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DATE: May 29, 2020
TO: Community College Presidents
FROM: Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director
SUBJECT: **Applying the Final Placement Recommendations for Placement in the Fall of 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

All community colleges have been engaged in implementing aspects of the [Final Placement Recommendations](#)¹ with more than two-thirds planning to implement fully by the fall of 2020. This guidance will expedite the adoption of specific aspects of these recommendations. This is due to challenges associated with a lack of standardized test scores, campus availability for placement testing in the spring, summer, and potentially the fall, the exacerbation of equity and access issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the acknowledgement that while learning loss is inevitable, this was through no fault of students.

Given this inevitable learning loss, it is appropriate that colleges put processes into place that can provide students with wrap-around services that can help reduce any learning losses due to the pandemic, thereby reducing the need for remediation. However, it is not appropriate to place students in remediation based simply upon a lack of a placement test, standardized test scores or a grade of a “P” in a course.

The current Final Placement recommendations provide for the use of a menu of options for placement. Given the general lack of standardized assessments and placement tests, the inequitable access to testing that is available, and the learning loss that is likely to affect any placement tests that are provided, the GPA is the best vehicle for accurately assessing the capability of a student to effectively complete credit bearing coursework in math and English. ***Thus, colleges should use the GPA in place of other assessments when other assessments are not available (or not easily accessible) or when GPA places the student out of remedial coursework.*** Given the challenges with completing placement tests in this current pandemic environment, students should have the option to provide their GPA to community colleges, in lieu of placement tests. Further, such GPA assessments should be made without consideration to any “P” grades awarded during the spring 2020 semester, if the college currently utilizes these in GPA calculations and such utilization would place students below the required threshold for entry into credit bearing courses.

The final placement recommendations state the following as it relates to GPA and its use. These GPA scores are an important proxy for college readiness.

1. High school cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher on an unweighted 4.0 scale for placement into college-level English.
2. High school cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher on an unweighted 4.0 scale with a successful completion of a 4th year of math for placement into college-level Math.

¹ Recommendations of the Illinois Community College Chief Academic Officers (ICCAO) & Illinois Community College Chief Student Services Officers (ICCSSO) on Placement Methods and Scores.

Furthermore, the Final Placement Recommendations state: “A college may require students to be engaged in additional support activities, consistent with college policy. Such additional activities shall in no way infringe upon the student’s ability to enroll in college-level courses.” ICCB encourages colleges to utilize this option to help students meet any additional competencies that might have been lost or not addressed as a result of the pandemic. This is not the same as enrolling said students in a remedial course. Support activities could consist of taking advantage of embedded tutoring, completing (ungraded) learning modules via a learning support center, attending appointments virtually in a writing or math center setting, or other ungraded activities that will support student success.