



GUIDED SELF-PLACEMENT TASK  
FORCE REPORT: SPRING 2016  
TERM

## Executive Summary

- To evaluate the first semester results of guided self-placement, Dr. Higdon convened a task force consisting of:
  - Andrew Aberle, Math Instructor
  - Jennifer Dunkel, English Instructor
  - Matthew Simpson, College Director of Research and Strategic Planning
- The task force was also directly assisted by:
  - Vivian Elder, Dean of Academic Services
  - Abby Benz, Assistant Director of Research and Strategic Planning
  - Misty Tollett, Research Analyst
- The goal of this task force was to conduct a robust assessment effort to evaluate the ongoing impact of guided self-placement and identify opportunities for improvement moving forward.
- This task force first met in December 2015 and continued to meet weekly throughout the spring 2016 semester to plan and implement data collection.
- Quantitative data (including enrollment, withdrawal rates, first week movement between classes, midterm grades, support center usage and final grades) was collected and analyzed throughout the semester.
  - In order to provide results in time to act on any accepted recommendations, grades were analyzed before the completion of the processing period for Incomplete grades. The final numbers will change as this processing occurs, but the number of affected grades is too small to change the substantive findings.
- Qualitative data collection mechanisms included:
  - A survey to all English, reading, and math instructors sent during the 5<sup>th</sup> week of classes and completed by 102 instructors.
  - A survey to all instructors in other subjects with courses that could be affected by prerequisite changes sent during the 10<sup>th</sup> week of classes and completed by 152 instructors across all divisions.
  - An online open portal for instructor feedback, which remained available throughout the semester, and received 56 submissions from 47 faculty representing all four divisions.
  - Large and small group open faculty comment sessions were held, attended by a total of 121 faculty representing over 30 different subjects.
  - A survey to all students in relevant English, reading, and math courses during the 10<sup>th</sup> week of classes and completed by 660 students.
  - Two faculty work-groups evaluating reading and affective behaviors.
  - Feedback received through governance council meetings.
  - Review of external literature and best practices.

- Analysis of this research led to 14 findings:
  1. Guided self-placement increased enrollment in college level courses and decreased enrollment in developmental level courses.
  2. Very few students took advantage of the opportunity to move between class levels in the first week.
  3. Guided self-placement did not have an effect on college-wide withdrawal or course completion rates but did have an effect within math and English courses.
  4. Guided self-placement increased the number of first-time students who enrolled in and passed gateway math and English courses.
  5. Support center usage increased among specific groups and courses, although overall visits decreased.
  6. Students who visited a support center for their course were significantly more likely to be successful.
  7. High School GPA, for recent graduates, and date of registration were identified as strong predictors of student success in English and math courses.
  8. Math and English faculty reported moderately lower levels of student preparedness relative to past terms.
  9. Faculty in other courses affected by prerequisites reported no significant change in student preparedness relative to past terms.
  10. Students were satisfied with their course level placement and indicated that the skill levels required were consistent with their expectations.
  11. The leading decision factor for OTC students' course level selection was their degree or career plan; OTC-provided resources were not widely used.
  12. Instructors served as the primary support resource for students outside of class.
  13. The lack of soft skill abilities and understanding of college expectations represented a growing barrier to student success.
  14. The majority of faculty comments submitted to the open portal this semester indicated a higher workload, due to student preparedness levels and/or soft skill challenges.
- Based on these findings, the task force offers the following recommendations:
  1. Integrate completion of the guided self-placement process into student onboarding and incorporate research findings to improve placement results.
  2. Increase focus on the provision of soft skill training and early establishment of college expectations for students with risk factors.
  3. Increase the promotion and availability of support resources for students and faculty in English, reading and math.
  4. Continue to monitor and evaluate guided self-placement results.

**NOTE: these findings and recommendations are organized by data source (instrumentation), and the order is not intended to convey level of importance.**