

Foreword

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Beginning with a doctoral class on writing program administration and continuing throughout my doctoral coursework, I noticed the limited integration of writing scholarship about two-year colleges and produced by two-year college scholars. Having worked as an adjunct faculty at various community colleges in California and later in Texas and New Mexico, I devoted my earliest research efforts to examining the various ways writing program administrators are teacher-scholar-activists (Sullivan, 2015) constantly working to advocate for change within their departments and programs (Tinoco, forthcoming). The case studies in *Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education* are a powerful example of this advocacy and activism as the authors in this collection ask readers to bear witness to the inequities caused by writing placement—such as systemic under-placement, cost in tuition, and persistence—and share ways two-year college writing faculty are redressing the harm inflicted on students.

Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education both acknowledges the harm caused by placement and offers approaches to more equitable writing placement. For example, it lets readers experience moments like those described by Jessica Nastal, Jason Evans, and Jessica Gravely, who share how their department at a predominately Black two-year college did not analyze disaggregated placement data to examine racial and equity disparities caused by their placement process. In another example, Jeffrey Klausman and Signee Lynch share that prior to placement reforms, their institution's ACCUPLACER cut-off score placed only about 30 percent of students into their English 101 course. Additionally, Charissa Che demonstrates that state-mandated placement mechanisms meant to close the equity gap can still be rooted in standard English language ideologies that harm linguistically diverse students. Bringing forth and making these things visible is risky, but the authors also show how acknowledging these injustices offers possibilities for radical change.

If we want institutions to move away from commercial, automated, computer-based placement exams and adopt more equitable approaches to writing placement as a response to the recommendations of the 2016 TYCA White Paper on Placement Reform (Klausman et al., 2016) and Mya Poe and Asao B. Inoue's (2016) call for socially just writing assessment, then we must direct our attention to the possibilities offered in this collection. *Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education* shows readers how placement reform, whether it be multiple measures, directed self-placement, or informed self-place-

ment, has closed equity gaps, and in some cases, created almost no equity gap, as seen at one two-year college. Annie Del Principe, Lesley Broder, and Lauren Levesque share how placement reform has reduced the number of developmental writing courses at their college from more than 100 sections to seven. We also learn from Calhoun-Dillahunt and Margoni how placement reform has facilitated professional development on antiracist and equitable assessment. The authors in this collection share their intellectual experiences as they develop placement practices that meet the needs of their students, all while their work starts to create small but significant campus-wide shifts towards ongoing equity work.

Although placement reforms were in action at various institutions in this collection well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the third section of this book, “Pandemic-Precipitated Placement Reform,” hones in on the opportunities created by the kairotic moment caused by the pandemic’s disruptions. I write this foreword still in the midst of the pandemic, but over the last two years, we have all seen how the COVID-19 pandemic has altered higher education. For some of the authors in this collection, the pandemic created an exigency for placement reform as institutions and faculty were required to make dramatic adjustments to their placement practices, specifically how they used unproctored placement exams. Remote instruction considerably complicated the delivery of student services. Scholars, such as Brand and Kriner, in this last section of *Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education* demonstrate how they were able to implement placement methods that met the needs of their student body amidst the pandemic. Even though the pandemic allowed for placement reform to occur, such as the online direct self-placement discussed by Sarah Elizabeth Snyder, Sara Amani, and Kevin Kato (this collection), they do caution us about the consequences of implementing such rapid, emergency placement, especially for multilingual students. This section of the book reminds us all to not sacrifice the opportunities the pandemic has presented for us to learn and improve our writing placement.

Through the case studies brought together in this book, the authors help teachers, researchers, and administrators understand the complexities in leading placement reform at two-year colleges. They show us how state laws and policies, local contexts, and resources can hinder or facilitate this work. They show us that the work of writing placement requires their disciplinary and professional knowledge, *and* it should not only be the work of English faculty but the entire institution. The writers demonstrate that this process needs institution-wide support—from institutional research to grant funding to support from faculty, administrators, advisors, IT, and information systems staff. In writing their stories, the authors illustrate the importance of placement reforms being developed by faculty who understand their institutional context and student demographics. These scholars remind us that placement also needs continual revision to fit the changing student demographics of not only two-year colleges but all institutions of higher education.

Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education contributes to our body of disciplinary knowledge on writing assessment ecologies (Inoue, 2015), allowing us to reimagine the radical possibilities of writing assessment beyond the classroom. But more importantly, this collection reminds us that scholars at two-year colleges are at the forefront of advocating for and developing transformative and humanizing writing placement assessments that create more equitable conditions for historically minoritized students at two-year colleges.

References

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