A Call to Action to Improve Math Placement Policies and Processes

This call to action is based on a simple but important premise: The nation cannot allow placement policies, processes, and instruments to undermine promising efforts to increase student success in mathematics and increase attainment of STEM credentials. Efforts to redesign math pathways hold great promise for improving the teaching and learning experiences of students who need college algebra—many of whom are STEM students—and helping those students persist toward and maintain STEM aspirations. But placement policies, processes, and instruments have not kept pace with math redesign efforts.

The nation needs more students prepared for STEM jobs—particularly low-income students, students of color, and underprepared students who historically have not had equitable access to preparation for and on-ramps to well-paying, dynamic STEM careers. To meet this need, mathematics course pathways must be a lever for helping students maintain and even increase their STEM aspirations. At the moment, however, far too many math courses—especially developmental math courses—serve as a serious obstacle and even deterrent to STEM-interested students seeking STEM credentials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Begin the placement support process early to ensure entering students are ready for college-level math.

**Recommendation 2:** Use multiple factors to determine whether students are placed into developmental courses and which developmental or gateway courses are most appropriate.

**Recommendation 3:** Require testmakers to align placement tests with differentiated math pathways and improve their predictive value.

**Recommendation 4:** Strengthen the role of student supports—especially advising—in the placement process.

**Recommendation 5:** Prioritize student academic and career goals in the placement process.

**Recommendation 6:** Create a bridging mechanism from non-algebra pathways into algebra pathways.

Source: excerpts reprinted from http://achievingthedream.org/resources/knowledge-center
Annual Feedback Report form ATD

Temple College received its feedback report from Achieving the Dream (ATD) on the college’s annual reflection. The feedback was organized on the five broad principles that ATD views as key to institutional transformation. A summary of the observations follows:

Reflections on the Five Achieving the Dream Principles

Committed Leadership

The Board of Trustees was praised for its interest in student success outcomes and in the commitment of substantial resources to hiring student-success coaches.

Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services

The ATD staff were pleased that the college is improving research capacity and data access with the purchase of data analytics software from ZogoTech.

Broad Engagement

Temple’s developmental-education faculty was observed to be very engaged in improving student success in their courses, as evidenced by their involvement with the new Texas Success Initiative and the New Mathways Project.

Systemic Institutional Improvement

The college was commended for scaling its most effective practices. Zero Week and continuous orientations were cited as excellent examples of promising practices that started as pilots and became integral pieces of the institution.

The team commented on the college’s current strategic planning process.

We understand that this is an important period with the current strategic plan coming to an end. As you begin development, ensure that student success is once again a cornerstone of the new strategic plan. Include measures of success, and regularly monitor and report on them. It is also recommended that you operationalize the strategic plan, so that all staff, faculty, and administrators understand the specific responsibilities of their departments and the timeline for accomplishment. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew Temple’s commitment to student success and to reinvigorate the college staff.

Equity

The ATD team applauded the college for including a value statement on equity in its strategic plan and recommended that the college reconvene the equity committee and create an equity plan with action steps, designated responsibilities, a timeline, and targeted measures.