, class, gender, and linguistic background. Moving forward, we have greater insight about the type of comparative data we need to collect to make informed decisions.

Conclusion

After receiving broader training (a Fall 2020 workshop on DSP for all English faculty), reviewing the early data, and considering faculty input, in October 2020 we decided to launch a DSP Phase II pilot that would span a three-term period and allow us to grow our sample sizes. We intend to systematically move through three phases: data collection, interventions, and methods of results interpretations. We plan to collect student survey responses regarding their self-placement course choices versus DSP recommendations, developmental placement demographics, ACCUPLACER/DSP placement data and course completion and pass/fail rates, and faculty perspectives on DSP adoption. We will also implement additional faculty and staff training, and educate students on the importance of the first-year writing course selections. We intend to learn more about interpreting disaggregated data so that we can readily see whether the DSP mitigates disproportionate placement related to race, class, gender, or linguistic background.

It is only in hindsight that we have come to understand that the COVID-19 pandemic provided us a rare opportunity for both immediate and continuing educational reform. Even though we were in a moment of crisis, the pandemic opened a space for us to have a more concentrated focus on understanding our

population and meeting their needs. The DSP inspired us not only to increase our awareness of our students' needs, but also to revisit our curriculum sequence, reconsider and reevaluate the effectiveness of all our reform initiatives, question whether we are truly serving and meeting the needs of our student population, and form crucial institution and cross-institution partnerships. As we review our preliminary data and begin hearing stories from students about how the DSP personally impacted their decisions to both enter college and select courses, we are confident that we will not be readily returning to our status quo placement tools, instead preferring the holistic and more personalized placement approach.

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Appendix A: Transfer Data

Table 10.A1. Transfer-Out Data for First-Time English or Reading Developmental Education Students

Year	Head Count	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years	6 Years
2014	358	0.3%	1.4%	5.6%	10.6%	13.7%	15.4%
2015	357	0.0%	1.7%	8.1%	14.3%	18.5%	
2016	334	0.3%	2.1%	9.0%	15.6%		
2017	299	0.7%	4.4%	14.4%			
2018	283	0.4%	2.1%				
2019	226	0.9%					

Table 10.A2. Transfer-Out Data for First-Time Non Developmental Education Students

Year	Head Count	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years	6 Years
2014	585	0.2%	3.6%	9.7%	14.9%	18.6%	22.2%
2015	500	0.6%	3.2%	9.8%	15.2%	18.6%	
2016	450	1.1%	5.3%	12.7%	18.0%		
2017	359	0.3%	2.8%	13.1%			
2018	437	0.2%	6.0%				
2019	521	1.0%					

Appendix B: DSP Self-Assessment Questions

- I have a strong grasp of the conventions of academic writing, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
 - Not really
 - Kind of
 - Mostly
 - Absolutely
- When I have a writing assignment, I know exactly what I need to do to get it done.
 - Not really
 - Kind of
 - Mostly
 - Absolutely
- I prefer to read and analyze multi-page academic texts ...
 - with a lot of assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.
 - with some assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.
 - with little to no assistance and guidance from peers and instructor.
 - more independently, with very little support from my peers and instructor.
- I prefer to work on major assignments for the course ...
 - mostly during class time.
 - during class time and on my own as homework.
 - mostly on my own as homework, with limited in-class writing time.
 - on my own, without in-class writing time.
- I prefer to decide what I write about for my major projects ...
 - with a lot of assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.
 - with some assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.
 - with limited amount of assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.
 - with little to no assistance and guidance from my peers and instructor.

6. I prefer to engage in the writing process (brainstorming, prewriting, outlining, drafting, revising) ...
 - A) With a lot of support from my peers and instructor.
 - B) With some support from my peers and instructor.
 - C) Somewhat independently, with limited support from my peers and instructor.
 - D) More independently, with very little support from my peers and instructor.
7. I can read and annotate (take notes on) 15 or more pages for weekly homework.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
8. I can discuss a text with an instructor and/or peers.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
9. When I read something (a book, an essay, an article), I always have a lot of ideas for how to respond to it.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
10. I know how to clearly summarize key arguments in others' writing.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
11. I have written many (5+) academic texts that are longer than five pages.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
12. I have regularly written for an audience other than a teacher.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely
13. I have a lot of experience locating, selecting, and evaluating sources for researched academic writing.
 - A) Not really
 - B) Kind of
 - C) Mostly
 - D) Absolutely

14. I seek other writers' advice on my writing while I am drafting.
 A) Not really
 B) Kind of
 C) Mostly
 D) Absolutely
15. I have a lot of experience citing others' ideas in my writing to avoid plagiarism or academic dishonesty.
 A) Not really
 B) Kind of
 C) Mostly
 D) Absolutely
16. I have completed many writing assignments integrating multiple sources.
 A) Not really
 B) Kind of
 C) Mostly
 D) Absolutely
17. I have strategies to overcome the challenges I confront in a writing project.
 A) Not really
 B) Kind of
 C) Mostly
 D) Absolutely

Appendix C: DSP Placement Recommendations

Placement Score	Course Recommendation
425 - 849	ENG 095 - Many of your answers in the self-assessment indicate that you may desire or benefit from additional writing support and time with your instructor that ENG 095 provides.
850 - 1274	<p>ENG 096 - Many of your answers in the self-assessment indicate that you may desire or benefit from additional research and academic reading and writing practice that ENG 096 provides.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>ENG 101 with Corequisite Support - Many of your answers in the self-assessment indicate that you may desire or benefit from taking college-level ENG 101 coupled with a support lab in which you receive more individualized support as you work to complete a college-level writing course. Note: Once you successfully complete ENG 101 with Corequisite Support, you will receive credit for ENG 101.</p> <p>*Note: The ENG 101 with Corequisite Support option was added to the course recommendations in DSP Pilot Phase II.</p>
1275 - 1700	ENG 101 - Many of your answers in the self-assessment indicate that you may desire or benefit from the challenge and the rigor of a college-level writing experience that ENG 101 provides.