

Introduction

Jessica Nastal

PRAIRIE STATE COLLEGE

Mya Poe

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Christie Toth

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Since the mid-twentieth century, two-year colleges—known historically as junior colleges, technical colleges, and community colleges, depending on the specific mission and programming of the institution—have served a critical function as an open-admissions pathway to postsecondary education for a wide range of students.¹

With more than 1,000 two-year colleges in the US, including 936 public colleges, 35 tribal colleges, and 73 independent colleges (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2021), these institutions encompass a wide range of educational and geographic spaces. Two-year colleges serve an enormous number of students, annually including 6.8 million credit-seeking students and 5.0 million non-credit-seeking students. During the 2018-2019 academic year alone, two-year colleges awarded 20,700 baccalaureate degrees in addition to 878,900 associate degrees and 619,711 certificates (American Association of Community Colleges, 2021).

These institutions provide local educational access, offering non-credit coursework in high school equivalency, adult basic education, English as a second or additional language, and lifelong learning for community members; developmental courses for those institutionally classified as underprepared for college coursework; vocational degrees and certificates (often with close ties to local industries); transfer-oriented general education and associate programs for those pursuing bachelor's degrees; as well as growing dual/concurrent enrollment and early college initiatives for high school students (Cohen et al., 2014).

Two-year colleges are new majority institutions. Of students enrolled in credit-earning coursework at two-year colleges, 27 percent are Hispanic/Latinx, 13 percent are Black, 44 percent are White, 6 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 1 percent are Native American, 4 percent identify as two or more races, 4 percent

1. Adapted with permission from “Introduction: Writing Assessment, Placement, and the Two-Year College” by Christie Toth, Jessica Nastal, Holly Hassel, and Joanne Baird Giordano, which appeared in the 2019 special issue on two-year college writing placement in the *Journal of Writing Assessment*.

identify as “other/unknown,” and 2 percent are international students (AACC, 2021). Diversity data are even more revealing when compared to percentages of the national undergraduate population from underrepresented groups. Two-year colleges enroll 56 percent of Native American undergraduates, 52 percent of Hispanic/Latinx students, and 43 percent of Black students nationally (AACC, 2017); 29 percent of community college students are in the first generation of their family to attend college (AACC, 2021). Community college students are also more likely than students at four-year institutions to be older than age 24, returning to higher education, parents, veterans, immigrants or refugees, DACA recipients or unDACAmented, and/or students with disabilities (Cohen et al., 2014). More than one-third of Pell Grant recipients attend two-year colleges, and nearly 80 percent are working students (AACC, 2022). Two-year college students are more likely than those at four-year institutions to work full-time and be the main source of family care.

Two-year colleges provide a crucial point of entry to students who would otherwise be unable to access (or re-access) public postsecondary education. Many of these students are not making “market” choices between two- and four-year institutions, but rather between two-year colleges or no college at all, or between two-year colleges and for-profit institutions that may leave them deep in debt with unimproved employment prospects (Toth et al., 2016). To the extent that writing assessment—for placement, in the classroom, or as a requirement for exiting required course sequences—functions to support or undermine student success at two-year colleges, it plays a key role in either opening or foreclosing access to learning, credentials, and, ultimately, socioeconomic mobility for some of the least advantaged students in the U.S. postsecondary system. This reality has become all the more pressing since Spring 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit hardest many of the communities most likely to enroll in two-year colleges.

The pandemic has caused massive and inequitable human suffering, both nationally and globally. It disrupted face-to-face instruction at all institution types, with the least advantaged students experiencing disproportionate harm in terms of course completion and semester-to-semester retention (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). It also disrupted the on-site, proctored placement testing used at many community colleges. For faculty, researchers, and policymakers who had been advocating for placement reform, this upheaval created a(nother) kairotic opening. Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, two-year college writing faculty queried professional listservs about placement options and shared materials from placement reforms already underway (e.g., Benton, 2020). Several of us who worked on the 2019 special issue of the *Journal of Writing Assessment* (JWA) on two-year college writing placement were contacted by colleagues across the country seeking advice on redesigning their placement processes. Many contributors to this collection, most of whom submitted chapter proposals prior to the pandemic, found themselves writing case studies of placement reform in the time of COVID.

Published research on this subject is only just beginning to appear, but initial studies suggest the pandemic has accelerated large-scale changes to placement. A January 2021 report from the Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness stated, “Perhaps counterintuitively, the onset of COVID-19 created opportunities for state systems to facilitate institutional adoption of multiple measures assessment” (Bickerstaff et al., 2021, p. 2). The report describes pandemic-driven moves to large-scale multiple measures assessment (MMA) for placement in Indiana, Virginia, Texas, and Washington; in Virginia and Washington community colleges, direct, informed, or “guided” self-placement (DSP/ISP/GSP) options were implemented or expanded for at least some groups of students ((Bickerstaff et al., 2021, pp. 5, 8). The authors of the report view those movements favorably, stating,

The pandemic has . . . created opportunities for institutions to decrease their reliance on standardized assessments. This can serve to help more students enroll in college courses sooner, with the aim of reducing disparities in outcomes and improving student success. (Bickerstaff et al., 2021, p. 9)

Yet, at least in the short-term, enrollments at community colleges nationwide have declined sharply and inequitably. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2021), “While declines in undergraduate enrollment [have been] evident across all institutional sectors, community colleges remain hardest hit [in Spring 2021] (-9.5%, 476,000 fewer students)” (p. 1). Those declines have continued into the 2021-2022 academic year (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center [NSCRC], 2021), where two-year colleges are at a 13.5 percent decline in enrollment since Fall 2019 (NSCRC, 2022). These broad dynamics are playing out in specific contexts shaped by institutional histories and structures, emplaced manifestations of political polarization, and local diversities/structures of inequality.

Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education was born out of a history of placement innovation at two-year colleges that has been given new visibility in the pandemic. As the case studies in this volume demonstrate, some two-year college faculty have been seizing the national moment of reform as an opportunity to challenge the idea that writing placement is ideologically or consequentially neutral and to develop more equitable approaches to writing placement. Moreover, as the chapters in this collection make clear, changes to placement are only part of a much more complex, resource-intensive process of making it possible for all students—including the hundreds of thousands of expected students who did not show up for college in 2021—to pursue their interests and achieve their goals through open-admissions two-year colleges.

In this introductory chapter, which is adapted and updated from the introduction to the 2019 special issue of *JWA*, we lay out several layers of context for this moment of potential transformation we are navigating in the opening years

of the 2020s. These layers include the critical interrogation of the assumptions long underpinning two-year college writing placement, the broader policy context for two-year college placement reform, ongoing effort to gain greater visibility for two-year colleges in writing assessment scholarship, and the implications of the ethical turn in writing assessment for placement reform. We then present an overview of the chapters in this collection, each of which presents a site-specific case study of two-year college placement reform at the turn of the decade. These case studies exemplify how the strands we trace here play out in local contexts while identifying complex challenges and new possibilities for placement in the wake of COVID. We close with a discussion of directions for future research and praxis.

Interrogating the Assumptions of “Placement”

Today, few would argue that traditional high-stakes, single-score purchased placement tests are accurate or fair for the purposes of placing students into writing courses. However, we often do not step back from such debates to reflect on the larger ecology in which placement testing was developed and continues to operate. Placement is a writing assessment process unique to postsecondary education in the United States (Haswell, 2004). While other countries use proficiency testing for institutional admissions, many U.S. colleges use placement assessments once students have already been admitted. In the nation’s open-admissions two-year colleges, where students enter from a wide range of academic trajectories and often have not taken any kind of admissions exam, placement assessment is nearly universal. The rationale for placement hinges on the following argument:

1. Placement testing identifies students with the weakest writing abilities.
2. In order to boost those abilities, placement tests funnel students into specific classes or sections where instruction can be more manageable and students can learn better.
3. Therefore, placement testing leads to improved student learning, retention, and completion.

This rationale is predicated on the algorithmic, decision-tree approach to placement advanced by Warren W. Willingham (1974, p. 71) more than four decades ago. Willingham’s model is a closed system—i.e., a system in which “mastery” of “skills” lies within the bounds of the placement test and the “post-test.” The model relies on a linear progression of a preset notion of expertise labeled as skills: Students demonstrate mastery of Skill A; they are then tested on Skill A; those who succeed on test of Skill A progress to Skill B (which relies on Skill A); those who fail on test of Skill A return to the beginning of the unit. The construct of “skill” is not questioned and neither is the assumption that Skill B is dependent on Skill A. Another assumption regarding the necessity of placement into writing

courses, as Michael Kane (1990) has identified, is “that performance on the placement test is relevant to readiness for the . . . course” (p. 11). Over the last several decades, however, we have learned much about the recursive nature of writing. We know, for instance, that decontextualized grammar-usage-mechanics instruction does not necessarily lead to improved writing; as a result, placement assessments that rely on outdated notions of the writing construct are often neither valid, reliable, nor fair. The traditional placement algorithm is a model in which the student has no agency beyond demonstration of skills that may not be relevant to the writing course. The assessment process has been stripped from institutional or community context, which are essential aspects of any communicative act.

Willingham’s binaristic, decontextualized model has not only become the tacit theory undergirding most writing placement, it has also been a technological apparatus mapped onto discussions of standards and equity. Thirty-five years ago, Edward A. Morante (1987) argued that placement tests and their corresponding cut scores “play important roles in access, retention, and quality” (p. 63), asserting, “To dump everyone in the same level of course is significantly to increase the probability of lowering standards or of failing many students” (p. 63). A decade later, Edward White (1995) claimed placement testing “[serves] to help underprepared students succeed instead of washing them out . . . these are the students for whom required placement and the required freshman course are necessary, for they are most in need of guidance and support” (pp. 76-77).

Assumptions that map the technology of placement testing onto discourses of standards and equity have not gone unchallenged. Teacher-scholars like Richard Haswell (2004) questioned the test-retest reliability of placement exams when students have been found to change their score significantly the second time they take the test. He compellingly demonstrated how research conducted since placement testing began with the 1874 Harvard entrance exams shows both indirect and direct methods of testing do little in the way of predicting student success (Haswell, 2004). Likewise, William L. Smith (1993) analyzed the locally designed test at University of Pittsburgh, which used a robust scoring method that relied on its expert teachers, and found that 14 percent of students were under-placed. While this may seem like a “good enough” number for some, Smith (1993) argued, “For the students and for the teachers, ‘very few’ [underplacing] is too many” (p. 192). This limited ability for placement exam scores to predict which writing course is best suited for a student is precisely what led ACT to halt the COMPASS placement exam in 2015.

Placement testing has also been mapped onto discourses about teacher efficiency. Indeed, placement has long been viewed as necessary to increase the productivity of both instructors and students in writing classes. The perceived value of such efficiency relates directly to the material conditions of postsecondary writing instruction, especially at two-year colleges where undercompensated and not-always-well-supported adjunct faculty teach many of the writing courses. In these settings, sorting based on abilities is presumed to help ease the labor of teaching.

Because writing assessment has often been driven by such questions of efficiency (see Williamson, 1994; Yancey, 1999), this orientation treats composition courses as a necessary burden for both students and the institution. In recent decades, writing program administrators and writing studies teacher-scholars have made headway in shifting the conversation about college composition from teaching “basic skills” to engaging students around disciplinarily-informed insights that help prime them for life-long development as critical readers, writers, and community members. At many institutions, however—and particularly at two-year colleges, where writing faculty often have less disciplinary authority over assessment—placement into composition courses is still viewed *not* as a pivotal educational moment for introducing students to local pedagogical orientations and the valued construct of writing, but rather a mechanism for putting students in their “proper” seats quickly, easily, and inexpensively. This perspective has led to the proliferation of methods that leave unaddressed critical questions about what accuracy means, how it might shift depending on the stakeholder, and what messages placement conveys.

Ultimately, placement testing does more than direct students into certain courses. Placement is an introduction to the institution and how it conceives of writing (Harrington, 2005, p. 15). It communicates specific cultural values, language ideologies, and expectations to test-takers and participants: In short, it communicates power. It can replicate or trouble inequitable social structures; it can support or challenge the current era of testing/assessment despair (Gallagher, 2007). Decontextualized algorithmic approaches to placement offer little helpful information about the ways most composition teacher-scholars conceive of writing. For too long, the widespread reliance on commercially produced tests that measure a limited construct of writing has prioritized knowledge of Edited American English conventions at the expense of any other capacity, primarily because these are the skills that can be easily measured through multiple-choice tests (Huddleston, 1954; Stein, 2016; Williamson, 1994), quickly written paragraphs (Bereiter, 2003; Faigley et al., 1985), and automated writing evaluation (AWE) software (Burstein, 2012). Placement assessments with such limited construct representation might work to quickly put students into writing classes. They do little, however, to expand the narrow conceptions of writing held by much of the public, conceptions bolstered by that public’s experiences with school-based writing assessment. They certainly do not prepare students for longer-term rhetorical awareness and writing knowledge transfer.

Traditional placement models communicate inaccurate and counterproductive messages about what we value in college writing; they appear to misplace students at unacceptable and often inequitable rates; they fail to assess key capacities necessary for college success; and they do not provide information about what kinds of supplementary supports might benefit students—something that contextualized, nonbinaristic measures with broader construct representation can offer (Hassel & Giordano, 2015). At two-year institutions, the consequences

of poor placement practices are not simply a matter of how many credit-bearing writing courses a student will need to complete. In an unreformed two-year college curriculum, misplacement can mean taking as many as three non-credit developmental courses before entering into credit-bearing composition (see Nastal, 2019; Patthey-Chavez et al., 2005). Many students will not have the time, money, or motivation to persist through a year of additional and unnecessary writing coursework—more if they do not pass a class. Such barriers can be reduced or eliminated if we develop placement processes that prioritize fairness, antiracism, and justice.

Contextualizing Reform Efforts at Two-Year Colleges

In *Gateway to Opportunity? A History of the Community College in the United States*, J. M. Beach (2012) reviewed scholarly perspectives on the function of two-year colleges and concluded that these institutions offer “a limited opportunity and a mixed blessing” (p. 128). The early mission of the community college was to “*limit* access to higher education in the name of social efficiency” (Beach, 2012, p. xx), but students, faculty, and administrators galvanized by the democratic potential of open admissions “tried to refashion this institution into a tool for increased social mobility, community organization, and regional economic development” (Beach, 2012, p. xx). Tensions between these institutional missions, which reflect impulses of constraint and opportunity, have persisted through the demographic and economic upheavals of the twenty-first century, as two-year colleges became the focus of renewed scholarly debate, philanthropy-driven reform efforts, and state and federal policymaking aimed at increasing the percentage of Americans holding postsecondary credentials. These forces have been rapidly reshaping writing curricula and placement assessment at two-year colleges. At many institutions, however, neither English faculty nor the discipline of writing studies has traditionally been well-positioned to influence these reforms (Griffiths, 2017; Hassel et al., 2015; Toth et al., 2013).

Community college researchers and reformers often invoke low and inequitable degree completion rates as a major motivation for enacting change (e.g., Bailey et al., 2010; Barnett & Reddy, 2017; Scott-Clayton et al., 2014; Zaback et al., 2016). For example, Doug Shapiro et al. (2016) reported that only 39 percent of students who enrolled at two-year colleges earned any kind of credential within six years, and nationally, just 16 percent of entering two-year college students went on to earn a bachelor’s degree. Moreover, only 33 percent of Hispanic/Latinx students and 26 percent of Black students who enrolled at two-year colleges earned a credential within six years, and just 11 percent of Hispanic/Latinx students and nine percent of Black students who began at two-year colleges eventually completed bachelor’s degrees (Shapiro et al., 2016).

Few argue that there is no need for reform; rather, debates hinge on the nature, goals, and underlying ideologies of those changes. As Patrick Sullivan (2008, 2017)

has reminded us, measuring “student success” at open admissions institutions is a complex endeavor. Not all two-year college students aspire to transfer or to earn degrees: Many are pursuing two-year vocational, technical, or para-professional certifications, or simply need a few classes to update their resume or job skills. Other students may be enrolling to experience higher education and determine if it aligns with their personal, professional, community, and academic priorities. Some are dual-enrollment/early college high school students or reverse transfer students—that is, students who are already enrolled at four-year institutions and take a limited number of classes at their local two-year college to fulfill specific degree requirements, save on tuition, and attend classes with smaller student-faculty ratios and, therefore, increased opportunities for individualized instruction and collaboration. Degree-seeking students at two-year colleges may shift their aspirations throughout the course of their education, and many students find themselves facing financial pressures, life crises, or family and community responsibilities that take priority over schooling, at least temporarily (Griffiths & Toth, 2017; Sullivan, 2008, 2017). Longstanding federal measures of completion rates have penalized community colleges by not including part-time students or those who transfer to four-year institutions before completing a degree in their success metrics; some metrics are limited to first-time, full-time students, which represents a slim margin of two-year college students. When the Department of Education revised these criteria in 2017, it found the eight-year combined graduation and transfer rate for community college students was 60 percent (Carey, 2017).

Over the last few decades, calls among both state and federal policymakers to improve students’ course completion, persistence, and degree completion have increasingly been framed as a matter of institutional accountability. As Christie Toth and colleagues (2016) have observed, accountability measures often fail to acknowledge that “the academic playing field is not level. An institution’s record of ‘success’ is largely shaped by its student demographics and resources. The performance metrics are stacked in favor of selective colleges and universities, particularly the most elite among them” (p. 401). This dynamic makes performance-based funding problematic. Such policies risk punishing under-resourced institutions that serve under-resourced students by further denying them resources.

Given that traditional measures often fail to capture the successes of two-year college students, the American Association of Community Colleges has recently launched the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), piloted in 2011 with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation for Education and begun in 2018; it is now funded by membership dues (AACC, 2022). The VFA is “the first national system of accountability specifically for community colleges and by community colleges” (2022). Rather than defining student success only by conventional metrics such as graduation rates, the VFA looks at three areas:

- Student progress and outcomes (SPO), including measures on develop-

mental education progress, one-year progress, two-year progress, and six-year outcomes

- Career & technical education
- Adult basic education (ABE) (AACC, 2022)

For example, one-year progress measures include the following:

- Credits earned: first term, by end of year one
- Completed college math in year 1, completed college English in year 1, and completed college math and English in year 1
- Persistence from term 1 to term 2
- Successful completion of credits by end of year 1 (AACC, 2022)

Career and technical education includes a number of measures, including enrollment (credit and non-credit) and completions (credit and non-credit) as well as measures such as passing rates on licensure exams. Finally, ABE measures include whether the student completed ABE, enrolled in more education post-ABE, and gained employment post-ABE. Data from each area are analyzed independently and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, part-time/full-time status, Pell status, age, gender, and pathway key performance indicators (AACC, 2022). Such innovation in evidence-based program assessment is yet another demonstration of what four-year researchers can learn from two-year colleagues: progress measures that capture student success in more fine-grained ways.

The discourse of degree completion at two-year colleges has attracted the attention of mega-philanthropies like the Lumina and Gates foundations, as well as higher education researchers who have made use of the influx of funding from such organizations. Perhaps the most influential researchers have been those associated with the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University's Teachers College. Over the last decade, CCRC has produced a number of high-profile publications arguing that one major cause of departure prior to degree completion is the amount of time many two-year college students spend in developmental courses before they can enroll in credit-bearing college-level coursework (e.g., Bailey et al., 2010; Jaggars & Stacey, 2014): During the first decade of the twenty-first century, 68 percent of two-year college students enrolled in at least one developmental course (Chen & Simone, 2016). These researchers have found that, for many students, the costs of the time and resources spent in developmental courses seem to outweigh the benefits to learning, with particularly negative impacts on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Bailey et al., 2010; Henson & Hern, 2019; Jaggars & Stacey, 2014; Nastal, 2019).

This line of research has fueled the now-robust movement for reducing enrollment in and/or accelerating developmental instruction at two-year colleges. It has spawned heated debates between CCRC researchers and advocates of developmental education, who have questioned reformers' analyses and the political endgame

of their research (for an illustrative exchange, see Bailey et al., 2013; Goudas & Boylan, 2012, 2013). It has also fueled continued struggles over the implementation and perceived successes and failures of California's A.B. 705 (e.g., Gilman et al., 2019; Nazzari et al., 2020; Siegal & Gilliland, 2021). The Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations (CLADEA, n.d.), which includes most professional developmental education organizations, has responded to policy initiatives that reduce developmental education support with a statement on college access, arguing that "elimination or underfunding of learning assistance programs inevitably restricts college access in ways that lead to blatant educational disparities, very often with patterns related to race and socioeconomic status." The Council offered their own college completion plan in a white paper, *Meaningful Access and Support: The Path to College Completion*, that the authors describe as a call to action for higher education institutions to provide access and support for all students through evidence-based practices (Casazza & Silverman, 2013).

While many two-year college English faculty have embraced—and, in some cases, have been important leaders in—efforts to reduce the time students spend in developmental coursework (Adams et al., 2009; Cho et al., 2012; Hassel et al., 2015; Hern, 2012), many also share CLADEA's concern that broad-stroke critiques of developmental education are leading policymakers to cut resources and eliminate programs that provide necessary support for the least advantaged students, ultimately foreclosing their ability to access higher education (Hassel et al., 2015; Siegal & Gilliland, 2021). Again, few of these faculty argue against the importance of enrolling students into college-level courses as quickly as possible. The debates center on what combination of reforms to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, professional development, and resource allocation will best achieve that goal for the diverse student groups entering two-year colleges.

This broad rethinking of developmental education has drawn increased attention to the assessment practices used by two-year colleges to place incoming students into courses. CCRC researchers have released a series of studies suggesting that the common use of high-stakes, single-score purchased placement tests leads to widespread misplacement, and particularly "underplacement": that is, placing students—disproportionately, first-generation college students and BIPOC students—who are capable of succeeding in college-level coursework into developmental courses, which can negatively impact their persistence to degree completion (e.g., Bailey et al., 2010; Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Hodara et al., 2012; Scott-Clayton, 2012). Recognition of this systemic injustice and debates about how best to counter it have fueled the push for two-year college placement reform.

Bringing Visibility to Two-Year College Writing Assessment

Given the research that is being published by CCRC, Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness, and National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, the disciplinary community of writing studies should have a significant interest

in assessment at two-year colleges. Yet, two-year colleges and the faculty who teach in them have long been underrepresented in writing studies, and specifically in writing assessment, scholarship (Hassel & Giordano, 2013; Lovas, 2002; Morris et al., 2015; Nist & Raines, 1995; Toth & Sullivan, 2016). While community college faculty publish in journals such as *Assessing Writing* and the *Journal of Writing Assessment* (for example, Blankenship et al., 2017), most assessment scholarship by two-year college faculty is published in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. Because that journal is not open-access and historically has been either disparaged or ignored by university-based scholars (Connors, 1984; see Hassel et al., 2019; Rodrigo & Miller-Cochran, 2018; Sommers, 2017), it often has been overlooked as a site for cutting-edge research.

Fortunately, there is growing recognition of the critical importance of two-year faculty voices in national conversations on writing assessment. For example, the *White Paper on Placement Reform* (Klausman et al., 2016), which was composed by a Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) research committee and approved by TYCA's executive committee, provided a synthesis of research on placement that emerged from higher education reformers—particularly researchers associated with the CCRC—as well as writing studies through the first half of the 2010s. The paper offered case studies of promising approaches to two-year college writing placement and articulated several key principles for designing, administering, and assessing placement practices. Those principles include (1) grounding in disciplinary knowledge, (2) involvement of English faculty in the development of placement processes, (3) sensitivity to the effects of placement processes on diverse groups of students, (4) ongoing local validation, and (5) integration of placement reform with other campus-wide efforts to support student success (Klausman et al., 2016, p. 126).²

Spurred by the 2015 demise of the widely-used COMPASS placement test and the 2016 TYCA statement, the *Journal of Writing Assessment* (JWA) released a special issue on writing placement in two-year colleges in 2019. Published before the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, the special issue was driven by contributors' pursuit of equity for their students and influenced by the ethical turn in writing assessment as well as emerging conversations about antiracism in writing studies. The special issue led to a featured presentation on two-year college writing placement at the Council on Writing Program Administrators conference as well as a panel at National TYCA. Contributors to the special issue

2. Following the recommendations of CCRC and TYCA, many community colleges have adopted various forms of MMA placement that increase the range of ways that students can demonstrate readiness for college-level writing (Barnett & Reddy, 2017; Klausman et al., 2016). The idea of MMA aligns with the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) position statement on writing assessment (CCCC Executive Committee, 2009). Holly Hassel and Joanne Giordano (2011, 2015) presented a successful two-year college model for multiple-measures placement grounded in disciplinary knowledge and values.

engaged with mounting pressures for placement reform emanating from higher education researchers, policymakers, administrators, and two-year college faculty. They addressed the racial inequities often promulgated through high-stakes single-score placement tests and explored the promise of emerging alternatives.

In the three years since the publication of the *JWA* special issue, the landscape of two-year college writing placement has continued to evolve. California's A.B. 705 legislation, which took effect in 2018, has now restructured developmental education and its associated placement systems at community colleges throughout the state (see Gilman et al., 2019). In the years since its implementation, the legislation has fueled wide-scale movements to MMA and GSP at hundreds of two-year colleges (Kretz & Newell, 2020). Amid the pandemic crisis in 2020–2021, many students could not access college testing centers, and long-standing methods for in-person placement assessment at many community colleges were impossible. Some of the changes discussed in the *JWA* special issue were pushed into mainstream practice. Suddenly, moving to MMA or forms of self-placement was not a cautious experiment: In many contexts, such moves were the only available option.

The chapters in this collection show how two-year college faculty have continued to be influenced by the ethical turn in writing assessment (Elliot, 2016; Slomp, 2016a). That movement has challenged conventional measurement approaches to validity and fairness that ignore adverse impact and minimize students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Hammond, 2019; Inoue & Poe, 2012a; Olivieri et al., 2022; Poe & Cogan, 2016; Randall, 2021; Saenkhum, 2016). For example, over the last decade, writing assessment scholars Mya Poe and Asao B. Inoue (2016) have argued for a "sociocultural model[s] of validity" (p. 118) that "provide[s] a useful reworking of validity theory for the purposes of social justice" (p. 118). Scholars in this turn have drawn insights from a number of transdisciplinary critical fields, including philosophical works on ethics and social justice; critical race theory, whiteness studies, and antiracism; feminist standpoint theory; translanguaging theory; queer theory; disability studies; psychology and cognitive studies; educational development and educational measurement. These scholars ask the field to consider how writing assessments are shaped by dominant epistemological assumptions, values, and language ideologies that are raced, classed, gendered, colonial/imperialistic, and often predicated on normativities regarding physical abilities, sensory processing, and neurotypicality.

In short, the field of writing assessment today is expansive in theoretical orientation. It is also an exciting time as scholars look for new methods that serve the goals of these theoretical horizons. New critical approaches challenge algorithmic assessment models like Willingham's (1974). They offer valuable conceptual tools for analyzing the social consequences of two-year college assessment practices and ontological options for imagining fairer alternatives. These tools include *racial validity inquiry* (Inoue, 2012b, 2015) and *disparate impact analysis* (Poe & Cogan, 2016; Poe et al., 2014), which encourage disaggregating assessment data by race and other legally protected categories. Extending these concepts,

David Slomp (2016b) has argued for “disaggregation of data so score interpretation can be clearly understood for all groups and each individual within those groups,” with particular attention to determining “whether assessment practices are having an adverse impact on some student communities” (see also Elliot, 2016; Slomp, 2016a). If so, these assessment practices can and should be redesigned to achieve more equitable outcomes.

Such redesigns may require not only revising assessment processes and instruments, but a fundamental rethinking of the values, goals, and practices driving writing assessment in the context of local diversities. Both Ellen Cushman’s (2016) argument for decolonizing the concept of validity and West-Puckett et al.’s (forthcoming) suggestions for queering writing assessment ask us to question the epistemological universalism and normativities built into why and how we measure writing performance. They encourage us to develop assessments that value the plurality and diversity of our students’ languages, literacies, and rhetorics. Such local re-valuation is particularly pressing at two-year colleges, given their diverse students, institutional missions, and community contexts. Contributors in *Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education* show us how such issues are being addressed in local two-year contexts.

Overview of the Book

As the chapters in this collection demonstrate, the scholarly conversation about writing assessment, social justice, and the advancement of opportunity is shifting from its historically four-year focus to an awareness of the distinctive conditions of teaching and administering writing in a variety of settings. Those conditions include the missions and student populations served, constraints on institutional resources, writing instructors’ varying disciplinary backgrounds and professional identities, labor conditions, and the on-going reform-minded policy contexts in which two-year college faculty are undertaking their work.

The chapters in this book bring together established and new voices in two-year college English studies, writing studies, and writing assessment. These teacher-scholars write from institutions in the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Mid-Atlantic. They are accredited by the Northwest Commission, the Higher Learning Commission, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, respectively. All have worked to enact placement reform amid local manifestations of the layered challenges and opportunities we have traced in this introduction.

This book may be read in several ways: by timespan, method, geography, or accrediting commission. To navigate the case studies by timespan for placement reform, readers can use the dedicated subheadings by which the chapters are arranged. These subheadings are “The Long Road of Placement Reform,” “Innovation and Equity in Placement Reform,” and “Pandemic-Precipitated Placement Reform.”

In Part One, “The Long Road of Placement Reform,” contributors from Central Oregon Community College, Prairie State College, Whatcom Community College, and the Community College of Baltimore County document many years of adapting to local students’ communities, testing hypotheses and refining practices, and advancing systematic reforms. These processes have been commended by regional accrediting bodies and by national organizations. In 2021, for example, Central Oregon Community College received the Diana Hacker TYCA Outstanding Programs in English Award for Fostering Student Success for their *Rethinking Placement as Part of Redesigning Developmental Literacy: Using Multiple Measures and Directed Self-Placement to Improve Student Success*. The Community College of Baltimore County received an honorable mention in the same category for their work on *Self-Directed Placement*. Whatcom Community College won the award in 2020 for their *Informed Self-Placement Program*.

In Chapter 1, “No Reform Is an Island: Tracing the Influences and Consequences of Placement Reform at a Two-Year Predominantly Black Institution,” Jessica Nastal, Jason Evans, and Jessica Gravely report on the consequences of placement reform for students and for their composition program. Students at Prairie State College appear to be placing into the college credit-bearing class at higher rates and succeeding at higher or similar rates than with past placement methods, though arriving at these conclusions has proved to be challenging. Nastal and colleagues share how their placement ecosystem operates as they document the logistical challenges of reform, including staffing and access to accurate and timely data.

In Chapter 2, “From ACCUPLACER to Informed Self-Placement at Whatcom Community College: Equitable Placement as an Evolving Practice,” Jeffrey Klausman and Signee Lynch discuss how their institution moved from ACCUPLACER to MMA and ultimately, to ISP. Doing so alongside curricular reform efforts has dramatically increased the number of students placed into the college credit-bearing class and narrowed equity disparities. Since Composition I is the gateway class to earning a credential at Whatcom and most other institutions nationwide, these results offer evidence of how practices explicitly designed to achieve equity can fulfill the two-year college goal of making “education accessible to all.”

In Chapter 3, “A Path to Equity, Agency, and Access: Self-Directed Placement at the Community College of Baltimore County,” Kris Messer, Jamey Gallagher, and Elizabeth Hart reflect on the fundamental questions of writing placement at two-year colleges: Who are our students? What are their educational and career goals? How are we prepared to support their achievement? Their case study offers compelling evidence regarding the value of *self-directed* placement (SDP)—their reconceptualization of DSP—for expanding “flexibility, agency, and control” in placement for students at two-year colleges. Their qualitative data is especially compelling, demonstrating how “intelligent, driven, [and] linguistically sophisticated” students are, and how they “bring a range of experiences that can serve to strengthen our classrooms and our larger culture” when offered the opportunity to do so. Messer and colleagues discuss the complexity of advancing student

agency in an educational system built on maintaining the status quo, particularly as business-as-usual has excluded and penalized so many in the communities two-year colleges purport to serve. They also describe how the pandemic created opportunities to expand SDP at a previously reluctant institution but has also presented challenges for sustainability.

Finally, in Chapter 4, “Welcome/Not Welcome: From Discouragement to Empowerment in the Writing Placement Process at Central Oregon Community College,” Jane Denison-Furness, Stacey Lee Donohue, Annemarie Hamlin, and Tony Russell document the systematic effort they have undertaken at Central Oregon Community College to improve student outcomes. They present a careful discussion of an MMA placement system that integrates DSP alongside redesign of developmental literacy courses, outcomes, and curricula to support first-generation and new majority college students. Denison-Furness and colleagues emphasize the importance of institutional support in undertaking these reforms. Such support includes reassigned time to attend to the design, institutional investment in the processes, and ongoing conversations and input from administrative and faculty stakeholders.

The second section, “Innovation and Equity in Placement Reform,” presents contributions from faculty at Yakima Valley College, Jamestown Community College, Kingsborough Community College, and Queensborough Community College. In each case, these colleges have been responding to institutional, system, or statewide mandates to redesign placement to address issues of equity. In Chapter 5, “Narrowing the Divide in Placement at a Hispanic-Serving Institution: The Case of Yakima Valley College,” Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt and Travis Margoni assert that writing placement is a “key everyday practice” that has the potential to influence equity work across Yakima Valley College’s campus. Tracing the demographic shift from a Predominantly White Institution to a Hispanic-Serving Institution, Calhoon-Dillahunt and Margoni document how their customized version of The Write Class, an MMA instrument developed by compositionists at Boise State University, has mitigated some of the previous equity disparities in placement. They describe how seeking to cultivate an antiracist writing assessment ecology (Inoue, 2015) has further improved their course-level success outcomes.

In Chapter 6, “Putting ACCUPLACER in Its Place: Expanding Evidence in Placement Reform at Jamestown Community College,” Jessica Kubiak traces Jamestown Community College’s (JCC’s) work toward MMA and developmental education reform, integrated within a college-wide general education framework. JCC’s unified faculty, guided by quantitative data, successfully contextualized reading instruction and general education requirements to ensure more students enroll in and complete the composition sequence earlier in their academic career. Since a significant percentage of the student body is composed of non-matriculated students enrolled in early college or dual enrollment programs, Kubiak’s questions about how high school GPA will factor into future placement decisions are prescient.

In Chapter 7, “Tracking the Racial Consequences of Placement by Probability: A Case Study at Kingsborough Community College,” Annie Del Principe, Lesley Broder, and Lauren Levesque challenge the face validity of using a direct sample of student writing to place students into composition courses and highlight the promises of MMA, particularly for BIPOC students. Their case study of placement is situated in Brooklyn’s Kingsborough Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, which recently mandated MMA for all its colleges. Del Principe, Broder, and Levesque provide welcome evidence that, for their students, MMA results in gains for all racial/ethnic groups. As a result, Kingsborough’s disaggregated rates of placement into credit-bearing composition classes more equitably represent the demographics of the student body. Del Principe, Broder, and Levesque demonstrate how placement reform is one step toward supporting “student success for a more fair and just society.”

In Chapter 8, “Mind the (Linguistic) Gap: On ‘Flagging’ ESL Students at Queensborough Community College,” Charissa Che offers nuance to the portrait of CUNY’s approach to MMA, particularly as it relates to multilingual students. Through a mixed-method study at Queensborough Community College, located in Queens, Che demonstrates how a focus on racial/ethnic equity often omits the complexities of students’ linguistic identities, experiences, and communities. Che argues that placement reform must account for the dynamic ways students speak English as an additional language and the linguistic strengths they bring to college campuses. To do otherwise is to continue upholding Standardized Edited American English ideologies.

Finally, Part Three, “Pandemic-Precipitated Placement Reform,” shows how faculty at Cuyahoga Community College, Cochise College, and Arizona Western College seized the disruptions of the pandemic as an opportunity to implement methods of writing placement that attend to concerns about equity and ethics. In Chapter 9, “Pandemic Placement at Cuyahoga Community College: A Case Study,” Ashlee Brand and Bridget Kriner discuss their on-the-fly development of MMA in response to the pandemic. Attuned to the benefits and drawbacks of contemporary placement methods, particularly for new majority college students, faculty at “Tri-C” implemented a method where students can gain entry to the college credit-bearing course via past performance or ISP. Reactions to the reform affirm the value of faculty coming together to discuss their students’ placement as it humanizes the event, prepares faculty to meet students’ needs, prompts curricular revision, and develops camaraderie sorely missed during the pandemic.

In Chapter 10, “A Complement to Educational Reform: Directed Self-Placement (DSP) at Cochise College,” Ella Melito, Erin Whittig, Cathy Sander Mathesen, and Denisse Cañez identify the constellation of factors two-year colleges faced in the early days of the pandemic and elaborate on the effects after 18 months. Their DSP method was implemented to assuage institutional concerns about facilitating an unproctored placement exam for students whose past re-

cord did not place them into the college credit-bearing course. This emergency method quickly turned into an ongoing practice relying on the entire placement ecosystem at Cochise College, with promising early results for students.

Finally, in Chapter 11, “Community College Online Directed Self-Placement During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” Sarah Elizabeth Snyder, Sara Amani, and Kevin Kato describe how a pre-pandemic effort to develop an online DSP process for multilingual students unexpectedly became their college’s main placement process. Their case makes stark the challenges two-year college faculty faced during the first year of the pandemic as they sought to a) implement an unproctored method of placement, b) attend to administrator concerns about moving away from purchased exams, and c) ensure all local student communities would benefit from the method. Snyder and colleagues emphasize the importance of methods that account for the linguistic diversity of our students and provide detailed evidence of positive early results.

Readers interested in reading case studies of specific approaches to placement can navigate this book by placement method (Table 1). Many of the contributors document how they moved from one placement method to another, and it is intriguing to see how the logics and local ecologies for placement led each institution to their current placement method.

Table 1. Navigating Chapters by Placement Method

Method	Chapters
System- Mandated Multiple Measures	Ch. 1: No Reform Is an Island: Tracing the Influences and Consequences of Placement Reform at a Two-Year Predominantly Black Institution Ch. 7: Tracking the Racial Consequences of Placement by Probability: A Case Study at Kingsborough Community College Ch. 8: Mind the (Linguistic) Gap: On “Flagging” ESL Students at Queensborough Community College
Multiple Measures	Ch. 6: Putting ACCUPLACER in Its Place: Expanding Evidence in Placement Reform at Jamestown Community College Ch. 7: Tracking the Racial Consequences of Placement by Probability: A Case Study at Kingsborough Community College Ch. 8: Mind the (Linguistic) Gap: On “Flagging” ESL Students at Queensborough Community College
Multiple Measures with Self-Placement	Ch. 4: Welcome/Not Welcome: From Discouragement to Empowerment in the Writing Placement Process at Central Oregon Community College Ch. 5: Narrowing the Divide in Placement at an HSI: The Case of Yakima Valley College Ch. 9: Pandemic Placement at Cuyahoga Community College: A Case Study

Method	Chapters
Multiple Measures with Timed Impromptu Exam	Ch. 1: No Reform Is an Island: Tracing the Influences and Consequences of Placement Reform at a Two-Year Predominantly Black Institution
Self-Placement	<p>Ch. 2: From ACCUPLACER to Informed Self-Placement at Whatcom Community College: Equitable Placement as an Evolving Practice</p> <p>Ch. 3: A Path to Equity, Agency, and Access: Self-Directed Placement at the Community College of Baltimore County</p> <p>Ch. 10: A Complement to Educational Reform: Directed Self-Placement (DSP) at Cochise College</p> <p>Ch. 11: Community College Online Directed Self-Placement During the COVID-19 Pandemic</p>

Table 2. Navigating Chapters by Region

Region	Accrediting Body	State	College	Chapter
Pacific Northwest	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	WA	Yakima Valley	Ch. 5: Narrowing the Divide in Placement at an HSI: The Case of Yakima Valley College
		OR	Central Oregon	Ch. 4: Welcome/Not Welcome: From Discouragement to Empowerment in the Writing Placement Process at Central Oregon Community College
		WA	Whatcom	Ch. 2: From ACCUPLACER to Informed Self-Placement at Whatcom Community College: Equitable Placement as an Evolving Practice
Southwest	Higher Learning Commission	AZ	Cochise	Ch. 10: A Complement to Educational Reform: Directed Self-Placement (DSP) at Cochise College
		AZ	Western Arizona	Ch. 11: Online Directed Self-Placement During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Arizona Western College
Midwest		IL	Prairie State	Ch. 1: No Reform Is an Island: Tracing the Influences and Consequences of Placement Reform at a Two-Year Predominantly Black Institution
		OH	Cuyahoga	Ch. 9: Pandemic Placement at Cuyahoga Community College: A Case Study

Region	Accrediting Body	State	College	Chapter
Mid-Atlantic	Middle States Commission on Higher Education	MD	Baltimore County	Ch. 3: A Path to Equity, Agency, and Access: Self-Directed Placement at the Community College of Baltimore County
Northeast		NY	Jamestown	Ch. 6: Putting ACCUPLACER in Its Place: Expanding Evidence in Placement Reform at Jamestown Community College
		NY	Kingsborough	Ch. 7: Tracking the Racial Consequences of Placement by Probability: A Case Study at Kingsborough Community College
		NY	Queensborough	Ch. 8: Mind the (Linguistic) Gap: On “Flagging” ESL Students at Queensborough Community College

A final way to read this book is by geography (Table 2). Placement and related reform initiatives are often precipitated by state-level policy pressures or mandates. Likewise, geographical location often shapes the demographics of particular two-year colleges. Moreover, many reforms are, in part, dictated by the influence of the accreditation commission as well as state legislatures. Too often writing studies scholars ignore how such influences can drive local assessment practices.

Research and theory published over the last decade show that the commercial exams which have long dominated two-year college writing placement have offered inadequate representations of local constructs of college writing and yielded inequitable outcomes. They have reproduced language and literacy ideologies that advantage students from White, middle-class communities. While faculty have long tolerated such constraints in the name of efficiency—or a distorted sense of equity—at often under-resourced open admissions institutions, it is now clear that those constraints have, in fact, harmed the least advantaged. Through systematic misplacement, particularly underplacement that delays enrollment in college-level courses, two-year colleges have reduced those students’ likelihood of degree completion. In the process, they have also sent students destructive messages about their capacities as writers and learners and about the value of the rhetorical and literacy practices in their out-of-school communities. These disparate, adverse impacts are neither fair nor, in many cases, legal (Klausman et al., 2016; Poe & Cogan, 2016; Poe et al., 2014). Taken together, the chapters in this collection further the ongoing work of imagining and implementing possibilities toward a more fair and just future.

From Theoretical Expansion to Methodological Innovation in the Future of Writing Placement at Two-Year Colleges

We hope *Writing Placement in Two-Year Colleges: The Pursuit of Equity in Postsecondary Education* prompts readers to recognize the enormous potential of writing assessment research at two-year colleges to inform practices at all institution types.³ This collection highlights how two-year colleges are leaders in making evidence-based decisions about placement reform within their local contexts. The contributors demonstrate how faculty agency—informed by both local data and engagement with ongoing national conversations—can be a powerful instrument for positive change in the midst of crises. Their intellectual work also raises important new questions for further research. We close this introductory chapter by identifying a few of those questions and areas.

First, many of these chapters point to the challenges many two-year college faculty face in collecting, accessing, and analyzing high-quality data—particularly disaggregated data—regarding both longstanding placement practices and new initiatives. Future research should contend with the challenges and consequences of inadequate institutional research infrastructure at many two-year colleges, as well as institutional cultures and policies that prevent faculty from gaining access to existing data and assistance with analysis. Likewise, the field needs more work on how to improve the kinds of demographic data institutions collect to enable more meaningful and relevant disaggregation based on the local communities served (Inoue & Poe, 2012b; Leonard et al., 2021; Poe & Zhang-Wu, 2020). These data could include, for example, better and more consistent information on linguistic identity, trans and nonbinary gender identities, sexual identities, a range of disabilities, documentation status, social-emotional well-being, family caretaking responsibilities, foster youth, and veteran status. Such data, especially informed by QuanCrit (Gillborn et al., 2018), could help visibilize additional disparities in placement and academic outcomes as well as offer rich intersectional analysis.

Second, the field needs more evidence that connects data from multiple points in students' academic paths: admission, placement, enrollment, course throughput, graduation and/or transfer, and beyond. We can start by examining the implementation of multiple single measures in this era of placement reform: What are the consequences of abandoning one high-stakes measure (e.g., purchased exam) for another? How can we think more expansively about connecting data sets? What do the constellation of data points we have access to tell us about our students, faculty, institutions, values? In short, we need robust forms of validity

3. For example, Toth's familiarity with research on and innovations of DSP in two-year colleges—including insights gained from early versions of the chapters in this collection—directly contributed to the design of directed self-placement at the University of Utah in 2020–2021.

evidence. Justice-oriented approaches to validity expand on the five traditional forms of validity evidence—construct, internal content, relation to other variables, response processes, and consequence—“to disrupt assessment practices that continue to (re)produce racism through the uncritical promotion of white supremacist hegemonic practices” (Randall et al., 2022, p. 1).

Third, as the chapters in this collection demonstrate, there is not just a need to analyze data in a post hoc fashion but to connect the design of assessment with the analysis of consequence. In measurement, researchers employ theory of action (ToA) models to connect design, outcomes, and validity evidence. Suzanne Lane (2014) describes ToA as follows:

Within a theory of action for an assessment system, the goals, purposes, and uses of an assessment system; the outcomes of the assessment system (e.g., increased rates of college and career readiness for all students); and the mediating outcomes necessary to achieve the ultimate outcomes (e.g., students will show gains on the assessment, instruction will improve) are articulated (Marion, 2010). Key components of the theory of action are then prioritized and further delineated to support the design of the assessment and the validity argument. (p. 127)

While ToA models do not necessarily explicitly attend to equity questions, they can be used for such purposes. Newer iterations of ToA models, such as the integrated design and appraisal framework (IDAF), were “designed to enable literacy educators to pay systematic attention to the broad set of consequences derived from an assessment’s design and use” (Slomp & Elliot, 2021, p. 469; see also Slomp, 2016a). IDAF offers researchers and teachers a set of critical questions to ask at each stage of the design, outcome, and validity argument process regarding immediate and long-term consequences. As David Slomp and Norbert Elliot (2021) explained,

While a ToA . . . lays out the logic that takes us from program elements to intended policy outcomes, the IDAF . . . provides a mechanism for critically examining that logic. Integrating the models provides teachers with a tool kit to draw attention of assessment stakeholders to the components and consequences of assessment implementation (p. 471).

By connecting design and consequence through frameworks such as IDAF, community college faculty can be “in-front of” future assessment revisions in that IDAF demands attention to intended and unintended consequence.

Fourth, along with innovations in model and data analysis building, we need better language to describe the plurality of approaches today to DSP and MMA. Both community college reformers and writing assessment scholars have advocated for MMA and/or DSP as alternatives to single-score placement tests.

However, as the chapters in this collection make clear, there are many different (and sometimes overlapping) approaches to both MMA and facilitated forms of self-placement. The field needs more work that clearly identifies, disambiguates, and examines the various ideological underpinnings and potential consequences of these proliferating variations. For example, how do MMA processes that produce a holistic placement based on multiple metrics differ from MMA processes that simply offer a range of single-metric options (e.g., high school GPA or ACCUPLACER score) to demonstrate preparedness for college-level writing classes? How do DSP/GSP processes that generate a placement recommendation based on questionnaire responses differ from ISP/SDP processes that do not?

The chapters in this collection also demonstrate the importance of iteratively designing and assessing placement practices in the context of broader reforms to developmental education, instruction and support for multilingual students, pedagogies in “gateway” college composition courses, and other campus-wide teaching and learning initiatives. Placement is always part of a broader local assessment ecology that encompasses classroom assessment practices as well as sites like supplemental instruction for accelerated learning, writing centers, exit assessments for course sequences, and assessment practices that involve writing across the curriculum. The field needs more research into how writing placement interacts with ongoing changes across these spaces, many of which are motivated by concerns regarding access and equity. Specifically, there is much to learn about how writing pedagogies can and should change in the wake of placement reform and the onset of the pandemic. Likewise, the field needs to account for the reality that placement, curriculum, and pedagogical reform alone will not address the inequities of our postsecondary system. Research must factor in the essential role that non-academic resources, services, and *policies* aimed at meeting students’ basic material needs—e.g., food, housing, transportation, medical care, mental health services, family care, technology access—play in meeting the underlying goals of writing placement reform.

These chapters also hint at the under-examined role that accreditation processes can play in advancing placement reform. The pressures of upcoming accreditation reviews can provide leverage for evidence-based and equity-oriented changes to a range of institutional assessment practices, including placement. The field would benefit from more research into ways that practitioners have used the accreditation process to assert a voice in what assessment looks like at their institutions. Such research might enable writing faculty to feel empowered to participate in placement reform and to push for fairer practices without fear of being punished by accrediting bodies. Indeed, such research might help practitioners contribute to the wider field as accreditation reviewers learn about their local assessment work and carry that knowledge to other institutions.

Furthermore, the field needs more research into how colleges do and could include students and their communities in the assessment, design, and implementation of writing placement processes. Students are the most important

stakeholders in these processes—they are the purported reason such processes exist—and they are the stakeholders most harmed by unfair assessments of their capacities. Yet, students are almost always excluded from direct participation as co-designers of placement reform. Likewise, the local communities that two-year colleges serve—and sometimes fail to serve—typically have no input on what writing placement processes value and measure. Future research might interrogate *who* gets to determine what the “valued local construct of writing” is, and how such values might be developed in collaboration *with* students and their communities.

While finalizing this introduction for publication, we realized we have had heartbreakingly similar conversations with two-year college students—both first-generation, one a woman of color returning to higher education; the other a traditional first-year student—who described their experiences with standardized placement exams by saying, in essence, “I thought I was smart until I took that test.” Those experiences had negative consequences for these women’s educational trajectories, their self-concepts and self-efficacy as students, and their relationships with writing, even years after their colleges had stopped using those tests. Recent research calls attention to the impact of students’ mental health on their education; for instance, with results indicating students with depression are less likely to persist than their peers (Mamiseishvili & Koch, 2012). However equitable new placement processes might be, such reforms do not undo the harm that has already been caused, with real consequences for individual students’ lives, the material circumstances of their families, and entire communities. We close, then, with a call for more scholarship focusing on how colleges and the field will begin making reparations for the harm wrought by decades of unfair and unjust writing placement.

References

- Adams, P. D., Gearhart, S., Miller, R., & Roberts, A. (2009). The Accelerated Learning Program: Throwing open the gates. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 28(2), 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.37514/JPW-J.2009.28.2.04>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2017). *2017 FactsSheet*. <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfactsfactsheet.aspx>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2021). *Voluntary Framework of Accountability*. <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/programs/voluntary-framework-accountability/>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2022). *FAQs. Voluntary Framework of Accountability*. <https://vfa.aacc.nche.edu/about/Pages/FAQs.aspx>
- Association of Community College Trustees. (2022). *Pell Grants*. <https://www.acct.org/page/pell-grants#:~:text=Credit%20Alignment%20Lab-,Pell%20Grants,wages%2C%20and%20a%20stronger%20economy>
- Bailey, T., & Cho, S.-W. (2010). *Developmental education in community colleges* (Issue Brief Prepared for the White House Summit on Community Colleges). Teachers College, Columbia University.

- Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2013). Commentary: Characterizing the effectiveness of developmental education: A response to recent criticism. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 36(3), 18-34.
- Bailey, T., Jeong, D. W., & Cho, S. W. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(2), 255-270.
- Barnett, E. A., & Reddy, V. (2017). *College placement strategies: Evolving considerations and practices* (CAPR Working Paper). Columbia University.
- Beach, J. M. B. (2012). *Gateway to opportunity? A history of the community college in the United States*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Belfield, C., & Crosta, P. M. (2012). Predicting success in college: The importance of placement tests and high school transcripts (CCRC Working Paper No. 42). Columbia University.
- Benton, E. (2020). Turning to each other: Reflections on teaching and collaborating during the pandemic of 2020. *Montgomery College Innovation Journal*. <http://mcblogs.montgomerycollege.edu/innovation-journal/2020/06/21/turning-to-each-other-reflections-on-teaching-and-collaborating-during-the-pandemic-of-2020/>
- Bereiter, C. (2003). Foreword. In M. D. Shermis & J. C. Burstein (Eds.), *Automated essay scoring: A cross-disciplinary perspective* (pp. vii-x). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bickerstaff, S., Kopko, E., Lewy, E. B., Raufman, J. & Rutschow, E. R. (2021). Implementing and scaling multiple measures assessment in the context of COVID-19. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/implementing-scaling-multiple-measures-covid.pdf>
- Blankenship, C., Canava, A., Jory, J., Lewis, K., Stanford, M., & Stephenson, B. (2017). Re-assessing composition at open access institutions: Using a threshold framework to reshape practice. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 10(1). <http://www.journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=113>
- Burstein, J. (2012). Fostering best practices in writing instruction and assessment with E-rater®. In N. Elliot & L. Perelman (Eds.), *Writing assessment in the 21st century: Essays in honor of Edward M. White* (pp. 203-217). Hampton Press.
- Carey, K. (2017, October 31). Revised data shows community colleges have been underappreciated. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/31/upshot/revised-data-shows-community-colleges-have-been-underappreciated.html>
- Casazza, M. E., & Silverman, S. L. (2013). *Meaningful access and support: The path to college completion*. Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations. http://49123941-214107090244894478.preview.editmysite.com/uploads/3/9/9/3/39938161/cladeawhitepaper_81413.pdf
- Chen, X., & Simone, S. (2016). *Remedial coursetaking at U.S. public 2- and 4-year institutions: Scope, experiences, and outcomes* (NCES 2016-405). U.S. Department of Education. National Center of Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016405.pdf>
- Cho, S.-W., Kopko, E., Jenkins, D., & Jaggars, S. S. (2012). *New evidence of success for community college remedial English students: Tracking the outcomes of students in the Accelerated Learning Program* (CCRC Working Paper No. 53). Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

- Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C. B. (2014). *The American community college* (6th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee on Assessment. (2009). *Writing assessment: A position statement*. National Council of Teachers of English. <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment>
- Connors, R. (1984). Journals in composition studies. *College English*, 46(4), 348-65.
- Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations. (n.d.). *College access* (Policy Statement). Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations. https://cladea.info/resources/CLADEA_policy_CA.pdf
- Cushman, E. (2016). Decolonizing validity. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/oxh7v6fb>
- Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2021). *Education in a pandemic: The disparate impacts of COVID-19 on America's students*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>
- Elliot, N. (2016). A theory of ethics for writing assessment. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/36t565mm>
- Faigley, L., Cherry, R., Jolliffe, D., & Skinner, A. (1985). *Assessing writers' knowledge and processes of composing*. Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Gallagher, C. W. (2007). *Reclaiming assessment: A better alternative to the accountability agenda*. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Gillborn, D., Warmington, P., & Demack, S. (2018). QuantCrit: Education, policy, "Big Data" and principles for a critical race theory of statistics. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 21(2), 158-179.
- Gilman, H., Giordano, J. B., Hancock, N., Hassel, H., Henson, L., Hern, K., Nastal, J., & Toth, C. (2019). Forum: Two-year college writing placement as fairness. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 12(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4zv9yb2>
- Goudas, A. M., & Boylan, H. R. (2012). Addressing flawed research in developmental education. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 36(1), 2-13.
- Goudas, A. M., & Boylan, H. R. (2013). A brief response to Bailey, Jaggars, and Scott-Clayton. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 36(3), 28-32.
- Griffiths, B. (2017). Professional autonomy and teacher-scholar-activists in two-year colleges: Preparing new faculty to think institutionally. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 45(1), 47-68.
- Griffiths, B., & Toth, C. (2017). Rethinking "class": Poverty, pedagogy, and two-year college writing programs. In W. Thelin & G. Carter (Eds.), *Class in the composition classroom: Pedagogy and the working class* (pp. 231-257). Utah State University Press.
- Hammond, J. W. (2019). Making our invisible racial agendas visible: Race talk in *Assessing Writing*, 1994-2018. *Assessing Writing*, 42, 1-19.
- Harrington, S. (2005). Learning to ride the waves: Making decisions about placement testing. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 28(3), 9-29.
- Hassel, H., & Giordano, J. B. (2011). 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), 29-39. <https://doi.org/10.37514/OPW-J.2011.5.2.03>

- Hassel, H., & Giordano, J. B. (2013). Occupy writing studies: Rethinking college composition for the needs of the teaching majority. *College Composition and Communication*, 65(1), 117-139.
- Hassel, H., & Giordano, J. B. (2015). The blurry borders of college writing: Remediation and the assessment of student readiness. *College English*, 78(1), 56-80.
- Hassel, H., Klausman, J., Giordano, J. B., O'Rourke, M., Roberts, L., Sullivan, P., & Toth, C. (2015). TYCA white paper on developmental education reforms. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 42(3), 227-243.
- Haswell, R. (2004). Post-secondary entrance writing placement: A brief synopsis of research. *CompPile.Org*. <http://comppile.org/profresources/writingplacement-research.htm>
- Henson, H., & Hern, K. (2019). Let them in: Increasing access, completion, and equity in English placement policies at a two-year college in California. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 12(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3nh6v5do>
- Hern, K. (2012). Acceleration across California: Shorter pathways in developmental English and math. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 44(3), 60-68.
- Hodara, M., Jaggars, S. S., & Karp, M. M. (2012). *Improving developmental education assessment and placement: Lessons from community colleges across the country* (CCRC Working Paper No. 51). Community College Research Center, Columbia University.
- Huddleston, E. M. (1954). Measurement of writing ability at the college entrance level: Objective vs. subjective testing techniques. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 22, 165-213.
- Inoue, A. B. (2012). Racial methodologies for composition studies: Reflecting on theories of race in writing assessment research. In L. Nickoson & M. P. Sheridan (Eds.), *Writing studies research in practice: Methods and methodologies* (pp. 125-139). Southern Illinois University Press.
- Inoue, A. B. (2015). *Antiracist writing assessment ecologies: Teaching and assessing writing for a socially just future*. The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0698>
- Inoue, A. B. (2019). Classroom writing assessment as an antiracist practice: Confronting white supremacy in the judgments of language. *Pedagogy*, 19(3), 373-404.
- Inoue, A. B., & Poe, M. (2012a). *Race and writing assessment*. Peter Lang.
- Inoue, A. B., & Poe, M. (2012b). Racial formations in two writing assessments: Revisiting White and Thomas's findings on the English Placement Test after 30 years. In N. Elliot & L. Perelman (Eds.), *Writing assessment in the 21st century: Essays in honor of Edward M. White* (pp. 341-359). Hampton Press.
- Jaggars, S. S., & Stacey, G. W. (2014). *What we know about developmental education outcomes. Research Overview*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Kane, M. T. (1990). *An argument-based approach to validation* (ACT Research Report Series No. 90-13). American College Testing Program.
- Klausman, J., Roberts, L., Giordano, J., Griffiths, B., Sullivan, P., Swyt, W., Toth, C., Warnke, A., & Williams, A. (2016). TYCA white paper on placement reform. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 44(2), 135-157.

- Kretz, A., & Newell, M. (2020). *AB 705 implementation survey: Spring 2020 summary of results*. RP Group. California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.
- Lane, S. (2014). Validity evidence based on testing consequences. *Psicothema*, 26(1), 127-135.
- Lorimer Leonard, R., Bruce, S., & Vinyard, D. (2021). Finding complexity in language identity surveys. *Journal of Language Identity & Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1863152>
- Lovas, J. C. (2002). All good writing develops at the edge of risk. *College Composition and Communication*, 54(2), 264-288.
- Mamiseishvili, K., & Koch, L. C. (2012). Students with disabilities at 2-year institutions in the United States: Factors related to success. *Community College Review*, 40(4), 320-339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552112456281>
- Morante, E. A. (1987). A primer on placement testing. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (59), 55-63.
- Morris, W., Greve, C., Knowles, E., & Huot, B. (2015). An analysis of writing assessment books published before and after the year 2000. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 43(2), 118-140.
- Nastal, J. (2019). Beyond tradition: Writing placement, fairness, and success at a two-year college. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 12(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4wg8wong>
- National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021). *Current term enrollment estimates: Spring 2021*. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Spring_2021.pdf
- National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2022). *Overview: Fall 2021 Enrollment Estimates*. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2021.pdf
- Nazzari, J. S., Olson, C. B., & Chung, H. Q. (2020). Differences in academic writing across four levels of community college composition courses. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 47(3), 263-296.
- Nist, E. A., & Raines, H. H. (1995). Two-year colleges: Explaining and claiming our majority. In J. Janangelo & K. Hansen (Eds.), *Resituating writing: Constructing and administering writing programs* (pp. 59-70). Boynton/Cook.
- Oliveri, M., Poe, M., & Elliot, N. (2022). Fairness. In A. A. and McCaffrey, D. (Eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Education. Quantitative Research/Educational Measurement*. (4th ed.). Elsevier.
- Patthey-Chavez, G. G., Dillon, P. H., & Thomas-Spiegel, J. (2005). How far do they get? Tracking students with different academic literacies through community college remediation. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 32(3), 261-277.
- Poe, M., & Cogan, J. A. (2016). Civil rights and writing assessment: Using the disparate impact approach as a fairness methodology to evaluate social impact. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/08f1c307>
- Poe, M., Elliot, N., Cogan, J. A., & Nurudeen, T. G. (2014). The legal and the local: Using disparate impact analysis to understand the consequences of writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, 65(4), 588-611.
- Poe, M., & Inoue, A. B. (2016). Toward writing as social justice: An idea whose time has come. *College English*, 79(2), 119-126.

- Poe, M. & Zhang-Wu. (2020). Super-diversity as a framework to promote social justice: Designing program assessment for multilingual writing outcomes. *Composition Forum*, 44, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/44/north-eastern.php>
- Randall, J. (2021). "Color-neutral" is not a thing: Redefining construct definition and representation through a justice-oriented critical antiracist lens. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 40(4), 82-90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12429>
- Randall, J., Slomp, D., Poe, M., & Olivieri, M. (2022). Disrupting white supremacy in assessment: Toward a justice-oriented, antiracist validity framework. *Educational Assessment*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10627197.2022.2042682>
- Rodrigo, R. & Miller-Cochran, S. (2018). Acknowledging disciplinary contributions: On the importance of community college scholarship to rhetoric and composition. In *Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity* (pp. 53-69). Utah State University Press, <https://doi.org/10.7330/9781607326953.c003>
- Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). *Do high-stakes placement exams predict college success?* (Working Paper No. 41). Community College Research Center: Columbia University.
- Scott-Clayton, J., Crosta, P. M., & Belfield, C. R. (2014). Improving the targeting of treatment: Evidence from college remediation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(3), 371-393.
- Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., & Hwang, Y. (2016). *Completing college: A national view of student attainment rates- Fall 2010 cohort* (Signature Report No. 12). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.
- Siegal, M., & Gilliland, B. (2021). Introduction: Why FYC teachers' perspectives are important. In M. Siegal & B. Gilliland (Eds.), *Empowering the community college first-year composition teacher* (pp. 1-18). University of Michigan Press.
- Slomp, D. (2016a). An integrated design and appraisal framework for ethical writing assessment. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4bg9003k>
- Slomp, D. (2016b). Ethical considerations and writing assessment. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(1). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2k14r1zg>
- Slomp, D., & Elliot, N. (2021). What's your theory of action? Making good trouble with literacy assessment. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 64(4), 468-475.
- Smith, W. L. (1993). Assessing the reliability and adequacy of using holistic scoring of essays as a college composition placement technique. In M. M. Williamson & B. A. Huot (Eds.), *Validating holistic scoring for writing assessment: Theoretical and empirical foundations* (pp. 142-205). Hampton Press.
- Stein, Z. (2016). *Social justice and educational measurement: John Rawls, the history of testing, and the future of education*. Routledge.
- Sullivan, P. (2008). Measuring "success" at open admissions institutions: Thinking carefully about this complex question. *College English*, 70(6), 618-632.
- Sullivan, P. (2017). *Economic inequality, neoliberalism, and the American community college*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Toth, C., Griffiths, B., & Thirolf, K. (2013). "Distinct and significant": Professional identities of two-year college English faculty. *College Composition and Communication*, 65(1), 90-116.

- Toth, C., & Sullivan, P. (2016). Toward local teacher-scholar communities of practice: Findings from a national TYCA survey. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 43(3), 247-273.
- West-Puckett, S., Caswell, N., & Banks, W. (forthcoming). *Failing sideways: Queer possibilities for writing assessment*. Utah State University Press.
- White, E. M. (1995). The importance of placement and basic studies: Helping students succeed under the new elitism. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 14(2), 75-84. <https://doi.org/10.37514/JBW-J.1995.14.2.08>
- Williamson, M. (1994). The worship of efficiency: Untangling theoretical and practical considerations in writing assessment. *Assessing Writing*, 1(2), 147-173.
- Willingham, W. W. (1974). *College placement and exemption*. College Entrance Examination Board.
- Yancey, K. B. (1999). Looking back as we look forward: Historicizing writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, 50(3), 483-503.
- Zaback, K., Carlson, A., Laderman, S., & Mann, S. (2016). *Serving the equity imperative: Intentional action toward greater student success*. State Higher Education Executive Offices Association. https://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2016_SHEEO_CCA_ServingEquityImperative.pdf