

Minutes of Math Issues Committee

Friday, March 13, 2009

Naugatuck Valley CC, Technology Hall, Room T531

Present — Martin Brock (Norwalk), Elaine Dinto (Naugatuck Valley), Paul Edelen (Manchester), Teresa Foley (Asnuntuck), Lori Fuller (Tunxis), Miguel Garcia (Gateway), Pat Hirschy (Asnuntuck), Sal Maimone (Northwestern), Joy Mark (Quinebaug Valley), Sam Sagong (Middlesex), Rachael Schettenhelm (Gateway)

Pat called the meeting to order at 11:07 a.m.

Committee members introduced themselves and welcomed Norwalk's new Math Issues representative, Martin Brock. Martin will be replacing Joe Karnowski, whose responsibilities as Engineering Coordinator no longer permit him to serve.

Minutes of February 13, 2009 were approved.

Announcements —

- Pat has been invited to speak at the April 22 meeting of the Transfer and Articulation Subcommittee to the Standing Advisory Committee of the State Board of Governors. She will share information about some things that, via the Math Issues Committee and the Math Basic Skills Committee of CT, math faculty do as a discipline statewide.
- Pat questioned whether anyone had heard about an Oversight Committee for the CSU/CC Compact. The Committee is setting up a website that will be helpful for transfer purposes, showing which community college courses satisfy general education requirements at state universities. MI Committee representatives were unaware of this committee.
- Elaine reminded members about Bob Devaney's MATYCONN presentations at Housatonic on April 17. Unfortunately, some colleges, such as Middlesex and Naugatuck, have conflicts that day.
- Pat spoke about Miguel's intermediate algebra outcomes correspondence with Dr. Susen, on behalf of the Committee. Feedback from the college Deans seems to be positive. MI representatives are requested to please make a special effort to touch base with all math faculty on their campuses, to thank them for their cooperation and continued support of Math Issues Committee Representatives. We should all continue to keep timely communication with colleagues in mind in the future.
- Lori announced that it is her understanding that Accuplacer information will now import directly into Banner; this should be especially helpful for Institutional Research.

Old Business: Accuplacer —

Pat and Miguel led the discussion, continued from last month, concerning campus practices surrounding Accuplacer. For organizational purposes, categories had been broken down into (1) what happens before the test; (2) testing; (3) what happens after the test; and (4) assessing placement policies/procedures.

(1) **Before the test:** a variety of procedures exist system-wide.

- Asnuntuck – Students who apply in person receive a brochure and sample questions; if they call, they get an appointment for the test, but may not receive any information concerning preparation. ACC's brochure and other testing information will be going

online. They refer students to the following websites:

www.testprepreview.com/accuplacer_practice.htm,

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/preparation-sample.html>, and

www.nvcc.commnet.edu/admissions/placement.shtml

- Gateway – Students are referred to websites if they apply to the college in person, but if they apply by phone, no list of websites is given. Rachael is planning a script to be read to students over the phone that will emphasize the importance of the test.
- Manchester – Students are given a list of resources and a link on their website to additional resources.
- Northwestern – no known policy.
- Quinebaug Valley – Students get information if they ask.
- Tunxis – Same as QV, students who ask receive information.
- Other — Norwalk will check on this aspect. No information was available for Housatonic or Three Rivers. Info for Capital, Middlesex, and Naugatuck was presented at the last meeting.

In general, students have a lack of understanding of the importance of the test. Suggestions include the following:

- Make clear the options for placement.
- Send a form with information that is short and to the point. "You may place into a college level course or you may place into a course that is not credit bearing." Maybe make a signature line, "I have read and understand..."
- Announce beforehand the retest policy, if there is one.

Issues —

- Students must be made aware of placement policies and procedures. Some students may not understand being in college and taking courses not for credit.
- It is necessary to disseminate information to students who make appointments by phone as well as in person.
- A lack of preparation time exists for large numbers of late registrants. Last minute people will not have the opportunity to review.

(2) **Testing:** there are differences system-wide in the Accuplacer testing environment.

Different policies exist regarding calculator use. Accuplacer recommends using a calculator where it pops up; CollegeBoard has collected data on large numbers of students, showing whether they use a calculator or not makes no difference in scores.

- Schools that use the calculator where it pops up include Asnuntuck, Manchester, Middlesex, Naugatuck, Northwestern, Norwalk, Tunxis.
- Schools not using the calculator include Gateway, Quinebaug Valley.

Issues —

- Should all colleges have the same policy regarding calculator use? Should some schools reconsider their policy?
- Are there time accommodations for students with registered disabilities? Perhaps the accommodation is to use calculator?

(3) **After the test:** various policies exist for students who are not placed properly or who challenge their placement.

- Northwestern – if a student feels placement was too low, he or she can essentially take a credit by exam.

- Norwalk – if students place into MAT*095, 80% on an elementary algebra exam will move them into MAT*138.
- Gateway – gives a pre-quiz to know who should take the final exam for the preceding course. Everybody takes a quiz on the first day; full disclosure, ensuring informed consumers: 80% on the final places them up.
- Middlesex – has essentially the same policy as at Norwalk and Northwestern. but a score of 70% on an 095 final places them up.
- Summary: Students with border-line grades can retake the Accuplacer. Some students maybe referred to the Department for some other choice of tests.

Issue —

- There is an impact on classroom environment for students whose Accuplacer scores don't accurately reflect their abilities. Improperly placed students affect everyone.

The **next meeting** will be held on Friday, May 8, 2009, at Gateway Community College, North Haven Campus.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 for a working lunch.

Respectfully submitted,



Elaine Dinto

Note 1: While there were several excellent topics considered ((1) teaching mathematics through a functions based approach / a functions based approach to learning mathematics; (2) defining the System's family of intermediate algebra courses (MAT*136, 137, 138); (3) what's new in the System's math world? Include proposals for new courses, studies, research), Math Issues reps decided at the working lunch to ask a CollegeBoard representative to present a session on Accuplacer at a math discipline break-out session on April 24. Miguel will contact Associate Director of Accuplacer, Suzanne Murphy, to present on the new Accuplacer platform, including proficiency statements and their validation, calculator use, emphasis of questions on mathematical skills versus higher level critical thinking skills.

Note 2: Below is a compilation/summary of issues surrounding Accuplacer discussed at the February and March 2009 Math Issues meetings.

MATH ISSUES COMMITTEE

Issues relating to Accuplacer testing system-wide —

- (1) What happens before the test? A variety of issues exist system-wide.
 - There is a lack of understanding of the importance of the test. How do we reverse this?
 - Students must be made aware of placement policies and procedures. Some students may not understand being in college and taking courses not for credit.
 - It is necessary to disseminate information to students who make appointments by phone as well as in person.
 - A lack of preparation time exists for large numbers of late registrants. Last minute people will not have the opportunity to review.
 - Advising with college personnel versus self-advising: do students take advantage of college advising?
 - Is there a follow-up to see if students actually review? Should there be some sort of sign-off, or waiver, if students do not take advantage of the review?

- (2) Testing: differences exist in the testing environment —
 - Should all colleges have the same policy regarding calculator use?
 - Should some schools reconsider their policy on use of calculators? (Note that faculty are interested in learning whether the calculator is available on all subtests, and on what types of questions it is available.)
 - Are there time accommodations for students with registered disabilities? Perhaps the accommodation is to use a calculator?

- (3) What happens after the test? Various policies exist for students who are not placed properly or who challenge their placement.
 - There is a problem moving students to another level after classes start, as classes are full.
 - The self-paced design of some courses eases a change of courses; do any colleges offer new courses?
 - If retesting is to be done, it must be done in timely manner; are there deadlines in place?
 - If huge numbers of students place differently on Accuplacer than on a retest, maybe we need to adjust cut-offs for Accuplacer scores.
 - Should there be a sunset clause for Accuplacer scores, i.e., an expiration date for a placement result? Should a score be valid after 2 or 3 years?
 - Can students take Accuplacer more than twice? Some colleges have a policy that limits the number of retests to one.
 - If students are unhappy with their Accuplacer placement at one college, do they retake Accuplacer at another college? Currently students at every college do not need a Banner ID in order to take the placement test; Testing Coordinators have proposed that students have Banner IDs and a photo ID to take Accuplacer.

- (4) Assessing placement policies/procedures: assessment is a part of the Math Issues Committee plan for this year —
 - Should we plan assessment in a consistent manner?
 - Assistance from Institutional Research is required.
 - Lori will give us an update of her study. Are there other studies being done in the system?
 - How might our policies support the AMATYC position paper on placement?
 - Are the cut scores we have in place working? How do we know?