10-1-2018

Reclaiming Writing Placement

Heidi Estrem
Boise State University

Dawn Shepherd
Boise State University

Samantha Sturman
Boise State University

Reclaiming Writing Placement

Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Samantha Sturman

ABSTRACT

Writing assessment research has long described the harmful effects of using standardized test scores for writing placement. Now, national higher education reform efforts are critiquing the use of these tests as well. In this article, we explore how external pressures in higher education offer new spaces for WPAs to advocate for richer placement processes. We propose that placement is a moment where faculty can and should shape the conversation in order to help others—policymakers and nonprofit agencies involved in remediation reform—see placement anew. Finally, we describe our own locally developed writing placement process as one possible placement approach that encourages student reflection and draws on faculty expertise.

INTRODUCTION: INNOVATIONS IN WRITING PLACEMENT

The first-year writing (FYW) placement decision lies at the intersection of state politics, higher education reform efforts, and writing assessment research. For decades, writing assessment research has described what writing teachers and administrators knew through experience: that placing students using only a standardized test score was not a sound approach and often did educational harm (see Huot, "A Survey"; Haswell): While several alternatives to this placement practice have been reported on within our field, one approach that has helped WPAs and campus stakeholders most substantially reconsider the purposes and aims of placement is Dan Royer and Roger Gilles's directed self-placement (DSP) model. They created an exigency for redefining placement on their campus; we see a somewhat parallel exigency in placement at the national level now.

DSP, which was detailed in Royer and Gilles's September 1998 *College Composition and Communication* article, puts "students at the center" of

WPA: Writing Program Administration, vol. 42, no. 1, 2018, pp. 56–71.

56

the placement decision (61). It asks students to learn about their upcoming courses, to reflect on themselves as learners and writers, and to choose (or self-place into) the course that fits them best. With this new model of placement, Royer and Gilles successfully disrupted how we think about the placement moment. They reimagined placement not as something that happens *to* students but instead as something that happens *with* them. Their reframing of the placement interaction nudged our field to see writing placement as more than an assessment instrument, and that reconsideration has resonated in both placement practices and scholarship.

Since then, others have continued to build on Royer and Gilles's efforts through engaging students in purposeful activities that help them make decisions about their course selection. For example, the University of Michigan uses a modified DSP model in which students, as part of their decision-making process, complete an essay assignment similar to one they might encounter in a college writing course and then answer reflective questions about the writing process they completed (Gere et al. 609). At Sacramento State University and Wake Forest University, students also complete other reading and writing tasks, in addition to a self-reflective survey, to help them eventually make informed decisions about their course selection ("Directed Self Placement for First Time Freshmen"; "The 2017 DSP Task"). All of these options offer students opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and the expectations of the college writing classroom; some ask students to complete tasks similar to those they might face in college.

Beyond DSP, other scholars have experimented with and implemented portfolio-based placement processes (see Lowe and Huot; Huot, *(Re)articulating*; Daiker, Sommers, and Stygall) and "curriculum-based, expert reader approaches" (Isaacs and Keohane 55). These variations on placement continue to interrogate the placement moment, and all seek to provide richer data and different data to inform placement decisions. Still, for most college students at most colleges and universities, test-based placement has continued (see Isaacs and Molloy). WPAs have been hampered by state or system policies that favor the efficiency of using an already-available test score over implementing placement alternatives.

Now there is an emerging opportunity for WPAs to disrupt placement practices in substantive, creative, and ethical ways. As Nancy Welch and Tony Scott point out, institutions in higher education are currently faced with reform efforts that are offered through a "rhetoric of austerity" that "admonishes universities to make themselves more efficient and affordable amid deep funding cuts" (4). Concurrently, private foundations and nonprofit organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the

Lumina Foundation support the enactment of higher education reform efforts that emphasize efficiency, reduced time to degree, and lower costs for students. For example, California's state university system will, as of fall 2018, end remedial testing. Instead, campuses will "consider a variety of other measures, including high-school grade-point averages, English- and math-course grades, and SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement scores" (Mangan). While we should remain critical of these reform efforts that directly affect FYW, we also look to Royer and Gilles and these other pioneers in placement alternatives as models of how to respond within a problematic context. Royer and Gilles (like so many of us now) were trapped by what they describe as a frustrating placement process. To intervene on it, they rethought the placement decision (who does it, where it happens, and what informs it) altogether. As WPAs, we might currently feel hampered by policies developed by external bodies and reform efforts led by national organizations, but there is also new space to rethink placement again in substantial, learning-centered ways. As we describe later in this article, some of these unsettling national reform efforts are directly linked to placement. If we are strategic, there just may be new inroads available for local WPAs to implement placement processes that better serve students and that resonate more closely with our field's research.

Our earlier *WPA: Writing Program Administration* article describes how we have advocated with colleagues to make changes to writing placement processes across Idaho (Estrem, Shepherd, and Duman). This advocacy happened largely through grassroots efforts: we developed proposals, did careful research, presented to policymakers, and met with our on-campus administrators. Policy change was slow to come. Now, though, we are experiencing a higher education landscape with urgent, dramatic shifts that provide opportunities for placement reform. As in many states, we have reduced or removed "remedial" writing courses at every institution in Idaho. Like many states, as well, we face continued budget shortfalls, increased pressures for student retention, and more language and cultural diversity than ever. All of these curricular changes shift the possibilities for placement. At the same time, these changes might mean that we need to partner with—or at least seek to find common ground with—external organizations that make us uncomfortable.

In this article, we describe how substantial, progressive placement work is newly possible through sometimes uneasy alliances with higher education reform organizations. First, we explore how the changes in higher education offer new spaces for WPAs to advocate for richer placement processes. We offer pragmatic ways that WPAs might participate in conversations that seem predetermined, ways to "proceed from principle" (Adler-Kassner,

The Activist 92) to affect the potentially damaging narratives about students that surround the placement reform efforts. Then, we describe the evidence-based placement process we have developed on our campus while exploring the rhetorical and pragmatic decisions that went into its development. We describe our approach to illustrate how we tried to build an intentional, contextual placement process, and we offer it only as an example, not as a universal solution. We propose that placement is a moment where faculty can and should shape the conversation in order to help others—policymakers, nonprofit agencies involved in "remediation reform"—see placement anew.

Navigating Reform Efforts that Impact First-Year Writing

In the eighteen years since Royer and Gilles's article was published, much has changed in higher education. In our state, we have experienced reform initiatives that directly affect FYW through our state's alliance with the nonprofit organization, Complete College America (CCA). With a focus on streamlining higher education through creating a "clear path" for students to "successfully complet[e] college and achiev[e] degrees and credentials," CCA's charter has been adopted by thirty-nine states ("About Complete College America"). We are mindful of Linda Adler-Kassner's sobering analysis of the "Educational Intelligence Complex" that drives these reform efforts ("Writing is Never Just Writing"), but the political landscape of our state has meant that if we want to be heard at all, we can neither ignore nor protest against our state's alignment with CCA. Instead, we have tried to act in rhetorically pragmatic ways and use these reform conversations to make the material conditions of learning better for students. We remain wary of both the alarmist rhetoric of these organizations and the push for "quick, efficient, low-cost education defined by the needs of business" while also viewing these uncomfortable alliances as an opportunity to enact change (Gallagher 26; see Adler-Kassner, "The Companies We Keep" for a review of these tangled reform efforts and initiatives).

As WPAs, we try to be alert to openings for research-based change—changes that might better support students' learning—within the crisis-driven approaches of these reform efforts. One brief example before we turn back to placement: in our state, CCA presented "corequisite remediation" as one of their five "game changers" in their work to raise college degree attainment ("The Game Changers"). They describe the dismal persistence rates for students who begin in non-credit-bearing courses. Of course, various corequisite and mainstreaming approaches are not new, and the success of these models in supporting students and increasing retention has

been well documented by Peter Adams, Judith Rodby, Barbara Gleason, and others.

So, while we worked to expand our CCA representatives' understandings of what remediation really meant, who had defined it, and how it had evolved, we also used this mandate to reduce remediation to implement some of the approaches that we had been advocating for years. In Idaho, WPAs and writing faculty across the state collaborated on a corequisite, credit-bearing course that replaced all remedial courses on six of our seven campuses. At our own institution, students who formerly would have had to complete a non-credit-bearing course prior to our first semester course, English 101, now are placed directly into English 101 Plus (English 101, plus a one-credit intensive studio with their English 101 instructor). According to recent institutional data, students who begin in English 101 Plus successfully complete the course at the same rate as their English 101 counterparts. So far, students from both courses are enrolling in and completing English 102 at similar rates (*English 90 and 101 Completion Over Time*).

In other words, we were able to leverage the CCA "game changer" into a change that mattered to us and to our students: replacing non-credit-bearing remedial courses with credit-bearing options that provide additional support. We aren't interested in horribilizing earlier "remedial" coursework, as these courses were taught tirelessly by dedicated faculty. However, we are interested in providing coursework that better supports students and increases their opportunities to learn and continue in college. Through finding space to navigate within the larger CCA initiative, we were able to improve course offerings for our students. Similar fissures are opening in placement practices.

REFRAMING WHAT "MULTIPLE MEASURES" ARE FOR WRITING PLACEMENT

Writing placement is also an area where the language and goals of higher education reform efforts benefit from the expanded definitions found within our field's research. For example: CCA's solution to the inappropriate use of standardized test scores for placement is to advocate using much wider bands of test score ranges instead of cut scores. To illustrate, under our state's previous approach, an ACT score of 17 or less placed students into a non-credit-bearing course, while a score of 18 placed them into our first-semester course. Instead of using clear cut-offs for each course, CCA encourages campuses to

use a placement range to start most underprepared students in college-level courses with corequisite academic support, within which 75 or more of those students can succeed. In essence, [institutions should] establish two cut scores: one that provides direct entry into standard college courses and another that signals very low level of readiness for college work, even with corequisite assistance. ("The Game Changers")

From the perspective of writing assessment scholarship, this does at least loosen the bonds of a standardized test—but it still assumes that student aptitude is measured, in some way, by these tests. This problematic assumption is one that WPAs can challenge.

Further, CCA also promotes the use of multiple measures to "provide a complete understanding of student ability" ("The Game Changers"). However, they describe multiple measures as simply an increased array of singular measures that might get students out of college writing courses. Generally, these multiple-singular measures are proposed to be given throughout the last few years of high school, either as numerous instances of the same test or a variety of different tests, to gauge how students are doing and where they might need additional instruction so that they can be "remediated" before they leave high school. For example, an idea discussed at one point in our state was to give the state's version of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's English Language Arts college readiness test multiple times starting in a student's junior year, so that high schools could "remediate" students who weren't ready for college.

However, these depictions of multiple measures differ in substance and approach from the multiple measures imagined by writing assessment scholars. One of the central tenets described in the *WPA-NCTE White Paper on Writing Assessment* is that sound writing assessment "should use multiple measures and engage multiple perspectives to make decisions that improve teaching and learning" (see also Yancey 1997). This perspective can be seen most clearly in holistic portfolio assessment: students create a small body of work that then provides a particular kind of picture of them as writers and learners. As WPAs, then, we can draw on these richer definitions of multiple measures, ones that are complex and integrative rather than singular.

CCA's definition of multiple measures comes from their focus on degree attainment; our field's definition focuses on how to best capture and describe student learning. In spite of the substantial differences in perspectives, WPAs can use the term both to inform external constituencies on what it means for writing assessment and to offer substantive examples that demonstrate this approach. Just as we can accept the model of corequisite

FYW courses as research-based from within our field while also continuing to reject the remediation label for these courses, we can also accept the opportunity to develop placement approaches that take up the call for multiple measures even as we reject the instrumentalist approach often underlying how organizations like CCA define it.

Why Placement Matters Differently Now

Why placement, and why now? WPAs always have a wide range of issues that are begging for attention. If "reforming remediation" or improving retention are conversations that are occurring on your campuses, it might be time to act on placement. Here are a few reasons why.

Student Needs

Students' tuition costs have risen substantially, so doing placement well matters more than ever. The recession substantially reduced higher education budgets; more students are coming to college, but the resources to serve these students have diminished. At our institution, for example, state funding provided 65% of our institution's revenue in 1987. In 2012, it had decreased to 30%, and the reductions have been even more significant at other institutions ("25 Years of Declining"). To make up for decreased state support, tuition, fees, and board costs have risen 34% over the past decade at public institutions ("Tuition Costs"). This shift in support for higher education not only has placed an undue burden on parents and students but also has created an increased ethical responsibility on institutions to do writing placement well.

First-Year Writing and Retention Efforts

We also need to point out one of the many tensions in placement work: we are advocating for developing careful, locally based approaches to writing placement even as our own state legislators press for more and more ways for students to complete these courses prior to arriving in college, thus circumventing the placement moment altogether. Our state, drawing from Utah's model, is charging higher education institutions with developing programs so that students can complete an associate's degree while they are in high school. It is a different undertaking altogether to place 15- and 16-year-olds into college writing courses when they are, in fact, still in high school. That particular challenge is one we will address in the future.

Yet at the same time, higher-level administrators, advisors, and student success colleagues generally recognize the critical importance of first-year writing courses—taken while in students' first year on campus—to overall

university retention efforts. These stakeholders also understand that sound placement can have a demonstrable effect on student retention. At our university, for example, shifting to our evidence-based placement process, in combination with credit-bearing coursework, has led to student pass rates increasing in all of our FYW courses (*Reduce Remediation Report*). This improvement occurred without changing curriculum, staffing, or student preparedness in any significant way. It also meant that more students began in our first semester rather than our second semester course. Every time a first semester student is successful in their coursework, the opportunities increase for her to persist in college. Further, FYW courses often serve as prerequisites for later coursework across campus–at least ours do. Students quite literally *must* find success in first-year writing if they are, in turn, going to persist in college.

Changes in the Placement Product Market

Finally and importantly, there has been a disruption in the placement test market, which offers faculty the opportunity to try something new. A problematic and unreliable test used by thousands of colleges and universities, ACT's Compass test, has been withdrawn from the market. The closest product on the market to Compass is The College Board's ACCUPLACER test. While this vacuum will not likely remain for long, it creates a space for those interested in placement change to move forward, and quickly. For example, just in our state, all eight public institutions used to require the use of Compass, and now none do; consequently, thousands of incoming students need to be placed in some way—or not placed at all. Therefore, there is an exciting window of opportunity to develop and market approaches to placement that draw on multiple measures, that are expedient, and that have the opportunity to positively influence student persistence in college.

None of these factors and few of these pressures for reform were in play in quite the same way when DSP arose and had the impact that it did. Because the stakes are so much higher—and so very different—than they have been for decades, WPAs can look for opportunities to propose new placement processes. By redefining what the placement moment is, who gets to participate, and how it is experienced, we can move toward more progressive models within our field. There are many possibilities; what we offer here is one example of how we have intervened on the placement moment through recasting it as a conversation, an invitation, and a calibration of sorts for students. In the next section, we describe our delivered

substantiation of what progressive, multiple-measures placement looks like and why we have designed it as we have.

DEVELOPING MULTIPLE-MEASURES, EVIDENCE-BASED PLACEMENT PROCESSES

How we engage with students through placement policies and procedures communicates to them what we value. In this section, we focus on The Write Class, our local, multiple-measures placement process that is a response to the shifting landscape in higher education. Again, we want to reiterate that this article is not an argument for our process itself: it is for doing something, anything, to use this opportunity to make changes to writing placement that will benefit students.

Engaging Students with the Placement Conversation: The Write Class

The Write Class is a web application that uses an algorithm to match students with a course based on the information they provide. It uses multiple measures to determine a student's optimal range of starting courses. While we initially developed The Write Class to improve placement accuracy, it has also provided key opportunities to reach students with additional, customized information. In other words, it links placement and curriculum in ways we had not previously considered.

Our context offers students three options for their initial writing course. English 101: Introduction to College Writing is a three-credit course that is the most common starting point for students. This course familiarizes students with university reading and writing practices, and an increasing number of instructors are implementing an explicit writing about writing approach within the course. English 101P: Introduction to College Writing Plus is a four-credit (all college level) course that supplements a section of English 101 with a one-hour writers' studio with the same instructor. The writers' studio extends and explores the content of English 101 in an interactive nine-student class. English 102: Introduction to College Writing and Research is a three-credit, second-semester course designed to build from English 101. In this course, students engage in inquiry-based research, working from the viewpoint that we produce knowledge by engaging with others' ideas.

The Write Class has four primary phases. In the first phase, students enter identifying information (e.g., name, student ID, email address), answer questions about language use, and provide previous testing and GPA data. Starting with information students readily associate with performance measurement eases them into this placement process.

The second phase engages students in reflection on their literacy histories through a set of questions about reading and writing experiences and confidence, somewhat like those Royer and Gilles outline in "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation" (56–57). The Write Class presents students with eleven pairs of descriptive statements and asks students to pick the ones that better describe them. This process offers students the opportunity to carefully consider the kinds of work they have done in the past and their relationship with that work. It also begins to shape their understanding of college courses by aligning reading and writing practices with this new setting. This oscillation between reflecting on previous reading and writing experiences and projecting into future writing situations represents a core ethic of our program and introduces students to meta-awareness, a key habit of mind that is foundational to our curriculum.

The third phase leads students through information on our FYW course options and asks them to think about which seems most appropriate for them as learners. First, students review detailed course descriptions and sample materials, such as syllabi and assignments. We've labeled these options with generic names (e.g., "Course A") both to help students and advisors concentrate on each course's content and approach and to obviate tendencies to seek out courses based on their number or name. Next, students are presented with instructor expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the outset of each course.

Our belief is that the procedures allow students to express preferences based on course information rather than focusing on enrolling in or avoiding one course or another. This moment helps them begin to situate themselves within the college learning environment. It marks a key shift; we want students to realign what they might think FYW courses cover and to consider themselves in light of these actual courses.

The fourth phase asks students to deepen their projections by considering the context of their upcoming semester. It reminds students of the expectations of college students and the general homework load for each course; it prompts them to consider their course load and work/family obligations in light of a potential course selection. On our campus, student success is often linked to whether students feel engaged and prepared or uninterested and overwhelmed (Shepherd). Therefore, we give students the chance to think carefully about their situation.

When students have completed The Write Class, they reach a results screen that contains both their course placement and additional information tailored for them, depending on their answers to particular questions. This page presents one of four possible results: English 101P, English 101 with the option to enroll in English 101P, English 101 with the option to

submit an English 102 accelerated placement application, or English 102 with the option to receive credit based on test scores, transfer/concurrent enrollment credit, or both.

The Write Class's questions enable more nuanced placement results than conventional measures. For instance, all students who receive an English 101 result have both a primary and secondary placement. Most students' primary placement is English 101 with the option to enroll in English 101P, which allows them to choose a traditional FYW course or one with additional support. Alternatively, students whose responses indicate a strong likelihood for success (e.g., top-range high school GPA in combination with tendencies to read challenging texts and other indicators) have a primary placement of English 101 with a secondary placement that allows them to apply to begin in English 102.

In addition to more nuanced placement options, the results message screen and the online environment's flexibility lets us guide students to various options in ways unique to our institution. Perhaps most importantly, one of our ongoing frustrations—our inability to communicate with students until the semester has begun—is mitigated through the initial conversation that begins through this system. Further, because it is locally controlled, we can tailor messaging and fine-tune advising as needed. We are better able to communicate about our courses and their expectations to students and can add messaging if unanticipated challenges arise.

We view the 15–20 minutes that students spend working through The Write Class as a pedagogical moment, one in which we can help students begin to understand the college context and their role in it. This process extends the other thoughtful, research-based placement approaches from our field in three ways that are key to its success: re-envisioning this moment of placement as one of reflection and projection, inviting the student into the college learning environment, and acknowledging faculty expertise.

The full implementation of The Write Class occurred because we were able to position it as a response to CCA's call for multiple-measures placement. While we had piloted it for several years, it was only through demonstrating how it aligned with this larger conversation that our provost was willing to support its implementation for all students. In the past few years, we have been able to work with colleagues at other colleges across the United States to design and customize The Write Class for their context, as they too had a new opening for reconsidering placement that had not previously existed. While a full exploration of The Write Class's efficacy and efficiency is beyond the scope of this article, suffice it to say that improving on the use of a single standardized test score for placement is relatively easy to

do. One brief example: our course placements shifted during the first year of implementation—more students began in English 101 and our pass rates increased—students were more successful in the course into which they'd been placed (Belcheir). A reflective approach that blends student input and faculty expertise continues to shift the conversation about the role, purpose, and context of first-year writing at each of these campuses.

Institutional Context: Being Agile and Responsive

The Write Class is fully administrated within the FYW program. This has meant that we now have access to placement in a way that we never did before. We can control the content and the messaging that students receive about our program. Our position in administering placement for our courses has allowed us to make connections across campus. We work closely with admissions, registrar, advising, and orientation offices to communicate with students and to develop processes for helping students enroll.

We can access student responses to all questions within The Write Class. This has allowed us to make improvements in advising in two substantial ways: one-on-one advising with students who have questions about their results, and advising prior to orientation sessions to help students get enrolled in classes. In the (rare) instances when students want to discuss the placement result they received, we can have a meaningful conversation about the time they spent in The Write Class, the responses they provided, and what led them to make the decisions they did. We can then connect that information with the course options and help them understand their results. The latter has allowed us to develop processes—with support from advising and orientation units on campus—for identifying students who may need guidance in getting enrolled in classes prior to their orientation sessions. For example, if a student received an English 101 placement but also has prior learning credits (test credits or transferred courses), we can reach out to them before they get to orientation to help them make their decision about where to enroll. We know that FYW courses are important when it comes to retention, and having access to placement data has allowed us to assist students in getting enrolled in their FYW courses as early as possible.

Administering the placement mechanism also means that we can make adjustments when necessary. As changes on our campus occur, we can adjust The Write Class accordingly. For example, we made a change to the prior learning credit policy by including International Baccalaureate credits. We were able to include information about this shift in The Write Class so students have the most current policies at hand. We are working on a

curriculum redesign in our program, and when we have that in place, we will be able to make necessary changes in The Write Class to ensure that it is aligned with our curriculum.

In short, having access to both the content and the data from the placement site has given us the ability to be responsive to changes and to be proactive in student support efforts.

RETHINKING PLACEMENT: CONCLUSION

When we not only reconfigure our courses but also make visible how they are content-rich experiences designed for all entering college students, we can affect how FYW is understood and described across campus. When we reconsider the placement process, we can begin to shift from sorting students or providing them mechanisms for "getting things out of the way" to starting a conversation about college-level work and what it means to be a college student. In an era where K–12 education includes an increasing number of high-stakes standardized tests, it is vital that students' first interaction with college writing is not a static test that happens to them but rather a dynamic conversation that happens with them.

As institutions that operate in a complex system that simultaneously emphasizes rigor while also working to expand the ways that students can forego courses such as FYW, public colleges and universities will likely need writing placement mechanisms of some kind for the foreseeable future. We must, then, keep engaging in higher education reform efforts while also continuing to build our own approaches that meet student needs, respond to research from our field, and speak to external stakeholders. We must develop our own ethical, progressive, multiple-measures approaches before we are required to use processes developed by others.

We invite you to consider whether this is the time to press forward on placement change at your institution. As part of your own inquiry surrounding placement, we encourage you to ask about the role, context, and purpose of placement at your campus. Perhaps it can serve a different purpose, open a new conversation, or promote a different understanding of your courses. Of course, a fully credit-bearing FYW sequence enables a different conversation about placement into appropriate courses than does a sequence that includes non-credit-bearing coursework. Alternatives to single test placement instruments can more reasonably help students encounter our courses and be matched with the best curriculum—rather than being placed into a course about which they know little to nothing. There are multiple models in our field, and the time just might be right to

propose a new, research-based placement approach that better supports student learning on your campus.

Works Cited

"The 2017 DSP Task," Wake Forest College Writing Program, 2017, college.wfu. edu/writingprogram/directed-self-placement.

"25 Years of Declining State Support for Public Colleges," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 3 Mar. 2014, chronicle.com/interactives/statesupport.

"About Complete College America." *Complete College America*, 2014, completecollege.org/about-cca.

Adler-Kassner, Linda. *The Activist WPA*. Utah State UP, 2008.

—. "2017 CCCC Chair's Address: Because Writing Is Never Just Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2017, pp. 317–40.

—. "The Companies We Keep *or* The Companies We Would Like to Keep: Strategies and Tactics in Challenging Times." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 119–40.

Belcheir, Marcia. *English Placement Task Force Summary of Findings*. Boise State U, 2010. Report.

Daiker, Donald A., Jeff Sommers, and Gail Stygall. "The Pedagogical Implications of a College Placement Portfolio." *Assessment of Writing: Politics, Policies, Practices*, Edited by Edward M. White, William D. Lutz, and Sandra Kamusikiri, MLA, 1996, pp. 257–70.

"Directed Self Placement for First Time Freshmen." California State U, Sacramento, csus.edu/writing/directedselfplacement.

Estrem, Heidi, Dawn Shepherd, and Lloyd Duman. "Relentless Engagement with State Educational Policy Reform: Collaborating to Change the Writing Placement Conversation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2014, pp. 88–128.

English 90 and 101 Completion Over Time. Boise State U, 2018. Report.

Gallagher, Chris W. "Our Trojan Horse: Outcomes Assessment and the Resurrection of Competency-Based Education." Welch and Gallagher, pp. 21–34.

"The Game Changers," Complete College America, 2014, completecollege.org/the-game-changers.

Gere, Anne Ruggles, Laura Aull, Moisés Damián Perales Escudero, Zak Lancaster, and Elizabeth Vander Lei. "Local Assessment: Using Genre Analysis to Validate Directed Self-Placement." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2013, pp. 605–33.

Gleason, Barbara. "Evaluating Writing Programs in Real Time: The Politics of Remediation." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2000, 560–88.

Haswell, Rich. "Post-secondary Entrance Writing Placement." *CompPile*, 1 Mar. 2005, comppile.org/profresources/placement.htm.

Huot, Brian. *(Re)articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*. Utah State UP, 2002.

—. "A Survey of College and University Writing Placement Practices," *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 17 no. 3, 1994, 49–67.

Huot, Brian, Peggy O'Neill, and Cindy Moore. "A Usable Past for Writing Assessment." *College English*, vol. 72, no. 5, 2010, pp. 495–517.

Isaacs, Emily, and Catherine Keohane. "Writing Placement That Supports Teaching and Learning." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2012, pp. 55–84.

Isaacs, Emily, and Sean A. Molloy. "Texts of Our Institutional Lives: SATs for Writing Placement: a Critique and Counterproposal." *College English*, vol. 72, no. 5, 2010, pp. 518–38.

Lowe, Teresa J., and Brian Huot. "Using KIRIS Writing Portfolios to Place Students in First-Year Composition at the University of Louisville." *Kentucky English Bulletin* vol. 46, 1997, pp. 46–64.

Magnan, Katherine. "Cal State's Retreat From Remediation Stokes Debate on College Readiness." *Chronicle of Higher Education.* 15 Sept. 2017, chronicle.com/article/Cal-State-s-Retreat-From/241227.

NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities. CWPA. 2005–2014, wpacouncil.org/whitepaper.

Reduce Remediation Report. Boise State U, 2015.

Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere. Complete College America, Apr. 2012, completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf.

Rodby, Judith. "What's It Worth and What's It For? Revisions to Basic Writing Revisited." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 47 no. 1, 1996, pp. 107–11.

Royer, Daniel J., and Roger Gilles. "Directed Self Placement: An Attitude of Orientation." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1998, pp. 54–70.

Shepherd, Dawn. "Supporting Student Success: Retention, Engagement, and Students Who Repeat First-Year Writing Courses." Conference on College Composition and Communication, 15 Mar. 2013, Las Vegas, NV.

"Tuition Costs of Colleges and Universities," *National Center for Educational Statistics*, 2015. nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=76.

Welch, Nancy, and Tony Scott. *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, Utah State UP, 2016.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, and Irwin Weiser. *Situation Portfolios: Four Perspectives*, Utah State UP, 1997.

Heidi Estrem is professor of English and director of the First-Year Writing Program at Boise State University, a public metropolitan research university. Her research interests in first-year writing pedagogy, writing program administration, assessment, and instructor development and support have led to publications in *WPA: Writing Program Administration, Rhetoric Review, Composition Studies,* and several edited collections. Most recently, she co-edited *Retention and Persistence in Writing Programs* with Todd Ruecker, Dawn Shepherd, and Beth Brunk-Chavez

(University Press of Colorado, 2017). She regularly teaches graduate courses in writing pedagogy as well as courses in first-year writing.

Dawn Shepherd is associate professor of English and associate director of the first-year writing program at Boise State University. She is the author of *Building Relationships: Online Dating and the New Logics of Algorithmic Culture* (Lexington Books, 2016) and co-editor of *Retention, Persistence, and Writing Programs* (University Press of Colorado, 2017). Her work has been published in edited collections as well as *Computers and Composition* and *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Two of her recent book chapters on genre and weblogs, co-authored with Carolyn R. Miller, have been translated into Portuguese. She teaches undergraduate courses in rhetoric, writing, and media and graduate seminars on research methods and digital rhetoric.

Samantha Sturman is a lecturer in the English department at Boise State University and is the Placement and Assessment Manager for the first-year writing program. She helped pilot and continues to regularly teach English 101 Plus at Boise State and to provide mentorship to other faculty members teaching the course. Since writing her master's thesis on student self-efficacy in an earlier iteration of The Write Class placement tool, she has continued to serve as its co-developer and lead administrator at Boise State and has overseen deployments of The Write Class at six other institutions, from community colleges to private and public universities. Her research interests include first-year writing placement, writing and transfer, and assessment.