Reviewing the Research on Informed Self-Placement

Practices, Justifications, Outcomes, and Limitations

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Community colleges and other higher education institutions with broad or open admissions provide a pathway to increased wages and career opportunities for a wide range of students.[1] Research has shown that the standardized placement exams traditionally used to assess students' readiness for entry-level, or gateway, math and English courses at these institutions are poor predictors of college performance. Further, they place an overwhelming number of students into developmental education courses that cover prerequisite skills—sometimes with a sequence of courses that takes several semesters to complete and in which the individual courses typically offer no college credit. And, finally, they are associated with decreased persistence and low rates of degree attainment.[2] In response to these findings, many colleges are seeking, developing, and employing readiness assessments designed to increase student enrollment and success in gateway courses and more accurately identify students who would benefit from developmental instruction.

Emerging placement methods include the use of high school GPA or of multiple measures—such as GPA, ACT/SAT, and transcript information—to place students.[3] Informed self-placement (ISP)—also referred to as guided self-placement or directed self-placement—is another emerging method of assessment in which colleges provide information about placement policies, available courses, or other relevant topics in order to engage students as active participants in their own placement. The Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (CAPR) recently completed a one-year exploratory study to learn about ISP practices across the United States. Components of that project include this review of the research, a series of interviews and focus groups with practitioners who currently use a form of ISP, and a descriptive comparison of outcome data for students that were placed using ISP and traditional assessments, respectively, at a subset of Nevada colleges.

With this review of the research, we provide a discussion of the processes and methods used to implement ISP, as well as justifications for its use, an overview of the available data about how students behave and perform when ISP is used, and recommendations for future research. Methods used to conduct the review include searching key terms and snowballing (identifying additional papers to review from the references of reviewed papers). Studies reviewed for this brief include essays, case studies, descriptive studies, and other literature reviews. The research includes both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The Appendix lists the ISP sources discussed in the brief and provides additional details about each study.

How Is Informed Self-Placement Being Used?

Most of the research reviewed describes ISP practices that include two elements: active student engagement and some level of guidance and information about placement policies, available courses, or other relevant topics from the college and its representatives.[4] Based on the literature, practices labeled as ISP include the pivotal components of guidance and engagement in vastly different ways and to different degrees. There is also variation in who is offered ISP and which courses students can place into using ISP. For all these reasons, an exact definition of ISP can be elusive. The aim of this section is to explore the range of practices when it comes to engagement, guidance, target populations, and course options using specific examples from the literature to help create more clarity around the term.

When it comes to engagement, some texts emphasize the importance of students having agency and exercising choice in order to "self-place."[5] Others discuss placement approaches that are called ISP but under which, in practice, students effectively receive a placement from the college rather than engaging in a self-placement process.[6] Still others offer limited choice, or veiled choice, where students can select their courses but are largely unaware that they have this option.[7] See Box 1 for examples from the literature of how students engage in placement processes described as ISP.

There is variation not only in the level of engagement expected of (or granted to) students but also in the guidance that colleges provide during ISP. The type of guidance most frequently discussed in the research is information about the curriculum and the courses available to

BOX 1. LEVELS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN INFORMED SELF-PLACEMENT PRACTICES

Following are some examples of how students are engaged in the informed self-placement (ISP) process.

Focus on Student Choice

"[ISP] typically does not ask students to produce writing or answer usage questions on a test. Instead, students are presented with information about available courses and, after evaluating their own background and abilities via answering a series of questions, they determine which course they should take."[*]

Limited Choice

"Math self-placement consists of a Web-based testing and information site that allows students, or potential students, to gauge their level of math proficiency prior to talking with a counselor or enrolling in classes…For students planning on enrolling in a transfer-level course, self-placement is only informational. A transcript with the necessary prerequisites is required for entry into transfer-level courses."[†]

Veiled Choice

"Students report their standardized test scores, record their high school GPA, and then answer several questions about their experience as readers and writers. These responses are then converted into numbers, which then yield a class recommendation. Though this is a recommendation, not a requirement, students often don't know that. In practice, we thus remove the component of [ISP] in which students are informed of their choices, evaluate their strengths, and make a decision for which they then take responsibility. Technically, they do have this choice, but our scoring system functions to elide it."[‡]

"Informed Self-Placement" Without Choice

"We define [an ISP] placement system as one that primarily relies on students' self-evaluations of readiness for different levels of English and math coursework.…We found that in many of the [ISP] plans submitted to the Chancellor's Office, colleges identified their placement system as [ISP] even when it relied primarily or exclusively on high school records."[§]

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[*] A. R. Gere, L. Aull, T. Green, and A. Porter, "Assessing the Validity of Directed Self-Placement at a Large University," Assessing Writing 15, 3 (2010): 154–176.

[†] J. E. Felder, J. E. Finney, and M. W. Kirst, "Informed Self-Placement at American River College: A Case Study," #07-2 (San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2007).

[‡] A. Balay and K. Nelson, "Placing Students in Writing Classes: One University's Experience with a Modified Version of Directed Self Placement," Composition Forum 25 (Spring 2012).

[§] M. C. Mejia, O. Rodriguez, and H. Johnson, "A New Era of Student Access at California's Community Colleges," (San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 2020).

the student. Other forms of guidance include discussions about the implications of multiple measures provided for course placement, feedback on tasks performed during the ISP process, and prompts to help students consider their own educational contexts (for example, with regard to responsibilities outside of school or previous academic experiences). Box 2 contains a more complete list of types of guidance with examples from the texts.

BOX 2. TYPES OF GUIDANCE USED FOR INFORMED SELF-PLACEMENT

Following are examples of the types of information shared with students during informed self-placement (ISP).

Course and Curricular Information

"The writing program at DePauw consists of three courses. Most DePauw students enter the writing program by taking English 130 and then proceed to take a writing-intensive course."[*]

"[ISP reference materials] are basically like representative exit skills that they should have under their belt, which in turn became entrance skills. They're like prerequisites. For example, for a student considering taking intermediate algebra, the self-placement would assess their beginning algebra skills."[†]

"Additionally, students could get help from writing faculty regarding which section of English 101 to take. More than half of the program's first-year, first-semester writing courses are computer-enhanced, and the program also offers several service-learning sections of English 101. As our menu of English 101 options grew, we felt students might need more assistance in selecting the particular section of English 101 that was right for them, and [ISP] enabled us to provide exactly such guidance."[‡]

Implications of Multiple Measures

"I think we spend a lot more time trying to help them make better decisions. What your test scores tell us, here's what your high school transcripts tell us. That's not always the full picture, but at least it gives us the opportunity to have a conversation about their strengths and weaknesses and mapping their plans for future semesters."[§]

(continued)

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[*]C. E. Cornell and R. D. Newton, "The Case of a Small Liberal Arts University: Directed Self-Placement at DePauw," pages 149–178 in D. J. Royer and R. Gilles (eds.), Directed Self-Placement: Principles and Practices (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 2003).

[†]J. E. Felder, J. E. Finney, and M. W. Kirst, "Informed Self-Placement at American River College: A Case Study," #07-2 (San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2007).

[‡]R. Pinter and E. Sims, "Directed Self-Placement at Belmont University: Sharing Power, Forming Relationships, Fostering Reflection," pages 107–126 in D. J. Royer and R. Gilles (eds.), Directed Self-Placement: Principles and Practices (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 2003).

[§]S. Hu, T. B. Jones, A. Nix, J. You, H. Daniels, X. Hu, P. Hu, and R. Brower, "Understanding the Implementation of Developmental Education Reform in Florida," (Tallahassee, FL: Center for Postsecondary Success, 2021).

BOX 2. (CONTINUED)

Feedback on Tasks Performed During the ISP Process

"Informing students of their writing choices should involve more than mass communication of college standards of writing. Even one-on-one dialogue is most productive when it starts with the student's writing and writing experiences … University of Rochester has two choice-based placement processes: One involves a small group of incoming freshmen and is integrated into the classroom setting; the other, designed for the majority, is initiated by students' high school writing and an on-site writing exam."[II]

Considerations Related to Student Context

"Students responded to a battery of statements about frequency of reading of books, magazines and newspapers, about confidence in writing (out of which a composite confidence measure was created), about the number and types of essays written in high school, and about their verbal SAT score. Then students read various behavior/attitude profiles and chose the one that best matched their own self-assessment."[#]

"The main purpose of adding the background questions was to get students to think hard about whether they were prepared for a course before enrolling. It probed into important areas such as how much time they'll have to study, whether they've taken the prerequisites, and how recently. The test printout has the student's answers to the questions and is useful when speaking with a counselor."[**]

[II]P. Bedore and D. F. Rossen-Knill, "Informed Self-Placement: Is a Choice Offered a Choice Received?" WPA: Writing Program Administration 28, 1–2 (2004): 5578.

[#]E. Jones, "Self-Placement at a Distance: Challenge and Opportunities," WPA: Writing Program Administration 32, 1 (2008): 57–75.

[**]Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007).

Despite the many differences in the types of information shared with students, the methods and materials used to provide guidance generally fall into five categories.[8] These categories are listed in Box 3 and can be described more fully as follows: materials that explain ISP, available courses, or other relevant details; online and paper questionnaires, which are usually employed to prompt students to consider their background and relevant experiences; discussions with faculty or staff; tasks like math problems and writing prompts; and sample course materials or assignments, which are sometimes accompanied with sample responses. The latter two forms of guidance, tasks and sample materials, are commonly designed to support the students' reflections on their mastery of skills or knowledge required to succeed in a particular course. It is important to note that colleges might utilize different types of tools or a variety of tools of the same type in their ISP process. For instance, a state university in Pennsylvania utilized two different questionnaires designed to prompt student reflection on relevant habits and experiences, one multiple choice and one short answer; an explanatory brochure; and a group orientation session.[9] Students at that university were also able to have individual advising sessions after the orientation. The Appendix shows which

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BOX 3. METHODS AND MATERIALS USED TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE

- Explanatory handouts or online content
- Questionnaires
- Orientations or advising sessions
- Tasks performed during the ISP process (writing samples, math questions)
- Sample course materials or assignments (sometimes with sample responses)

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sources include sample materials and includes links to these materials where available.

Although institutions may choose to use ISP as their primary placement system for all students, the literature reveals that many colleges offer ISP as an option to students under certain specific conditions.[10] For example, English language learners as well as students who enroll in college after some time away from formal schooling may be offered ISP if they do not have access to measures that are required for placement at their institution (such as a GPA from a U.S. high school). In fact, California's legislation around placement, AB 705, includes ISP as a placement option for all students who cannot utilize their high school information, which is the standard metric used for placement in California.[11] Students are also offered ISP based on test scores—specifically in instances where students had low or moderate standardized test scores—as the research demonstrates that such tests are poor predictors of student success.[12]

The types of courses available to students through ISP vary as well. The implementation of ISP for specific departments or subjects is very common. There are many resources discussing ISP for placement in first-year writing courses, others discussing the use of ISP for math courses, and still others that discuss using ISP to place the majority of incoming students into both English and math courses.[13] Within subjects, students may be able to choose between gateway courses, developmental courses, and corequisite courses, which are gateway courses with a developmental component (like additional course hours to cover prerequisite material or tutoring support).[14] Other processes offer students only developmental or only college-level options.[15] The "Limited Choice" example in Box 1 describes one such situation in which students primarily use ISP to choose between several developmental courses.

Why Use Informed Self-Placement?

This section discusses four justifications for adopting ISP to demonstrate its potential utility from a more theoretical perspective. These justifications are meant to provide additional context for those considering whether or not to incorporate ISP into their placement practices.

Fostering Students' Agency

One of the most common reasons for using ISP is to foster student agency.[16] In a qualitative study of community colleges that use ISP for placement, representatives from half of the institutions mentioned increased student agency as a benefit of ISP.[17] As used in social psychology, *agency* is defined as people's ability to make decisions and take actions that influence their life's circumstances and the things that happen to them.[18] Because of

educational studies on self-determination theory, which posits that learning is facilitated by learners having autonomy over their learning experience, agency is commonly believed to have positive effects on student performance.[19] As discussed above and shown in Box 1, the amount of agency that students are actually able to exercise in ISP processes varies widely. It is important for those who are employing ISP with the aim of providing students with agency to be aware that not every placement method that is called ISP provides students with this benefit and to keep this in mind when making decisions about which methods to implement. The research also discusses the importance of coupling agency with proper guidance. In this way colleges can arm students not just with the ability to choose, but with the relevant knowledge needed for them to deliberate and make an informed, autonomous choice.[20]

Alignment with Institutional Priorities

Throughout the literature, researchers note a disconnect between prescriptive traditional placement practices (in which colleges dictate students' placement according to set rules) and educational philosophies that encourage critical thinking—philosophies that are embraced by many institutions in the modern academy, including those with a history of using traditional placement practices.[21] ISP is presented as an opportunity to align practice with philosophy by encouraging students to engage in discussions with faculty and advisors and to think carefully about complex issues. Similarly, the content of placement tools from external developers—often tests intended for use on a national scale—may differ from the curriculum and course content at any given institution.[22] An example of this would be a school that is reforming their math curriculum to include options other than algebra that is nevertheless using a standardized exam with a heavy algebraic focus for placement. Tools and guidance used for ISP are commonly developed by members of the college community such as faculty, administrators, and advisors. Because these stakeholders are familiar with institutional priorities, there is space for them to align their ISP practices with those priorities.

Holistic Placement

The degree of success that a student achieves in a particular course is determined by more than their knowledge and aptitude. Factors like motivation, competing priorities, and physical and mental health can affect a student's performance.[23] Traditional placement methods tend to focus on knowledge and skills at the time of enrollment, but students with similar skills could have different amounts of time available to dedicate to studying, or be more or less willing or able to utilize supports (like tutoring). Factors like these could heavily influence whether a student is better suited for a gateway or developmental course. Some forms of assessment, like multiple measures, can factor metrics of other variables, like motivation, into a placement determination. The literature suggests, however, that ISP can go a step further by allowing students—the ones who are most familiar with their own situations—to harness that familiarity and incorporate it into their placement decisions.[24] Some ISP procedures intentionally prompt students to consider relevant experiences, resources, and limitations when making their placement decisions. See the Appendix and the section "Considerations

Related to Student Context" in Box 2 for more information on these procedures and where to find sample materials.[25]

Improved Learning Environment

Within the literature, ISP is associated with a more positive learning environment for both students and teachers.[26] With more prescriptive traditional placement methods, students can have negative feelings or resentment (due to, for example, frustration with redundant coursework, experiencing a course as too difficult, or feelings of inadequacy at being labeled underprepared for college). Enrolling in a course as a result of their own judgement and volition, as is the case with ISP, may reduce these feelings, which can then lead to better classroom interactions.[27] Instructors of both developmental and gateway courses have reported perceived improvements in student attitudes in their responses to surveys of their experience.[28] At one college, teachers expressed increased interest in teaching developmental education courses after the implementation of ISP.[29] As discussed in that study, this may be due to the fact that the self-assessment component of ISP makes the developmental education classroom "one in which teachers and students can begin the real work of teaching and learning … rather than spending time boosting the morale of students told by a test that they aren't college-level."

What Outcomes Are Associated with Informed Self-Placement?

Many of the studies reviewed for this brief include a discussion of outcome data that describe what occurred after ISP had been implemented. Because trends in descriptive data could have been influenced by a number of factors, we cannot know whether any observed behaviors from these studies were *caused* by the use of ISP; these observations, however, have implications for others interested in implementing and or researching this practice. In addition to the descriptive studies, two quasi-experimental studies report on the effects of reforms related to ISP, but with important distinctions. The first took place at a large urban community college (or LUCC), where students were offered increased control over the selection of their first-year math course when the traditional placement exam became unavailable.[30] Students in this study were required to meet with an advisor before selecting courses, but details about the content of these meetings were unavailable to the authors so it is difficult to know the degree of engagement and guidance offered to students in this intervention.[31] The other study estimates the effects of legislation in Florida that mandated reforms to developmental education and made enrollment in developmental education courses optional for the majority of incoming students.[32] An implementation study, that describes the process of instituting the Florida legislation evaluated in the second study, suggests that students in many schools across Florida experienced a level of guidance and engagement that fits within the range of what is discussed as ISP in the literature. However, the impact estimates from this study include the effects of changes to the structure of

developmental education as well as the effects of ISP.[33] These studies are included in this analysis because their findings highlight important considerations for future studies and because they may help to demonstrate promise for ISP as an intervention.[34]

The literature mainly provides information on three types of student outcome data: student enrollment decisions—that is, the type of courses students tend to choose when offered ISP; performance outcomes, like grades and pass rates in developmental and gateway courses; and student experience surveys related to ISP.[35] All are discussed here. Outcome data for subgroups are included where available.

Enrollment Outcomes

Generally speaking, students offered ISP place themselves into developmental math and English classes less often than students placed by traditional means, according to the descriptive studies reviewed. According to those same studies, enrollment in standard gateway courses increases under ISP.[36] In the first semester of the Florida reform, for instance, 22 percent of students enrolled in developmental math courses—a decrease of 16 percentage points from the previous year. Enrollment in developmental reading and writing courses similarly declined by 11 percentage points and 5 percentage points, respectively.[37] Enrollment in gateway courses increased for all subjects. A later quasi-experimental evaluation of the reform associates positive academic outcomes with these enrollment patterns, which will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.[38]

Some deviations from the general trend include the quasi-experimental study of ISP at the LUCC. In this instance, changes in student enrollments were bidirectional: the number of students selecting a college-level course increased by about 8 percentage points and the number of students who selected the lowest-level developmental course also increased by about 7 percentage points.[39] There are also examples of colleges implementing ISP along with curricular reforms (specifically, corequisite courses as the only developmental education option and stretch courses, in which developmental material was fused with that of the gateway course and is presented as one two-semester course taught by the same instructor) that resulted in a significant number of students enrolling in the developmental courses.[40] Finally, there is a case study of a math program with increased choice in which students placed themselves into classes that are lower in the sequence than the class that they would have been placed into under a traditional placement method.[41] In this model, however, students primarily used ISP to choose between developmental courses and needed to provide a transcript in order to enroll in a college-level course. (See the "Limited Choice" section in Box 1.)

Enrollment Outcomes by Demographic Groups

Trends in enrollment outcomes in the literature correspond with subjects and student demographic characteristics—sometimes in contradictory ways across different studies.

Overall, White students seem more likely to place themselves into gateway courses than students of color.[42] Black students overwhelmingly select gateway courses over developmental courses in some studies, but are less likely to enroll in college-level courses in studies that examine trends in math enrollment, including the quasi-experimental study of a LUCC mentioned earlier.[43] The same study found that Black, Hispanic, and female students were most likely to enroll in the lowest level of courses in the developmental math sequence, which requires students to complete multiple developmental education courses before even enrolling in a gateway course.[44] This may be due to the fact that female students and students of color tend to underestimate their math abilities due to anxieties and stereotypes about their math performance.[45] Other studies reinforce this reasoning in their discussion of enrollment outcomes for writing programs, linking studies that show that apprehension about writing is generally higher in males than in females with results showing that females are more likely to select gateway writing courses than males and males are more likely to place themselves into developmental writing courses.[46] Additional studies are required before it is possible to tell whether this is consistent with students' performance.

Academic Performance Outcomes

The most common performance outcomes discussed in the literature are student grades and pass rates. Descriptive studies of ISP for placement in first-year writing courses that include performance data largely report that grades and pass rates remained the same or improved after implementing ISP, despite increased enrollments in standard gateway courses.[47] A quasi-experimental evaluation of the Florida reform found that incoming students were more likely to successfully complete gateway courses in both math and English in their first year of enrollment after the implementation of the reform.[48] Even more promising is that students who had exhibited lower performance in high school showed the most improvement. The quasi-experimental study of a LUCC found that ISP had no statistically significant impact on math course success, meaning that any small differences observed may have been due to chance.[49] The same study found that students who enrolled in gateway math courses via ISP had lower pass rates initially but were more likely to complete college-level courses than students whose placement was decided by a traditional placement method.

A couple of studies used data about course withdrawal and persistence, or continued enrollment in college, as a measure of student performance—mostly finding positive results. The LUCC study found that students placed with ISP were approximately 6 percentage points less likely to withdraw from their first-year gateway *or* developmental math course than those placed with traditional methods—a statistically significant finding with a very low probability of being due to chance (less than 1 percent).[50] That study also reported that self-placement increased students' chances of persisting along the math sequence and doing so more quickly, noting that while students who placed into courses that are lower in the developmental sequence were less likely to withdraw from their courses, they were also less likely to have completed a college-level math course up to four years later. An ISP pilot at a small liberal arts college similarly found that students who self-place into gateway courses persist longer in college than those who decide to enroll in developmental courses.[51]

Performance Outcomes by Demographic Groups

An examination of performance outcomes according to students' demographic characteristics yields some conflicting results. Among students who were placed with ISP as part of the Florida reform, but had placement exam scores that would have placed them in developmental courses, a descriptive study found that White, Hispanic, and female students were most likely to pass the gateway math course, and there is evidence that achievement gaps closed after the reform.[52] In the LUCC study, males saw increases in course completion and persistence in math while outcomes for females dipped or remained the same in those areas.[53] As mentioned earlier, a lack of specific details about the level and type of guidance provided to students for the LUCC study makes it difficult to offer explanations for the differences apparent in these outcomes—an issue that should be addressed by future evaluations that include implementation details.

Subgroup analyses on short- and long-term outcomes reveal interesting patterns, albeit with contradictory implications. For instance, a descriptive study of ISP for the writing program at a large public university found that its Black students experienced adverse outcomes in the short term with ISP (for example, increased chances of failing gateway and developmental writing courses), but experienced longer term benefits (for example, increased persistence). By contrast, the LUCC study found that the same group was less likely to withdraw when offered ISP, but also less likely in the long term to attain 30 credits, the equivalent of achieving sophomore status.[54] It also found that the likelihood of withdrawing from a first math course decreased for all subgroups but more so for White and Asian students than for Black and Hispanic students. Black students also lagged in credit accumulation in that study.[55] These inconsistent findings suggest that further studies are needed that include subgroup analyses—paying attention to the relationships between particular aspects of ISP processes and outcomes for particular groups.[56]

Student Experience

Some studies included student surveys to better understand ISP from the students' perspective. Based on these surveys, students generally value the opportunity to select their courses.[57] ISP students tend to express confidence in their course selections in surveys given both before and after course completion, including some students who failed their selected courses.[58]

Summary of Outcomes

To summarize findings across studies:

- There is a lack of consensus on enrollment trends with ISP. Generally, fewer students enroll in developmental courses and more students enroll in gateway courses—though there are some exceptions to this rule, including when ISP is implemented along with curricular changes that combine developmental and gateway coursework.

- Overall, studies suggest that ISP has either a positive or null effect on student performance even when a larger number of students opt to enroll in gateway courses. Students with low high school performance, or who would have been assigned to developmental education courses according to a standard placement test, show material gains when it comes to completing gateway courses early in their college career—an achievement associated with higher degree attainment.[59]

- It is not yet possible to draw definitive conclusions about how the different demographic groups behave under ISP, but outcomes seem to differ according to demographics and may be directly related to both students' feelings toward specific subjects and to societal expectations of their performance. Performance outcomes by subgroup are inconsistent across studies, suggesting that future studies should include subgroup analyses if possible.

- Finally, students and faculty report positive experiences under ISP, and students feel confident in their choices regardless of their course outcomes.

What Are the Limitations of Current Research and What Comes Next?

There are still some aspects of ISP that warrant further attention based on the current research. Because there have been no large-scale evaluations that completely control for the effects of variables other than ISP, it is not possible to say whether ISP has any impact on student outcomes. The descriptive data discussed in the outcomes section are encouraging, indicating that such studies would be beneficial to the field. The large range of ISP practices observed in the literature, however, is not conducive for an evaluation, which requires a fairly defined, replicable model. Some of the practices discussed in this brief that align with the justifications for ISP may suggest ISP components that should be included in any future evaluations. Among those are:

- students being the ones to determine their own placement;

- the inclusion of guidance from the college—more than likely including course and curricular information and prompts for students to consider various factors in their educational backgrounds and life situations as they make their placement decisions; and

- alignment with the institutional context in terms of subject content and educational philosophy.

Students and staff have a high level of influence over ISP processes and outcomes (see the "Fostering Students' Agency" and "Alignment with Institutional Priorities" sections above). Research suggests that staff views of students as well as students' perceptions of themselves are shaped by stereotypes.[60] These facts and the conflicting outcomes of subgroup analyses suggest that those charged with designing ISP processes might consider ways to achieve more equitable outcomes across subgroups. A forthcoming CAPR brief will provide guidance for intentionally designing placement processes to reduce equity gaps.

Additionally, there is considerable overlap between the fields of psychology and education with regard to ISP, which current studies are beginning to explore. Further inquiry into findings from studies in applied psychology on decision-making and self-evaluation could potentially bolster ISP efforts. For instance, there is evidence that the accuracy of self-assessments can be improved with very limited coaching, and behavioral decision theory suggests that decisions are influenced by a number of factors including the complexity of available choices and the way that information is presented.[61] Some of these have implications for the design of ISP models.

Notes

1   Toth (2018); Belfield and Bailey (2011).

2   Scott-Clayton (2012); Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2009).

3   Belfield and Crosta (2012); Cullinan and Biedzio (2021); Barnett, Kopko, Cullinan, and Belfield (2020).

4   Toth (2019); Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter (2010); Jones (2008); Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

5   Caouette (2019); Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter (2010); Royer and Giles (2003).

6   Mejia, Rodriguez, and Johnson (2020).

7   Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007); Balay and Nelson (2012); Blakesley (2003).

8   Toth (2019).

9   Chernekoff (2003).

10   Tirona (2018); Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (2018); Pinter and Sims (2003); Rassen, White, Newell, and Rodriguez-Kiino (2021); Ross (1998); Ferris and Lombardi (2020); Ferris (2016); National Council of Teachers of English (2020); Toth (2018); Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter (2010).

11   Mejia, Rodriguez, and Johnson (2020).

12   Cornell and Newton (2003); Tompkins (2003).

13   ISP for first-year writing courses is commonly referred to as directed self-placement. Royer and Gilles (1998); Toth (2018); Toth (2019); Toth and Aull (2014); Jones (2008); Balay and Nelson (2012); Caouette (2019); Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter (2010); Mejia, Rodriguez, and Johnson (2020); Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007); Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

14   Caouette (2019); Pinter and Sims (2003); Cornell and Newton (2003); Jones (2008).

15   Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007).

16   Royer and Gilles (1998); Royer and Gilles (2003); Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007); Toth (2018); Caouette (2019).

17   Toth (2019).

18   Bandura (2006).

19   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019); Niemiec and Ryan (2009).

20   Royer and Giles (1998); Bedore and Rossen-Knill (2004).

21   Pinter and Simms (2003); Toth (2019); Chernekoff (2003); Bedore and Rossen-Knill (2004).

22   Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007).

23   Toth (2019).

24   Cullinan and Biedzio (2021); Cullinan et al. (2019); Cullinan et al. (2018).

25   Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007).

26   Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003); Chernekoff (2003).

27   Caouette (2019).

28   Chernekoff (2003).

29   Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003).

30   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019). The institution inadvertently allowed its license for the placement exam to lapse.

31   The analysis occurred several years after the data were generated.

32   Park-Gaghan, Mokher, Spencer, and Hu (2021). The legislation, SB 1720, exempted students who entered the ninth grade in 2003 or later from placement exams. Older students and English language learners were not mandated to receive the exemption.

33   Hu et al. (2021).

34   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019); Park-Gaghan, Mokher, Spencer, and Hu (2021).

35   Parties interested in evaluating or monitoring the outcomes of their own ISP processes might want to collect these types of data over time as part of their effort.

36   The term "standard gateway course" is used here to distinguish between a stand-alone gateway course and a corequisite course. Hu et al. (2016); Chernekoff (2003); Royer and Gilles (1998); Jones (2008); Toth (2018).

37   Hu et al. (2016).

38   Park-Gaghan, Mokher, Spencer, and Hu (2021).

39   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

40   Pinter and Sims (2003); Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003).

41   Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007).

42   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019); Cornell and Newton (2003).

43   Hu et al. (2016); Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

44   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

45   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

46   Reynolds (2003); Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003).

47   Chernekoff (2003); Cornell and Newton (2003); Tompkins (2003); Toth (2018); Jones (2008).

48   Park-Gaghan, Mokher, Spencer, and Hu (2021).

49   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

50   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

51   Cornell and Newton (2003).

52   Park et al. (2018); Park-Gaghan et al. (2020).

53   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

54   Inoue (2009); Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

55   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

56   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019) suggest equity-focused trainings for staff might offset some of the unfavorable outcomes for minoritized groups.

57   Cornell and Newton (2003); Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003).

58   Chernekoff (2003); Cornell and Newton (2003); Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003).

59   Park et al. (2018).

60   Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

61   Kruger and Dunning (1999); Neal and Huot (2003); Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019).

Appendix

Resources on Informed Self-Placement

Appendix Table 1. Resources on Informed Self-Placement

Source	Author(s) and Year of Publication	Discusses Math Placement	Discusses English Placement	Includes Sample Placement Tools (questionnaires, etc.)	Student Makes Final Placement Decision	Type of Analysis	Includes Quantitative Analyses	Descriptive Study	Case Study	Includes Review of Literature	Includes Survey
Emerging Practices in ESL Guided Self-Placement	White and Newell (2022)		●	●	●					●	
Understanding the Implementation of Developmental Education Reform in Florida	Hu et al. (2021)	●	●	●	●	Qualitative interviews			●		
Do Rising Tides Lift All Boats? Exploring Heterogenous Effects of Florida's Developmental Education Reform by High School Academic Preparation	Park-Gaghan, Mokher, Spencer, and Hu (2021)	●	●		●	Regression models	●		●		
Assessment Measures for English as a Second Language Students in College	Rassen, White, Newell, and Rodriguez-Kiino (2021)				●					●	
What Happened Following Comprehensive Developmental Education Reform in the Sunshine State? The Impact of Florida's Developmental Education Reform on Introductory College-Level Course Completion	Park-Gaghan et al. (2020)	●	●		●	Quasi-experimental	●		●		

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Source	Author(s) and Year of Publication	Discusses Math Placement	Discusses English Placement	Includes Sample Placement Tools (questionnaires, etc.)	Student Makes Final Placement Decision	Type of Analysis	Includes Quantitative Analyses	Descriptive Study	Case Study	Includes Review of Literature	Includes Survey
Collaborative Placement of Multilingual Writers: Combining Formal Assessment and Self-Evaluation	Ferris and Lombardi (2020)	●		●			●	●			●
A New Era of Student Access at California's Community Colleges	Mejia, Rodriguez, and Johnson (2020)	●	●			Document review, qualitative interviews	●	●			
Directed Self-Placement, Corequisite Models, and Curricular Choice	Caouette (2019)		●	●	●	Quantitative, descriptive	●	●	●		
Giving Community College Students Choice: The Impact of Self-Placement in Math Courses	Kosiewicz and Ngo (2019)	●			●	Quasi-experimental	●	●	●	●	
Directed Self-Placement at Two-Year Colleges: A Kairotic Moment	Toth (2019)		●		●		●	●	●	●	
What Happens to Underprepared First-Time-In-College Students When Developmental Education Is Optional? The Case of Developmental Math and Intermediate Algebra in the First Semester	Park et al. (2018)	●			●	Regression models	●	●			
Miracosta College: English Informed Self-Placement Process	Tirona (2018)		●	●	●						

(continued)

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Directed Self-Placement at "Democracy's Open Door"	Toth (2018)		●	●	●	Qualitative interviews		●			
L2 Writers in Higher Education	Ferris (2016)		●		●					●	
Investigating Developmental and College-Level Course Enrollment and Passing Before and After Florida's Developmental Education Reform	Hu et al. (2016)	●	●		●		●	●			
Directed Self-Placement Questionnaire Design: Practices, Problems, Possibilities	Toth and Aull (2014)		●	●	●		●	●	●		●
Placing Students in Writing Classes: One University's Experience With a Modified Version of Directed Self Placement	Balay and Nelson (2012)		●	●		Correlations	●	●	●		●
Assessing the Validity of Directed Self-Placement at a Large University	Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter (2010)		●	●	●	Validity assessment	●	●	●	●	●
Self-Assessment as Programmatic Center: The First Year Writing Program and Its Assessment at California State University, Fresno	Inoue (2009)				●			●			●

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Source	Author(s) and Year of Publication	Discusses Math Placement	Discusses English Placement	Includes Sample Placement Tools (questionnaires, etc.)	Student Makes Final Placement Decision	Type of Analysis	Includes Quantitative Analyses	Descriptive Study	Case Study	Includes Review of Literature	Includes Survey
Self-Placement at a Distance: Challenge and Opportunities	Jones (2008)		●	●	●		●	●	●		●
Informed Self-Placement" at American River College: A Case Study	Felder, Finney, and Kirst (2007)	●		●			●	●			
Informed Self-Placement: Is a Choice Offered a Choice Received?	Bedore and Rossen-Knill (2004)		●	●	●	Focus groups			●		●
Directed Self-Placement in the University	Blakesley (2003)		●		●						
Southern Illinois University Carbondale as an Institutional Model: The English 100/101 Stretch and Directed Self-Placement Program	Blakesley, Harvey, and Reynolds (2003)		●	●	●			●			●
Introducing Directed Self-Placement to Kutztown University	Chernekoff (2003)		●	●	●	Qualitative interviews		●	●		●
The Case of a Small Liberal Arts University: Directed Self-Placement at Depauw	Cornell and Newton (2003)		●	●	●	Correlations	●	●			●
Directed Self-Placement at a Large Research University: A Writing Center Perspective	Frus (2003)		●	●	●						
Responding to Directed Self-Placement	Neal and Huot (2003)		●		●					●	

(continued)

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Source	Author(s) and Year of Publication	Discusses Math Placement	Discusses English Placement	Includes Sample Placement Tools (questionnaires, etc.)	Student Makes Final Placement Decision	Type of Analysis	Includes Quantitative Analyses	Descriptive Study	Case Study	Includes Review of Literature	Includes Survey
Directed Self-Placement at Belmont University: Sharing Power, Forming Relationships, Fostering Reflections	Pinter and Sims (2003)		●	●	●				●		●
The Role of Self-Efficacy in Writing and Directed Self-Placement	Reynolds (2003)		●		●						
The Pragmatist Foundations of Directed Self-Placement	Royer and Gilles (2003)		●		●						
Directed Self-Placement in a Community College Context	Tompkins (2003)		●		●				●		
Self-Assessment in Second Language Testing: A Meta-Analysis and Analysis of Experiential Factors	Ross (1998)		●			Validity assessment	●				
Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation	Royer and Gilles (1998)		●	●	●			●	●		

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