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Mapping the Terrain: Language Testing and Placement for US-Educated Language Minority Students in California's Community Colleges [FULL REPORT]

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MAPPING THE TERRAIN
Language Testing and Placement for US-Educated Language Minority Students in California's Community Colleges

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As both the United States and California face a shortage of college-educated workers, increasing attention has turned to the role of community colleges in expanding the number of Americans who earn higher education degrees and certificates. Yet the importance of community colleges goes beyond calculations of the total number of workers that will need to be educated to sustain our economy. Because their open enrollment policies provide potential access to higher education for groups that have long been underprepared by K-12 schools—and underrepresented in higher education--community colleges also play a potentially vital role in reducing the disparity in educational attainment between racial and ethnic groups (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). Nationwide, two thirds of all Latino students beginning postsecondary education do so in community colleges (Solórzano et al., 2005), and almost half of all Asian and Pacific Islander students attend community colleges, including many whose low academic achievement is masked by higher aggregated success rates for Asian Americans as a whole (Lew et al., 2005; US Government Accountability Office, 2007). In California, 75% of all first-time Latino, African American, and American Indian college students enroll in community colleges, as do 45% of first-time Asian American college students (Woodlief, Thomas, & Orozco, 2003).

Yet in California, only a small percentage of students who enter community colleges hoping to transfer to a four-year institution or complete a terminal degree or certificate do so, and there are significant disparities in success rates among racial and ethnic groups (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006; Moore & Shulock, 2007, 2010). In a state where over half of all public K-12 schoolchildren are Hispanic, and fewer than one third are White (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010, p. 29), the educational fate of traditionally underserved students represents a mainstream concern. As Patricia Gándara and Frances Contreras have pointed out with regard to Latino students, "never before have we been faced with a population group on the verge of becoming the majority in significant portions of the country that is also the lowest performing academically" (2009, p. 18). As educators, policymakers, and researchers focus on preparation, access, and success in community colleges, it is essential to focus on the needs of particularly vulnerable student populations, especially in terms of the institutional barriers they confront in pursuing academic and professional goals, and the impact of policies and instructional practices on their progress.

This report shines light on community college policies and practices impacting students from one particular population that has often been "overlooked and underserved" (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000): students from immigrant and language minority backgrounds who have attended US secondary schools and who enroll in community colleges in hopes of continuing their education. Forty percent of all California K-12 students come from homes where English is not the primary language, and one in four is classified as an English Learner, the state's designation for students in need of English language support (EdSource, 2008; Rumberger, 2007). Although data on students' language background is not collected by the state, there is no doubt, given the dominant role of community colleges in providing access to higher education for California's linguistically and culturally diverse students, that students from language minority backgrounds represent a sizable portion of the state's community college population.

When they reach postsecondary education, students from language minority backgrounds are sometimes called "Generation 1.5," because they do not fit the typical linguistic profiles of either native-born English speakers or of other groups of students learning English, including recently arrived immigrants, older adults who have lived in the US for a number of years, and international students planning to return to their countries of origin (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009). However, due to the tendency for the label "Generation 1.5" to be used to highlight students' linguistic deficits and downplay their resources and potential, in this report we use the term *US-educated language minority students* (US-LM students), defined as students who were raised in homes where English was not the dominant language, who have attended US high schools, and whose English proficiency at the community college level has been flagged as non-native by faculty, staff, or assessment measures. While US-LM students have been characterized as having relatively fluent speaking skills compared with more recent immigrants and international students, they may have less of a foundation in academic language and literacy skills, both in English and in their first languages, due to inequitable educational opportunities in their countries of origin and in US schools.

Our research explores language-related policies, practices, and instructional options that US-LM students encounter as they matriculate into California community colleges, how this information is communicated to students, and how college personnel perceive of these students and their needs (see also Bunch, 2008, 2009; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). In this report, we discuss findings from an analysis of matriculation-related information on 25 college websites; interviews with over 50 faculty members, counselors, matriculation personnel, and administrators at 10 subset colleges throughout the state; and site visits at 5 focal colleges. An accompanying report, *What's in a Test?* (Llosa & Bunch, 2011), describes and analyzes the most widely used community college ESL and English placement tests and discusses implications for their use with US-LM students. A third report, forthcoming, will document innovative testing, placement, and instructional practices that hold promise for meeting the needs of language minority students in community colleges. While many of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations are relevant for students from other minority backgrounds, or even community college students in general, others apply specifically to US-LM students.

The testing and placement process in community colleges represents high stakes, especially for first-generation college students, linguistic and cultural minorities, and academically underprepared students. This process, known as "matriculation" in the California community college system, often results in students' assignment to ESL or English courses that typically do not earn credits toward a degree, certificate, or transfer to four-year colleges and universities, and that serve as prerequisites to credit-bearing English course(s) required for completing these goals. Such courses are variably known as "precollegiate," "developmental," "remedial," and "basic skills." Although students in California community colleges can enroll in a variety of content courses while they complete the prerequisites for college-level English, ESL and remedial English courses often demand a large percentage of students' course time and therefore make concurrent course-taking difficult (Grubb, 1999). Given the financial and personal impact of enrolling in courses that do not grant credit toward a degree or transfer, students facing multiple semesters of basic skills work often abandon their academic aspirations altogether (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010).

Ideally, the placement process identifies what students are able to do in English and steers them toward the instructional environments that hold the most promise for

them to complete their academic goals. At the same time, *mis*placement can have a profound impact on students' academic pathways. Students with low levels of English language proficiency may be inappropriately placed in regular courses that feature no understanding or support for their language needs, little opportunity for them to improve their English, and a high likelihood of failing the courses. On the other hand, students who might be successful in regular developmental English courses or even college-level English courses, especially if those courses feature some support for linguistically diverse students, may be steered toward ESL classrooms that delay their progress toward required English courses and separate them from the environments in which they might have greater opportunity to improve their English and academic skills.

In California, a number of regulations govern various aspects of the matriculation process (see California Community College Assessment Association [CCCAA], 2005; Chancellor's Office, 1998; Shulock and Moore, 2007), including the selection and validation of placement instruments, the use of multiple measures in the assessment process, and how students can challenge the imposition of course prerequisites. However, the enactment and enforcement of the regulations are complicated by decentralized authority in California's community college system, a strong history and culture of local college autonomy, and the state's frequent budgetary crises (EdSource, 2010; Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine, 2010). As we completed our research, funding for California community colleges continued to deteriorate, with direct impact on matriculation policies and services. Due to funding cuts, soon after the completion of our data collection, the state legislature excused community colleges and districts from adhering to many state matriculation regulations. Even before the matriculation regulations were suspended, we found that colleges varied widely in the amount of support provided to students during the matriculation process and in the ways in which the regulations were enacted.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Despite the Linguistic Diversity of the State's Population, US-Educated Language Minority Students are Neither Identified nor Well Understood in California's Community Colleges

Given the increasing linguistic diversity of the state's population, it is incumbent upon *all* personnel who work with students in California community colleges to understand the linguistic and cultural resources that US-LM students bring with them, the challenges these students' face navigating testing and placement, and the implications of various instructional options on their language and literacy development and academic progress. Such understanding is particularly important in light of state and national movements toward common core standards in K-12 schools, and the need to prepare all students for college and career readiness. Yet despite the fact that almost half of California's K-12 students have grown up in homes where languages other than English are dominant, we found that there is little awareness of this population among community college personnel outside of ESL and English instructors. Meanwhile, among faculty and staff members who are aware of the population, there is little agreement regarding students' characteristics and needs. Little research has focused on the US-LM population, due in part to the difficulties inherent in identifying the population. Better means of identifying US-LM students are necessary in order to document their progress through coursework and attainment of degrees, certificates, and transfer. However,

identification of these students is not sufficient in the absence of rethinking the instructional options available to them.

Although they have been subjected to an inferior education by California's public K-12 school system, students from language minority backgrounds bring with them a wealth of linguistic, personal, and cultural resources, developed through negotiating different languages and cultures and navigating a range of social and economic challenges associated with their experiences as immigrants and children of immigrants (Valdés, 2003; Yosso, 2005). When recognized and valued, these multilingual and multicultural resources can be built upon by educators and institutions to support US-LM students in pursuing their educational goals and in realizing students' potential civic and economic contribution in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural society. US-LM students can be viewed as fully functioning bilinguals whose language, like that of all bilinguals, may deviate from that of monolingual speakers of English but who are able to use each of their languages effectively for a variety of purposes. Limitations in what bilinguals can do in *one* of their languages for any single purpose are to be expected as normal features of bilingualism, not as an indication that they lack proficiency in *any* language (see Valdés & Figueroa, 1994).

We found that while some college personnel view US-LM students as developing bilinguals and focus on how they might support US-LM students' linguistic and academic development by capitalizing on their linguistic, cultural, and experiential resources, others emphasized how these students' language deviated from monolingual norms or how they lacked the kinds of backgrounds and experiences common among students from more dominant groups. Given this latter orientation, it is not surprising that some colleges respond by placing US-LM students in multi-semester ESL or remedial English sequences, in an effort to prepare them to enter the academic mainstream.

Yet people learn to use language for particular audiences and purposes by having access to settings in which such language is used, opportunities to interact with others using it, and support in helping to realize how particular features of language are important for particular contexts (Gutiérrez, 1995; Hawkins, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004). It is essential, therefore, to envision support for language development that is integrated with, rather than separated from, opportunities for academic development. While efforts are underway in both ESL and English departments at some colleges to move toward such integration, other colleges maintain remedial approaches that attempt to teach skills such as sentence-writing, paragraph-writing, and even essay-writing in isolation from engagement in authentic academic or professional endeavors. Such decontextualized language and literacy instruction is unlikely to prepare students for the kinds of competencies required to succeed in college-level work.

Colleges Employ Different Strategies to Steer US-LM Students Toward Either ESL or Remedial English Placement Tests and Course Sequences, yet "ESL vs. English?" May Be the Wrong Question to Ask

For language minority students who have lived in the US for several years, attended US secondary schools, and completed some of their academic work in English, it is not self-evident whether an ESL or regular English course of study is most appropriate. Yet we found that US-LM students often receive little guidance to help them make informed decisions regarding whether to take an ESL or English placement test, a

high-stakes decision because at many colleges which test a student elects to take results in being assigned to that particular program, regardless of the score on the test.

ESL and English faculty express different viewpoints regarding whether the US-LM population is generally better served in ESL or remedial English courses. Discussions at the colleges we studied regarding whether US-LM students should be placed into ESL or remedial English courses often focus on *linguistic* or *remedial literacy* pathways, highlighting the discrete language and literacy skills US-LM students are lacking and which program might do a better job of teaching those skills. In contrast, the ESL vs. English decision is rarely discussed in terms of students' *academic* pathways, for example whether ESL or English courses are better serving US-LM students in their progression toward completing precollegiate courses and progressing toward the completion of their academic goals.

Some colleges make a concerted effort to steer US-LM students toward ESL tests and courses. These efforts take many forms: website information that seeks to attract students to ESL courses based on questions about their language use among friends and co-workers; on-line publicity about the benefits of ESL (often without suggesting any liabilities); and the use of branching mechanisms on one commercially available placement test that can result in students' taking an ESL placement test without their prior knowledge or consent. Such practices warrant further investigation, given concerns discussed elsewhere in this report surrounding the appropriateness of some forms of ESL instruction for supporting the academic goals of US-LM students and the fact that ESL course sequences are typically longer than precollegiate English sequences.

Ultimately, however, "ESL vs. English?" might be the wrong question to ask. A more appropriate question might be, "to what extent are the curricula and instruction *within* ESL and remedial English programs conducive to facilitating US-LM students' academic language and literacy development as well as their academic progress toward degrees, certificates, and transfer?" In most colleges we studied, neither ESL nor remedial English courses appeared to be designed with the academic or career goals of US-LM students in mind. Several colleges are working to change this. Two are involved in initiatives designed to learn more about the population. At a third, the ESL department has centered its entire program around the preparation of students for the academic mainstream, an orientation likely to support the goals of many US-LM students.

Colleges' different responses to the linguistic and academic needs of US-LM students are associated with different assumptions about language learners, bilingualism, and the development of academic language and literacy. The different responses are also related to different assumptions about remediation more generally. The orientation of some faculty members can be summed up in the words of one instructor regarding the placement of US-LM students: "when in doubt, always go lower." In contrast, many counselors, and some instructors, worried about the implications of such a stance for students' long-term academic success, given the typical length of ESL and remedial English course sequences, the obstacles students face while moving through those sequences, and the danger of attrition the longer students must enroll in courses that do not bear credit toward certificates, degrees, or transfer (Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010).

Multiple Measures that Could Prove Useful for Placing and Instructing US-LM Students Are Often Unavailable, Unsolicited, or Underutilized

One of the fundamental principles of testing in educational settings is that no single test should be used for high stakes decisions (American Education Research Association, 2000; American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999), and the use of multiple measures for placement in community colleges is mandated by California state policy. Particularly for US-LM students, who may perform poorly on placement tests that focus primarily on grammar skills but may be able to fulfill many language functions in English, additional assessment practices are necessary. Ideally, multiple measures and conversations with counselors can inform placement by providing a more complete picture of students' language strengths and needs and of their academic backgrounds and goals. Yet we found wide variation regarding the ways in which multiple measures are (or, in some cases, are not) used in California's community colleges.

The extent to which counselors are allowed to use their "professional judgment" to override placement exam recommendations was criticized at some colleges, especially by faculty members who feel they themselves have little role in the matriculation process and that their own professional judgment is not valued. However, we found that multiple measures at several colleges are only used when students indicate a desire to challenge their placements, meaning that for the vast majority of students no measures are used beyond a single test score. At other colleges, multiple measures consist solely of "points" added to or subtracted from placement test results based on questions added to the test. At most colleges, it is students' responsibility to provide any additional data they wished to be used for placement purposes. Yet often little or no information is made available to students regarding what can be submitted or how it will be used. Relying on language minority students to investigate and navigate the multiple measures process with minimal information and guidance is likely to deny colleges potentially helpful sources of additional information and limits students' ability to advocate for themselves during the matriculation process.

At the same time, potential sources of K-12 data that could be useful for making placement decisions about US-LM students, such as students' K-12 assessment scores and classification as English learners (EL) or Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP), are either unavailable to or unused by community colleges. As a result, students who might be able to use such measures in conjunction with the placement test to demonstrate their ability to use English effectively for academic purposes have little opportunity to do so.

Access to Comprehensive--and Comprehensible-- Information About Policies, Practices, and Stakes Relevant to Testing, Placement, and Instructional Options Is Essential for US- LM Students, Yet Colleges Vary in the Amount and Quality of Information Made Available

Given the stakes involved, information about the testing and placement process is essential, especially for US-LM students and others who may be unfamiliar with testing and placement procedures, as well as how to navigate higher education more generally. Yet we found that colleges vary widely in the amount and quality of information provided to students. Some colleges provide clear and useful information regarding such areas as the stakes of the matriculation process, the tests used, and the challenge procedure. In contrast, other colleges provide little or no such information, or they provide information

that is either difficult to comprehend or presented in a manner likely to discourage students from using it.

A range of assumptions about US-LM students and other underprepared students is evident in how policies and practices are communicated to students. On one end of the spectrum are policies, practices, and messages that assume students will, in the words of one of our interviewees, "cheat the system" whenever possible. The underlying assumption is often that students cannot be trusted, and that they will consistently attempt to make their way into higher level courses even if unprepared for them. We found that some colleges make it very difficult for students to take placement tests more than once, limit information on websites about the challenge process to what is technically required for them to disclose, and make the challenge process as difficult as possible for students to pursue.

Faculty members, counselors, and staff at several colleges pointed out that US-LM students, along with other students from non-dominant backgrounds, rarely challenge the results of the placement process, and that typically only White and middle-class students who already have large amounts of social and cultural capital do so. A contrasting set of assumptions presumes that students should be agents in their own education and, when equipped with high-quality information and guidance, can be trusted to make reasonable decisions regarding their academic futures.

Adequate Funding for Matriculation and Counseling is Essential for Colleges to Meet US-LM Students' Needs, Yet Funding Alone is Not Sufficient.

Clearly, community college policies and practices related to testing and placement are constrained by limited financial resources, which for several years have been insufficient to adequately fund orientation and counseling services (Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 2008). Financial concerns influence decisions regarding which placement tests colleges adopt, and such concerns are probably one reason for the fact that a low-cost ESL test not even initially designed for use in academic programs is the most commonly used ESL test statewide (see *What's in a Test,* Llosa & Bunch, 2011; as well as Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). Many faculty members, backed by what is known about best practices in writing assessment (e.g., Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee on Assessment, 2006), advocate for the use of writing samples in the placement process. Yet these same instructors report that their colleges cannot afford either the expense of computer-scored essay tests or the cost of hiring faculty or others to score writing by hand.

Retesting policies are also impacted by financial concerns: Retesting costs colleges staff time, facilities, and per-test charges by testing companies. Meanwhile, the limited availability of spaces in classes plays a crucial role in placement decisions, as exemplified by one English faculty member we interviewed who gave up the practice of recommending more appropriate placements to students during the first week of class because there were rarely spaces available in any of those classes.

Funding cuts for community colleges, especially for matriculation and counseling services, result is disproportionate negative impact on those already disadvantaged. Those who have greater social and cultural capital will continue to use it, and those with less capital will have fewer means by which to catch up. At the same time, funding alone will not create more equitable and effective policies and practices. Rather, as we argue

below, a wide variety of changes must be made related to the education of language minority students in California community colleges.

Recommendations in Brief

A. Transparent information about current matriculation policies and instructional options is essential for US-LM students to make informed decisions about their own education.

Language minority students and others inexperienced with higher education bureaucracies face significant challenges understanding and navigating California's community college testing and placement system. Unless concerted efforts are made to provide all students with high quality, transparent information, along with policies that allow them some agency in their own education, the same patterns of inequality that have placed many students in a marginalized position in the first place will be replicated.

Recommendation A1. *Colleges, with the support of other stakeholders, should communicate transparently and comprehensibly with US-LM students about policies and practices related to testing and placement, and about the stakes involved.*

Colleges should provide clear, accessible, and transparent information to students regarding the purposes and stakes associated with the assessment and placement process, as well as how to navigate each step of the process. Students should have access to information about the format, content, and constructs of the placement tests used at each college, including sample questions and test preparation materials. Students also need explicit information regarding how placement tests will be used, what course sequences students might be placed into as a result of testing, and whether those courses earn credit toward degrees, certificates, or transfer. *All* students (not only those who indicate dissatisfaction with their initial placements) should be made aware of what kind of additional information they can provide to be used as multiple measures, and they should have clear and transparent information about how they can challenge the initial results of the placement process. Colleges should endeavor to make this information as "student-friendly" as possible, avoiding the use of incomprehensible or intimidating bureaucratic language.

Much of this information could be provided to students as early as high school (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010). In order to facilitate this process, community college personnel should educate high school students, teachers, counselors, and administrators about community college testing and placement procedures relevant to US-LM students. Such efforts could also be facilitated by streamlining the number of placement tests used statewide.

At community colleges themselves, information about testing and placement should be made accessible to students upon their first encounters with the college, and it is crucial that the state adequately fund counseling services. Until such funding is secured, colleges will have to use as many means as possible to educate students, including larger group orientation sessions, print media, and online outreach through websites and social networking outlets. In order to assist college personnel in learning about other colleges' successful outreach efforts, the Chancellor's office, Basic Skills Initiative, and private foundations could support an effort to develop sample "best practices" website templates and intake materials for colleges to use to help students

make informed choices. Another potential tool for communicating with large numbers of students at a relatively modest cost could be CCCAssess, the student assessment data warehousing project discussed in the Introduction to the full report. One proposed feature of CCCAssess is a portal for students to access information about placement tests, matriculation policies and practices, and perhaps even data about success rates in various courses by students with similar assessment results as their own.

Recommendation A2. *Colleges should clarify for students, in a balanced way, the difference between ESL and remedial English, the stakes of choosing one over the other, and the potential consequences for future course enrollments.*

As US-LM students decide whether to take ESL or English placement tests, a decision which often determines which sequence they will be placed in, they need to know something about the goals of each program, the course sequences involved, and the potential consequences of being placed in either program. As is the practice at some colleges, students could be encouraged to preview sample questions from the ESL and English placement tests and, preferably with guidance, make a decision as to which test to take. Another possibility might be for colleges to encourage some US-LM students to take both the ESL and English placement tests and then, again with guidance, to consider the relative merits of the assigned placement in each program. In communicating with students about the ESL and regular English options, it is important for colleges to be forthright about the relative merits and drawbacks of each option for US-LM students. If the stigma associated with ESL by US-LM students is as strong as many of the faculty and counselors we interviewed implied, then it will not be overcome by mere "advertisements" for the benefits of ESL that do not deal frankly with the potential drawbacks for this population.

B. Testing, placement, and instructional policies and practices must promote access to and success in *academic* pathways by US-LM students.

We found that community college staff and faculty at many colleges view assessment and placement as a way to ensure that US-LM students are provided with the "building blocks" (e.g., correct grammar, sentence skills, and paragraph formation) perceived as necessary to prepare students for future academic instruction. Yet while it is certainly appropriate to focus on such areas as part of the instruction provided to US-LM students, such support must be part of larger efforts to foster academic pathways for students, rather than ends in and of themselves. That is, the diagnosis and treatment of discrete language and literacy problems needs to be contextualized in the promotion of academic language and literacy. Such efforts require collecting and analyzing data about students' progress toward completing their academic goals.

Recommendation B1. *The Board of Governors, the Chancellor's Office, and local colleges and districts should promote the use of student success data for high-stakes practices such as those establishing prerequisites for college-level courses.*

The Board of Governors should exercise caution in considering proposed changes aimed at making it easier to establish English and mathematics prerequisites for college-level courses in other content areas. The proposal currently before the Board of Governors to allow faculty to use "content review" alone instead of statistical validation to establish English, ESL, and mathematics prerequisites for courses in other disciplines would raise the stakes of the matriculation process even higher than they are now. Given

the problems with the matriculation processes documented in this study, which was conducted even before the suspension of many state matriculation regulations due to the budget crisis, it is difficult to imagine sufficient student safeguards being put in place to mitigate the increased stakes involved with the proposed changes. Underfunding of counseling and matriculation services has resulted in widespread variation in the extent to which these policies are implemented at local colleges. Even before colleges were relieved from some matriculation regulations as a result of the current budget crisis, we found that at most colleges multiple measures were unevenly applied and students had little access to information about the testing and placement process or the stakes involved.

Meanwhile, recent research has questioned the effectiveness of remedial education for preparing students for college-level courses (see Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010). If statistical validation is no longer required for the establishment of prerequisites, other research will be essential to ensure that there is indeed a relationship between the new, content-review-established prerequisite requirements and students' ability to succeed in particular courses. Similarly, research will be needed to measure the overall impact of the proposed regulatory changes on students' success in pursuing their academic goals, especially for language minority students and other minorities underrepresented in higher education.

Recommendation B2. Colleges should investigate and document the impact of retesting and the challenge process on students' academic success.

A wide range of current practices at some colleges discourages retesting (e.g., by requiring long waiting periods; requiring administrative approval; using lowest instead of highest scores; and, in apparent contradiction with state policy, charging fees). Colleges should investigate the impact of such policies on students' ability to progress toward their academic goals. Colleges' own institutional data could be used for this purpose. For example, researchers at one college we visited found that, upon taking the mathematics placement test a second time, almost three-quarters of students placed into a higher-level course, and these students completed and passed the resulting course at higher rates than other students in the same course. The college is currently studying the results of English retesting on student success.

Recommendation B3. Colleges, with support of other stakeholders, should move beyond the "ESL vs. English" debate to focus on how a wide variety of instructional environments, within and beyond ESL and English courses, can be improved to foster the development of students' academic language and literacy and their preparation for college-level coursework.

Colleges, with the support of the Chancellor's office, private foundations, and research enterprises, need to develop, implement, and document the results of efforts in both ESL and English programs, as well as in other areas, to design instructional opportunities that offer what Valdés (2004) has called "support without marginalization." Such approaches (whether in ESL courses, English courses, courses designed specifically for US-LM students, or other approaches such as learning communities that give students access to college-level coursework) can integrate language development and academic preparation. These approaches focus on the development of academic language and literacy, and they create opportunities for language minority students to use such language and literacy in more authentic settings. Because it is impossible to measure the potential success of US-LM students in courses

to which they have never had access, flexibility in placement practices will be required in order for the outcomes of different instructional options for US-LM students to be studied.

Recommendation B4. *Colleges, with support from the Chancellor's office and outside foundations and researchers, should develop, implement, and research the efficacy of instructional programs that seek to accelerate US-LM students' progress toward college-level coursework.*

At most of the colleges in our sample, many US-LM students face multiple course sequences in either ESL or remedial English before reaching college-level courses. Many faculty members expressed faith in such sequences to remediate students appropriately, yet recent reviews of the research show that remedial coursework has produced "mixed results at best" for the general student population (Bailey, 2009, p. 3; see also Bailey et al., 2010). It is likely that US-LM students are in particular need of courses that provide the integration of language and content in academically rigorous curricula. At the minimum, both ESL and developmental English courses must include a focus on academic language and literacy *throughout* course sequences, even at the earliest levels, instead of restricting courses to basic grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development. Another possibility is to accelerate students' progress by placing more students who score on the borderline between precollegiate and college-level courses directly into college-level courses, and to provide them additional support within or alongside those courses (see Bailey, 2009). Other options include the creation of shorter and more challenging pre-collegiate sequences, as well as learning communities in which students take developmental coursework while also enrolled in credit-bearing, college-level coursework. The efficacy of all such initiatives must be researched, both for students in general and US-LM students in particular.

C. Throughout the community college system, a better understanding is needed of the backgrounds, characteristics, needs, and academic progress of US-LM students.

Given that almost half of California's public school students have grown up in families where English is not the dominant language, US-LM students do not represent a fringe group, of interest only to those who specialize in ESL or second-language education. Instead, language minority students must be considered in discussions surrounding policy and practice, both at the state level and in individual colleges. One English instructor we interviewed put it this way: "These students are kind of invisible to our campus. And yet, they're most of our students. How can this be the majority population and be invisible?" This statement echoes calls by some researchers to consider language minority students, along with other students from non-dominant and marginalized backgrounds, as the "new mainstream" (Enright, in press).

Recommendation C1. State policy makers, the Chancellor's office, colleges and districts, and K-12 officials should work together to strengthen the availability and use of multiple measures, including those from K-12, both for placing US-LM students and for supporting them once placed.

Given the relatively narrow range of language proficiency measured by ESL and English placement tests (see *What's in a Test*?, Llosa & Bunch, 2011), additional information is necessary, including data from the K-12 system, in order to appropriately

place and support US-LM students. Most US-LM students in California community colleges have done at least some of their K-12 schooling in California public schools, which uses a single assessment system, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), along with a statewide system for classifying students as English learners and reclassifying them as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP). This system uses the CELDT, the mainstream California Standards Test (CST), and teacher input. Yet we found that colleges rarely use K-12 data in the placement process, and we found no examples of colleges using students' K-12 language proficiency levels, English learner classification, or CELDT scores for this purpose.

One promising avenue that does not require access to additional data or extensive training of community college personnel is the Early Assessment Program (EAP), in which augmented 11th Grade standards tests can be used to exempt students who are prepared for college-level coursework from the testing and placement process (Kirst, 2010; Perry, Bahr, Rosin, & Woodward, 2010, p. 90). This initiative, used by the California State University system and currently being piloted by several colleges, could save institutions the expense of testing and placing already-prepared students. It could also save students time and reduce the likelihood of their being misplaced into unneeded remedial courses.

Recommendation C2. The Chancellor's office, institutional researchers in colleges and districts, and researchers outside the community college system should conduct more extensive research on US-LM students' linguistic and academic needs, and on their progress through course sequences.

Beyond additional sources of information to be used for placement purposes, more research is needed, both by colleges and outside research organizations, on the characteristics, needs, and progress of US-LM students. If such information is not currently available, community colleges and K-12 systems need to work together to make it accessible. Additionally, data documenting students' progress from high school into, through, and beyond community college should be used. Efforts by consortia such as CalPASS to facilitate the sharing of relevant data should be encouraged. Other efforts, such as unified data systems (Vernez, Krop, Vuollo, & Hansen, 2008), should also be supported to improve the quality and accessibility of data that can be used to measure student progress, both overall and through different course sequences.

Recommendation C3. College faculty, counselors, staff, and researchers inside and outside the community college system should solicit students' input to inform policy and practice.

A limitation of much research on community college policy and practice, including our own, is the lack of student voices.[1] Students should be included in discussions and decision making about the assessment and placement process and the use of pre-requisites and other gate-keeping mechanisms. Students should also be included in campus discussions related to curriculum and program design. Speaking directly with students, whether it be as part of informal inquiries by faculty groups or more formal research, is important to help unpack the causes of the "ESL stigma" described to us by faculty and staff. Although the origins of the stigma may be traced to US-LM students' K-12 experiences, there may also be contributing factors at community

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[1] One exception is recent interviews conducted by Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine (2010) documenting the perspectives of students on navigating the matriculation process at a number of California community colleges.

colleges themselves. Efforts to make ESL more attractive to US-LM students, such as adopting a name other than ESL, should be accompanied by more substantive changes that draw on students' perceptions and address their concerns.

Recommendation C4. All responsible parties (the Chancellor's office, Basic Skills Initiative, local colleges and districts, and partners such as private foundations and research organizations) must work together to create opportunities for educating community college faculty, counselors, staff, and administrators about the characteristics, strengths, and needs of US- LM students, the nature of bilingualism, and how to create optimal conditions for students' academic and language development.

Given the wide range of conceptions—and misconceptions—held by community college personnel about bilingualism and US-LM students, efforts are needed to better inform faculty, staff, and counselors about these students and about the high stakes of language testing for them. These efforts need to include ESL, basic skills, and college-level English faculty; mainstream disciplinary faculty; career and technical education faculty; counselors; matriculation staff; and administrators. Matriculation and assessment staff members need to know more about the US-LM population in general. Community college faculty and staff should be specifically educated about K-12 curricula, tests, language proficiency designations, and the reclassification process for language minority students. In addition, faculty should explore ways to integrate academic language and content for US-LM students, both in precollegiate courses and college-level courses. Finally, institutional researchers and others should study the impact of different courses and course sequences on the academic progress of language minority students.

D. All stakeholders involved in the education of US-LM students should simultaneously (a) continue to advocate for adequate state funding for community colleges and (b) explore costs and benefits of potential money-saving testing, placement, and instructional practices and policies.

Given the crucial role that community colleges play in the education of the state's most vulnerable students, as well as their role in educating demographic groups that collectively represent the state's majority population, adequate funding for community colleges is essential and provides long-term benefits to the state. For example, services such as counseling are expensive in the short term but represent a long-term investment for students, colleges, and, ultimately, the public. Therefore, efforts must continue to advocate for adequate funding. At the same time, colleges, districts, and the system as a whole must explore reforms that could simultaneously strengthen student success and save costs, either in the short term or long term. Although an economic cost-benefit analysis of these proposals was beyond the scope of this study, potential cost savings associated with several of the recommendations mentioned earlier are worth exploring:

- The Early Assessment Program, in which high school students demonstrate readiness for college-level English and mathematics courses, could save colleges the cost of testing and placing these students once they get to community college.

- The central warehouse for assessment data (CCCAssess) could save colleges the costs of providing their own placement tests; result in overall efficiencies on the part of the system through negotiating a systemwide contract with vendors; and provide college researchers, faculty, and students with a low-cost source of data.

- Directed self-placement could be less expensive than using commercially developed placement tests. According to matriculation officials at the one college in our sample that used self-placement for ESL, the practice has proven to be as valid as the test formerly used by the college.

- Given the enormous costs of remedial education, both for community colleges and students themselves (Bailey, 2009), it is likely that acceleration strategies could improve student success and reduce costs.

Similar efforts to simultaneously strengthen student success and save financial resources can be undertaken at the local college level as well. At one of the focal colleges in our study, staff and faculty members used student data to explore how they could better serve students and reduce costs. Working with their institutional researcher, they discovered that students who were enrolled only in ESL courses during any given semester had lower retention rates than other students. In response, the college has recently consolidated the ESL curriculum into fewer courses and units per course and counseled students to enroll in non-ESL courses while completing the ESL sequence. Although data are not yet available regarding student outcomes, the change exemplifies an effort to simultaneously reduce costs and improve student success.

INTRODUCTION

As both the United States and California face a shortage of college-educated workers, increasing attention has turned to the role of community colleges in expanding the number of Americans who earn higher education degrees and certificates. The Obama administration, which has set a goal of producing 5 million more graduates by the year 2020, has highlighted the importance of community colleges in these efforts, and policymakers, researchers, and private foundations are focusing attention on both the promise of community colleges and the challenges they face. The role of community colleges is particularly important in California, where recent estimates indicate that by 2025 the state's economy will require one million more college-educated workers than the state is on track to produce (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). Because the state's Master Plan for Higher Education reserves initial entry into its public four-year institutions (the University of California and California State University) to the top one-third of California's high-school graduates, the overwhelming majority of the state's population must access higher education through one of the state's 112 community colleges (Taylor, 2009). Community colleges also play a critical role in preparing students for "middle-skill jobs," those that require more than a high school diploma but less than a Bachelor's degree. In California, such positions currently represent almost half of all current jobs, and they will represent the majority of all future job openings (California EDGE Campaign, 2009).

Yet the importance of community colleges goes beyond calculations of the total number of workers that will need to be educated to sustain our economy. Because their open enrollment policies provide potential access to higher education for groups that have long been underprepared by K-12 schools and underrepresented in higher education, community colleges also play a vital role in reducing the disparities in educational attainment among racial and ethnic groups (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). Nationwide, two thirds of all Latino students beginning postsecondary education do so in community colleges (Solórzano et al., 2005), and almost half of all Asian and Pacific Islander students attend community colleges, including many whose low academic achievement is masked by higher aggregated success rates for Asian Americans as a whole (Lew et al., 2005; US Government Accountability Office, 2007). In California, 75% of all first-time Latino, African American, and American Indian college students enroll in community colleges, as do 45% of first-time Asian American college students (Woodlief, Thomas, & Orozco, 2003).

As policymakers and researchers focus on preparation, access, and success in community colleges, it is essential that attention be paid to the needs of particularly vulnerable student populations, the barriers they confront in pursuing academic and professional goals, and the impact of policies and institutional practices on their progress. In California, only a small percentage of students who enter community colleges either complete a terminal degree or transfer to a four-year institution, and there are significant disparities among racial and ethnic groups in both degree completion and transfer (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006; Moore & Shulock, 2007, 2010). These disparities are present from the earliest stages of community college attendance. For example, Latinos are underrepresented among students taking primarily transfer-level courses their first year and overrepresented among those taking basic skills and ESL (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). Only 17% of Latinos who enter California community colleges between the ages of 17 and 20 are successful in transferring (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006), and Latinos are under-represented in community college completion rates compared with other groups (Shulock & Moore, 2007, 2010).

The inequitable education of students from historically marginalized groups has long been cause for concern on ethical grounds, but demographic changes suggest that the

educational fate of traditionally underserved students is also rapidly becoming a mainstream issue. Between 1980 and 2008, the White population in the US declined from 80 percent to 66 percent of the total population, while the Hispanic population more than doubled, to 15 percent (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010, p. 29). In California, over half of all public schoolchildren are Hispanic, while fewer than one-third are White (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010, p. 29). As Patricia Gándara and Frances Contreras have pointed out regarding the education of Latinos in the United States, "never before have we been faced with a population group on the verge of becoming the majority in significant portions of the country that is also the lowest performing academically" (2009, p. 18). The education of today's "minority" students, therefore, is inextricably linked to the prospects for tomorrow's majority.

This report aims to shine light on community college policies and practices impacting students from one particular population that has often been "overlooked and underserved" (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000) at every level of education: students from immigrant and language minority backgrounds who have attended US secondary schools and enroll in community colleges in hopes of continuing their education. These students are sometimes called "Generation 1.5," because they do not fit the typical linguistic profiles of either native-born English-speakers or of other groups of students learning English, such as more recent immigrants, older adult immigrants who have lived in the US for a number of years, and international students planning to return to their countries of origin (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau, 2009). However, due to the tendency for the term Generation 1.5 to be used to highlight students' linguistic deficits instead of resources and potential, we prefer to use *US-educated language minority students* (US-LM students) to describe students who were raised in homes where English was not the dominant language, who have attended US high schools, and whose English at the community college level is considered "suspect" by faculty, staff, or assessment measures.[2]

Focus, Aims, and Design of the Study

In this report, we discuss language-related policies, practices, and instructional options that US-LM students encounter as they matriculate into California community colleges, how this information is communicated to students, and perceptions of these students among college personnel. While it is possible for US-LM students to be placed into college-level English courses upon entering the community college, many begin in "precollegiate" ESL or English courses (also known as "developmental," "basic skills," or "remedial,") that serve as prerequisites to credit-bearing English course(s) required for degrees, certificates, and transfer to four-year colleges and universities. US-LM students' placement into and progress through mathematics courses is also of critical importance for their academic success, but issues related to mathematics testing, placement, and instruction are outside the scope of this study (see Gifford & Thompson, 2009; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010; Valdés & Gifford, 2009).

Given its role in determining access to courses required for associate's degrees, professional certificates, and transfer to four-year colleges and universities, the placement process in community colleges represents high stakes, especially for first generation college students, linguistic and cultural minorities, and academically underprepared students (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Perry, Bahr, Rosin, & Woodward, 2010) Although the assessment process in California technically results in placement "recommendations" instead of requirements,

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[2] When we do use the term *Generation 1.5*, it is typically to describe comments by community college personnel when asked to describe and discuss their perceptions of students who fit that label.

students are generally not allowed to take ESL and English courses that have prerequisites for courses beyond the level students place into. Therefore, placement tests are of central importance in students' trajectories toward college-level English courses required for degrees, certificates, and transfer. As we will explore in more depth later in this introduction, there has been widespread concern in California about these policies and practices, both for students in general and language minority students in particular. While many of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations are relevant for students from other minority backgrounds, or even community college students in general, others apply specifically to US-LM students.

This report presents findings, conclusions, and recommendations from an analysis of 25 California community college websites; interviews with over 50 faculty members, counselors, matriculation personnel, and administrators at 10 colleges throughout the state; and site visits at 5 focal colleges. An accompanying report, *What's in a Test?* (Llosa & Bunch, 2011), describes and analyzes the most widely used community college ESL and English placement tests and discusses implications for their use with US-LM students. A forthcoming report will document innovative testing, placement, and instructional practices that hold promise for meeting the needs of language minority students in community colleges.

Our hope is that by mapping the terrain of current assessment and placement policies and practices in California community colleges relevant to US-LM students, we can inform current discussions among policy makers, practitioners, and the public; make recommendations for improving access to and success in higher education for this significant segment of the state's population; and initiate and facilitate conversations among college personnel interested in taking action for change.

US-Educated Language Minority Students in Community Colleges

California community colleges are not required to report information on the language backgrounds of their students, so the precise number of US-LM students in the system is impossible to obtain. However, we do know that the state's K-12 population, which feeds into the community college system, is linguistically diverse. Forty percent of all California school-children come from homes where English is not the primary language, and one in four K-12 students is classified as an English Learner, the state's designation for students in need of English language support (EdSource, 2008; Rumberger, 2007). Given the dominant role of community colleges in access to higher education in California, especially for minority students, it is reasonable to assume that US-LM students represent a sizable portion of the state's community college population.

Given the fact that California has a foreign-born population of almost 10 million people (Erisman & Looney, 2007), it is not surprising that its community college population is linguistically diverse (Woodlief, Thomas, & Orozco, 2003). Yet, contrary to popular images of "immigrants" or "ESL students," many students from language minority backgrounds in community colleges are not new to the US or to American education; instead, many immigrated with their parents a number of years ago and have done some, or even most, of their schooling in U.S. public schools. In fact, almost 60% of the state's 1.6 million K-12 English learners (EL) have been in US schools for more than 6 years (Olsen, 2010). Many of these students ultimately enter California's community colleges, as do their classmates from immigrant backgrounds who have been reclassified as fluent English proficient but whose language and literacy skills may still be considered inadequate for college-level academic work.

Although many California primary and secondary teachers are committed to educating the state's diverse student population, students classified as EL, when compared with their native-English-speaking peers, have inequitable access to quality K-12 educational opportunities. Even when compared with other minority and poor students, EL students are more likely to attend inferior schools as measured by a wide variety of indicators: qualifications and professional development of their teachers; availability of appropriate assessments; amount of instructional time provided; access to adequate textbooks, instructional materials, and curricula; and the physical condition of their classrooms and school facilities (Gándara et al., 2003; see also Olsen, 2010). English learners are also often placed into segregated or tracked secondary classrooms where opportunities for either linguistic or academic development are limited (Callahan, 2005; Harklau, 1994; Valdés, 1998, 2001).

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that although US-LM students have been characterized as having relatively fluent speaking skills compared with both international students and older adult immigrants, they may have less of a foundation in the academic content, language, and literacy typically expected for college-level work. Table 1 contrasts the different backgrounds, characteristics and needs of different types of speakers of languages other than English. Such a comparison oversimplifies the situation as there is great variation among students within each of the groups, but we present the comparison as an attempt to highlight some of the differences. Later, we discuss in more detail varying perceptions of US-LM students and the potential consequences of such perceptions.

In transitioning from US high schools to community colleges, US-LM students share many of the challenges faced by their native-English-speaking classmates. Most students, regardless of their language background, encounter academic expectations in higher education that are not aligned with their high school experiences (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Many students are assigned to classes that do not bear credit toward a terminal degree or transfer to a four-year college or university (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). And many do not understand the stakes involved in the testing and placement procedures (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010).

However, US-LM students face additional, language-related challenges in their attempts to pursue academic pathways in community colleges. Learning the academic language and literacy necessary to succeed in mainstream academic settings in English takes time (Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000) and access to opportunities to engage with such language and literacy in authentic academic settings (Gutiérrez, 1995). Yet English learners in K-12 schools, as pointed out above, have often had the *least* access to the conditions necessary to develop their language, literacy, and academic skills (Gándara et al., 2003; Olsen, 2010). Meanwhile, in addition to the challenges facing all students as they navigate community college testing and placement policies, US-LM students who cannot access college-level English courses face the prospect of studying either in ESL courses or remedial English courses, neither of which may be designed with their needs in mind.

Table 1
Experiences and Characteristics of Speakers of Languages Other than English

	International students	Recent and/or older immigrants	US-LM students
Educational background	Have often received strong education in home country. Sometimes have already completed college-level work in a variety of subjects before arriving in the US.	Widely varying quality and levels of K-12 education in home countries, from interrupted or incomplete education in primary and secondary schooling to very strong schooling in home languages.	Some or most of K-12 education in US schools, often with inequitable access to qualified teachers, materials, and schools; may have transitioned back and forth between schools in US and home countries.
Prior English Instruction/ Experience	Have studied English as a foreign language in formal classroom settings; may have little experience with the language in naturalistic settings	Formal study of English often limited to adult ESL classes focusing on basic grammar, vocabulary, and "survival" English; experience with English in workplace and community varies widely.	Most secondary coursework completed in English, either in mainstream or "sheltered" content-area classrooms; probably have studied in ESL classrooms at some point in schooling.
Characteristics	Often know formal English grammar rules and terminology; generally perform well on tests of English grammar and usage; strong academic skills transfer to work in English.	Wide range of oral English skills, depending on length of time in US and integration into English-speaking communities and workplaces. Wide range of academic language and literacy skills in first languages, depending on quality and level of education completed before immigrating to the US.	Strong English-language skills in speaking and listening; often exhibit native-like command of colloquial English; will have same range of academic reading and writing skills as monolingual English-speakers; may have second language influences in writing.

SOURCES: Valdés, Bunch, Snow, & Lee, 2005; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999

Testing and Placement for US-Educated Language Minority Students

While testing, placement, and instruction for students in college-level academic work has garnered much recent attention, both nationally (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2009) and California (e.g. EdSource, 2010; Moore & Shulock, 2007, 2010; Perry et al., 2010; Shulock & Moore, 2007; Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010), little of this work has focused specifically on language minority students (see Bunch, 2008, 2009; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). Yet the testing and placement process plays a particularly important role for language minority students transitioning from U.S. high schools into community colleges. Ideally, the placement process identifies what students are able to do in English and steers them toward the instructional environment(s) that hold the most promise for them to complete their academic goals. This instruction could conceivably be provided in ESL courses; in developmental courses in English departments; in regular, credit-bearing courses required for degrees and transfer (such as English 1A); in other settings such as through lab time or tutoring; or in some combination of the above.

Unfortunately, language testing, placement policies, and instructional programs at community colleges are seldom designed to respond to the characteristics and needs that distinguish language-minority students coming from US high schools from the more traditional groups served by community colleges; and *mis*placement can have a profound impact on students' academic pathways. On one hand, students with low levels of English language proficiency may be inappropriately placed in regular courses that feature no understanding or support for their language needs, little opportunity for them to improve their English, and a high likelihood of failing the course. This misplacement delays students' academic progress and increases the likelihood of their abandoning their goals.

In other cases, students who might be successful in regular developmental English courses or even college-level English courses, especially if those courses feature some support for linguistically diverse students, may be steered toward ESL classrooms that delay their progress toward required English courses and separate them from the environments in which they might have greater opportunity to improve their English and academic skills.

Although students in California community colleges can currently enroll in a variety of content courses while they complete the prerequisites for college-level English, both ESL and remedial English courses often demand a large percentage of students' course time and therefore make concurrent course-taking difficult (Grubb, 1999). As mentioned above, neither ESL nor remedial English courses are likely to bear credit toward either transfer or a terminal degree. Given the financial and personal impact of enrolling in courses that do not grant credit toward a degree or transfer, students facing multiple precollegiate courses may abandon their academic aspirations altogether (Bailey, 2009).

Stakeholders within the community college system, as well as in California's other levels of public higher education, have identified issues of language testing, placement, and support for language-minority students to be of immediate concern. For example, a report by the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) ESL Task Force (2006) articulated key questions facing the public higher education system in California (p. 4): whether campuses are "effectively distinguishing those non-native English speakers who need specialized instruction to achieve academic success from those who do not need it"; how adequate current assessment and placement procedures are; and the efficacy of programs, courses, and support services for "ESL learners." The ICAS report included results from a survey of 61 of the then-109 California

community colleges (56%), finding that self-identification of ESL learners is the norm at community colleges, but that some students may be reluctant to self-identify due to perceived stigma associated with ESL. The report also argues that although Generation 1.5 students do not neatly fit the ESL category, they still have "ESL features" in their academic writing. Less than half of the community colleges surveyed tested for writing, and test validation was identified as an issue due to limited resources for research on evaluation practices.

An additional concern is that colleges' descriptions of who should take ESL vs. regular English placement tests often do not offer guidance for language minority students who have completed academic work in English while in high school. A pilot study that investigated language testing and placement at 16 community colleges in Bay Area and Central California community college regions (Bunch and Panayotova, 2008) found that colleges varied widely in how they described who should take ESL placement tests as opposed to the regular English placement test, signaling different conceptions (and misconceptions) about the nature of bilingualism and the needs of U.S.-educated language minority students. The study also found that a wide variety of institutionally developed and commercially available ESL placement tests were used at the 16 colleges. However, colleges either did not have access to or did not use information from the statewide K-12 ESL test or language proficiency designations, raising questions about the alignment between testing and placement at the K-12 and community college levels (see also Bunch, 2008, 2009).

The California Community College Policy Context

Testing and placement policies have long been contentious issues in California's community college system. Due in part to a lawsuit settled between the system and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF) in 1991 (see Grubb, 1999; Perry at al., 2010, pp. 6-7), a number of regulations govern various aspects of the process whereby students matriculate into community colleges (California Community College Assessment Association [CCCAA], 2005; Chancellor's Office, 1998). State regulations mandate, among other things, a process for the selection and validation of placement instruments, the use of multiple measures in the assessment process, and a process whereby students can challenge the imposition of course prerequisites (see Moore & Shulock, 2007).

The enforcement of these regulations is complicated, however, by the strong history and culture of local college autonomy, decentralized authority in California's community college system, and by the state's recent budgetary crises (EdSource, 2010; Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine, 2010). As we completed our research, funding for California community colleges continued to deteriorate, with direct impact on matriculation policies and services. Due to funding cuts, soon after the completion of our data collection, the state legislature relieved community colleges and districts from adhering to state matriculation regulations, meaning, for example, that they do not currently have to use assessments approved by the Chancellor's office. Counseling budgets in particular have suffered, with some colleges considering the elimination of all counseling services during the summer, a crucial time period for outreach to students transitioning from high school to college.

Even before the recent budget crisis, testing and placement policies have been a source of concern. Several reports have highlighted inefficiencies and confusion surrounding the fact that there are a large number of English, ESL, and mathematics assessment instruments approved for use statewide (e.g. Moore & Shulock, 2007). The Chancellor's list of approved assessments includes well over 100 English, ESL, and mathematics testing instruments, which include commercially available, second-party placement tests approved by the systemwide office

for use statewide, second-party tests for which individual colleges or districts have done validation studies, and "homegrown" tests that local colleges have developed themselves and had approved by the systemwide office. Although that number is somewhat misleading because the vast majority of colleges choose among the same handful of commercially available English, ESL, and mathematics tests (Brown & Niemi, 2007; Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 2008),[3] streamlining the number of tests used has been suggested as a means of saving costs, decreasing confusion for students who consider enrolling in more than one college, and facilitating the use of assessment data for research purposes.

In response to a directive from the California Community College Board of Governors in 2007 to "evaluate the implementation of a systemwide uniform, common assessment with multiple measures" for all community college students, the Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment published the results of a statewide survey of matriculation officers at all then-109 California community colleges (Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 2008). This survey provided a snapshot of community college ESL and English tests and matriculation policies statewide. The Council, expressing concerns surrounding mandating a central set of assessments, recommended that mandatory matriculation services (such as orientation and counseling) be fully funded by the state, that increased opportunities for assessments in high schools are warranted, that a system for sharing of assessment data should be established, and that the system should support efforts of the California Community College Assessment Association to develop an ESL placement test for statewide use. Since that time, efforts have been underway to study the feasibility of a number of options: (a) developing new statewide ESL, English, and mathematics placement tests that would be available at low or no cost to colleges statewide but which colleges would not be required to adopt, (b) negotiating a statewide contract with one or more of the testing companies whose tests are commonly used currently in many colleges, and (c) developing a central warehouse for assessment data from individual colleges that would agree to use a common placement test in each area. In return for agreeing to use a particular placement test and participating in the central warehousing project, currently referred to as CCCAssess, colleges would be relieved from the cost of the tests, and the Chancellor's office would have access to a large data set to study placement-related issues.

Other initiatives have focused more broadly on how community colleges should respond to students' inadequate preparation in secondary schools for college-level academic work. In June, 2008, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) made several recommendations: (1) that legislation be enacted to expand the Early Assessment Program (described below), then used only by the California State University System, to the state's community colleges; (2) that colleges require "underprepared" students to begin to take precollegiate coursework during their first semester; and (3) that funding requirements be adapted so that colleges could steer some money previously earmarked for instruction toward counseling services (Hill, 2008). Some of these proposals were consistent with those offered by Shulock and Moore (2007), who called for colleges to be granted more funding flexibility, to require assessment for students seeking degrees, to require students determined to need basic skills to enroll in such courses during their first semester, and to modify the process for establishing prerequisites to college-level courses so that more students would be required to complete remedial work prior to enrolling in them (see also Moore and Shulock, 2007).

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[3] The total number of instruments on the Chancellor's list of approved assessments is also misleading because each section of each test is listed separately (e.g. ESL grammar, ESL reading, etc.); the same instruments are listed in slightly different ways; and some of the assessments, although approved, are not actually currently used.

These recommendations are currently in various stages of consideration and implementation. Shortly following the release of the LAO report in 2008, Senate Bill 946 was passed, establishing an Early Assessment Program (EAP) for community colleges. The EAP, begun as an initiative by the California State University in 2001, involves the use of an enhanced version of the state's 11th grade standards tests in English and mathematics to provide information to students and colleges regarding students readiness for college-level coursework (Kirst, 2010; Perry et al., 2010, p. 90). SB 946 allows colleges to participate in EAP and encourages colleges to accept a "Prepared for College" score on the EAP, in lieu of scores on the English or mathematics placement test, for placement into transfer-level English and mathematics courses (Kirst, 2010).

Responding to the proposal to require students to begin precollegiate work during their first term, a Strategic Plan Assessment Action Planning Group (APG), established by the Chancellor to develop a strategic plan for assessment, raised a number of concerns related to the impact of such a policy on students' access to and success in college-level courses (Assessment Action Planning Group, 2009). The group raised questions and concerns related to how "unpreparedness" should best be defined. The report also pointed out that, in terms of remediation, "doing more of the same is not enough." Concerns were also expressed regarding the impact of disallowing students from taking college-level courses across the disciplines and whether there were sufficient basic skills sections to accommodate all students who would need them under the proposed changes.

Instead of endorsing the recommendation that students be required to begin remedial courses during their first term, the APG instead considered, and the full Academic Senate has since passed, a recommend ion that the Board of Governors change how faculty at local colleges assign communication prerequisites (e.g. English, reading, and ESL) for transfer-level disciplinary coursework in other areas. Currently, as a result of the MALDEF lawsuit mentioned earlier, in order to establish prerequisites in areas outside of the discipline of a particular course, colleges are required to show through statistical validation studies that students without the prerequisite are highly unlikely to succeed. The proposed change in state regulations would eliminate the requirement for statistical validation, giving colleges the option (should their districts approve revised policies) of using "content review" to establish prerequisites. Content review is a process whereby, instead of considering student success data, faculty consider course syllabi, assignments, and examinations for a particular course, make a judgment themselves as to what skills students are highly likely to be unsuccessful without, and identify courses in which they believe students could acquire those skills. As we completed this report, the Board of Governors planned to vote on the proposed changes in early 2011.

In our recommendations at the end of this report, we discuss the implications of these proposals and initiatives for US-LM students, and we discuss how the findings of our study might inform continued discussion surrounding them. Our research, however, was not designed to focus solely on these initiatives, but rather to provide a broad overview of a wide range of testing and placement issues related to the education of US-LM students. Therefore, our recommendations also address a wide range of issues relevant to policies and practices at local colleges, including action that can be taken by local colleges and districts.

In the next section, we briefly describe our methodology (the details of which can be found in the Appendix). That is followed by a discussion of the frameworks and orientations that are essential to consider when evaluating the appropriateness of various options for policy and practice relevant to the testing, placement, and instruction of US-LM students, including the nature of bilingualism and the development of academic language and literacy, the relative

merits of remediation and acceleration in the education of academically underprepared students, and the role of student agency in educational decision-making.

METHODOLOGY, FRAMEWORKS, & ORIENTATIONS

Methodology in Brief

In order to map the terrain of California language testing and placement policies relevant to language minority students, we collected public information available from the California Community College Chancellor's office and 25 individual college websites; conducted 51 telephone and in-person interviews with faculty and staff at 10 colleges representing different sizes, geographic areas, and student demographics; and visited five focal colleges. We reviewed colleges' own websites to gather information about the larger policies and practices related to testing and placement and how those policies and practices are communicated to students. Phone interviews and site visit conversations with matriculation staff, administrators, counselors, and ESL and English faculty allowed us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of matriculation policies and practices enacted at individual colleges, as well as to study how matriculation relates to ESL and English course sequences. Detailed information on the research methodology can be found in the Appendix.

Because we were primarily interested in policies and practices that potentially impact the academic trajectories of language minority students who have studied in US high schools, we focused our research primarily around placement into English courses and "credit ESL" courses (those designed for students who seek terminal degrees, vocational certificates, or transfer to four-year institutions), instead of "non-credit" ESL courses (those designed to fulfill the basic adult education mission of community colleges by helping students develop English for functional purposes such as employment, shopping, participating in the health care system, etc.) (Blumenthal, 2002).[4]

Frameworks and Orientations

In order to understand the testing and placement landscape that US-LM students encounter as they enter California community colleges, it is necessary to explore the assumptions and orientations that underlie that terrain. Policies, from the classroom to the state level, are not made, enacted, discussed, or researched in a social, cultural, or political vacuum (Heck, 2004; Ricento and Hornberger, 1996; Shohamy, 2006). They are influenced by assumptions and orientations about students and the extent to which they should be agents in their own education, about the most effective ways to prepare them for college-level coursework, and about the ways that colleges should communicate with them. For language minority students in particular, policies are constructed and practices developed in the context of assumptions about language, language learners, language learning, language testing, and the most effective ways to prepare students for using language in academic settings (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Bunch, 2009; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Gebhard, 1999; McNamara, 2001; Solano-Flores, 2008; Valdés, 2004).

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[4] In California community colleges, the terms "credit" and "non-credit" ESL refer to institutional credit granted, not credit toward degrees or transfer. "Credit" ESL courses generally do not carry credit toward a degree or transfer, although some intermediate- and upper-level ESL courses do at some colleges. We initially assumed that students from US high schools who had academic goals would not be enrolled in non-credit ESL programs. While we found this generally to be the case, personnel at one college discussed the fact that some Generation 1.5 students also begin in non-credit ESL. Future research, beyond the scope of this study, is needed to explore the role of non-credit ESL in the academic pathways of US-educated language minority students.

Therefore, before presenting our findings, we discuss different orientations toward bilingualism and the development of academic language and literacy, the goals and efficacy of ESL and remedial education, and the importance of transparent information and opportunities for students to make informed decisions about their education. We will return to these themes throughout the discussion of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Language Minority Students, Bilingualism, and the Development of Academic Language and Literacy

At the heart of debates surrounding effective placement policies and practices for US-LM students are questions concerning students' characteristics and needs, the nature of their language and literacy competencies, what instructional environments might be most effective for the development of these competencies, and how students can access and succeed in such environments.

The term "Generation 1.5," originating in sociological research on immigrant children and adolescents who share characteristics of both first and second generation Americans (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988), has been used for the past decade by higher education ESL and composition specialists to describe students from a wide variety of immigrant backgrounds who have attended US high schools and who enter higher education with language and cultural characteristics that do not fit neatly into either the "ESL" or "native-English-speaker" categories used in many institutions (Blumenthal, 2002; Harklau, Losey, & Siegel, 1999; Roberge, 2002; Roberge, Siegel, & Harklau, 2009). The term has been helpful for highlighting some of the characteristics and needs of this population, as well as illuminating some of the reasons that these students resist traditional ESL courses they view as irrelevant or even antagonistic to their needs and interests (Harklau, 2000). However, as mentioned earlier, the Generation 1.5 label is problematic because it can be used to erroneously argue that students lack proficiency in either English or their native languages and that they are "perpetual foreigners" in constant need of remediation (Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003, pp. 155-156; see also Benesch, 2008). Thus, the label has taken on some of the same negative connotations as the term ESL. As Marshall (2010) argues, students from multilingual backgrounds "are regularly confronted with a 'remedial ESL' identity . . . which positions their presence in [higher education] as a problem to be fixed rather than an asset to be welcomed" and that students often have to "re-become" ESL, an identity that they felt they had left behind in high school (p. 42).

On the other hand, US-LM students can be viewed as fully functioning bilinguals whose language, like that of all bilinguals, may deviate from that of monolingual speakers of English but who are able to use each of their languages effectively for a variety of purposes. A bilingual person is not "two monolinguals joined at the neck," meaning that bilinguals use both of their languages collectively (not necessarily each of them individually) to engage in the full range of communicative functions in their lives (Valdés, 2003). Limitations in what bilinguals can do in *one* of their languages for any single purpose are to be expected as normal features of bilingualism, not as an indication that they lack proficiency in *any* language (see Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). Similarly, the use of more than one language in verbal interactions among bilinguals is a common practice that has been extensively documented by linguists and sociolinguists as a sign of highly developed competence in *both* languages, rather than an indication of deficiencies in either (Grosjean, 1982).

Although they have been subjected to an inferior education by California's public school system, students from language minority backgrounds bring with them a wealth of linguistic,

personal, and cultural resources, stemming from their own experiences negotiating different languages and cultures and navigating the range of social and economic challenges stemming from their own experiences as immigrants and children of immigrants (Valdés, 2003; Yosso, 2005). When recognized and valued, these multilingual and multicultural resources can be built upon by educators and institutions to support US-LM students in pursuing their educational goals and in realizing their potential civic and economic contribution in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural society.

As they enter California community colleges, US-LM students are in need of instructional environments that provide access to enhanced opportunities to develop the language and literacy associated with their academic and professional goals. While there are a variety of perspectives on the nature of academic language and literacy and the most promising conditions under which to promote their development (see Valdés, 2004), a productive starting place is to consider the academic literacy competencies that the joint academic senates of the California community colleges, California State University system, and University of California system have argued are essential to doing college-level academic work (ICAS, 2002). Among others, the competencies articulated by the Academic Senates include students' ability to do the following:

- Engage in intellectual discussions
- Compare and contrast own ideas with others
- Generate hypotheses
- Summarize information
- Synthesize information
- Read a variety of texts, including news, textbooks, research, and Internet resources
- Report facts or narrate events
- Prepare lab reports
- Provide short answer responses or essays
- Listen and simultaneously take notes
- Participate in class discussions
- Ask questions for clarification

(Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002)

If these are the kinds of competencies valued in college-level work, and if US-LM students have not had access to opportunities to develop them in their K-12 schooling, then the challenge for community colleges is how to provide access to settings in which students have the opportunity to engage in them. One question, therefore, that could be asked of any placement policy or practice is to what extent it provides access and support for US-LM students to use and develop these kinds of competencies.

People learn to do things with language by having access to settings in which language is used, opportunities to interact with people using that language, and support in helping them realize how particular features of language are being used for particular purposes within those contexts (Gutiérrez, 1995; Hawkins, 2004). It is essential, therefore, to envision support for language development as integrated with, rather than separated from, opportunities for academic development. Although the explicit teaching of language forms may be effective when testing students explicitly on the use of those particular forms (see Norris & Ortega, 2000), Valdés (2010) has pointed out that there is little evidence that "curricularizing" language around the explicit teaching of traditional ESL grammatical components is effective for creating the conditions under which students can develop the language and literacy necessary for a variety of

real-world academic, social, and professional purposes (see also Tomlinson, 2008). Similarly, approaches to remedial English that attempt to teach skills such as sentence-writing, paragraph-writing, and even essay-writing in isolation from engagement in authentic academic or professional endeavors are unlikely to prepare students for the kinds of competencies required to succeed in college-level work. This is not to say that efforts to provide students with explicit guidance and support around particular language features or elements of literacy are unhelpful or unnecessary, but rather that such efforts must be part of the larger context of engagement in language and literacy for authentic academic, social, and professional purposes.

To further complicate matters, as discussed in the *What's in a Test?* report (Llosa & Bunch, 2011), the range of language and literacy competencies measured on most community college ESL and English placement tests is relatively narrow, matching the discrete features of language that are the easiest to teach and to test. For example, some ESL placement tests measure the acquisition of grammar rules and may not adequately measure what US-LM students are able to do with their English, either in academic or social settings (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994), especially given that most immigrant students seeking higher education in California community colleges have acquired English through using it, both in their communities and in school, rather than through the formal study of grammar rules.

Remediation, Acceleration, and Academic Pathways

Understanding issues and concerns related to the current testing and placement of US-LM students, as well as envisioning and evaluating potential improvements, is also related to larger debates surrounding the purposes and efficacy of developmental education more generally. On one hand, the goal of both ESL and regular English placement testing in community college, like all placement testing, is relatively straightforward. Given an existing ESL or English curriculum, tests are designed to place students into the class whose targeted skills most closely match those the student is in need of developing. For example, ESL course sequences are often designed around what might be called *linguistic* pathways: courses that break down English into various component skills (such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary) and establish levels of proficiency in each, through which students are supposed to progress. In a similar way, English departments often establish precollegiate English course sequences to revolve around a progression of skills in reading and writing—what might be called *remedial literacy* pathways.[5]

For US-LM students and others underrepresented in higher education, however, there are a number of problems with this model. As discussed in the previous section, theory and research from the fields of language and literacy indicate that, in order to acquire the language and literacy valued in any particular context, people need access to the settings in which such language and literacy is used, as well as opportunities to interact with people using it. Therefore, dividing up language and literacy skills into discrete components and teaching them in isolation in problematic if the goal is the development of academic language and literacy.

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[5] It is important to clarify that the teaching and learning of English as a second language is not, in and of itself, a remedial activity. In fact, the learning of second languages is seen in many contexts as a high-level academic enterprise, which is why some study of second languages is required or preferred for entrance into many elite universities. In the context of US-LM students in California community college, however, ESL is often perceived, and functions, as remedial course sequences that students must complete before gaining access to college-level work (see Marshall, 2010).

Moreover, linguistic and literacy pathways, no matter how they are organized, must support the larger context of the *academic* and *professional* pathways students are pursuing in community colleges. Given the stakes involved, the testing and placement processes play a much larger role than simply assigning students to particular courses that correspond to their skills in particular areas. Because the placement process governs access to college-level English courses required for terminal degrees and transferring to four-year institutions, it plays a fundamental role in promoting or restricting access to students' opportunities to progress toward academic and professional goals. Meanwhile, if proposed changes to regulations concerning how faculty establish prerequisites are approved, placement will play an even larger role in governing access to courses across the community college curriculum.

Finally, the quality of remedial education varies widely (Grubb, 1999), and recent reviews of the research have cast doubt on the effectiveness of remedial education as currently enacted. In a recent report reviewing available research on developmental education (Bailey, 2009), Thomas Bailey at the Community College Research Center at Columbia University concludes that although very little reliable research is available concerning the effectiveness of developmental English and mathematics courses in preparing students for college-level work, the few robust studies that are available indicate that developmental courses have produced "mixed results at best" (p. 3). While Bailey's review does not focus on ESL coursework, to our knowledge there is even less available research concerning the efficacy of ESL instruction on the preparation of students for college-level coursework, although some colleges conduct their own studies and may have found important results.

For all of these reasons, many current efforts to reform developmental education in English and mathematics have sought to create opportunities to *integrate* developmental education with college-level coursework. For example, some learning communities pair basic skills courses with credit-bearing college-level courses. Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and ESL or reading labs can also be provided while students are enrolled in college-level courses. For students whose skills lag far behind those necessary for college-level work, it makes sense to attempt to *accelerate* their progress through developmental education sequences so that they enroll in college-level courses earlier rather than later (Bailey, 2009).

One of the reasons many students, both those from language minority backgrounds and others, are unprepared for college-level work is the well-documented negative impact of being placed in low-track academic settings in secondary schools (Oakes, 2005), where they have not had access to college-preparatory language or content. The question for community colleges, therefore, becomes how to provide *greater* access to settings in which academic language and literacy are used authentically. One such setting could be college-level courses in a variety of disciplines, especially if appropriate supports are provided for students from a variety of language, literacy, and academic backgrounds. Therefore, while it may seem logical to place language minority students in ESL or developmental English courses *before* they can enroll in college-level courses in other subject areas, foreclosing access to those college-level courses for long periods of time may also foreclose access to the very conditions under which students might develop the language and literacy necessary for academic contexts.

Transparency and Student Agency in Educational Decision Making

Different testing and placement policies and practices reveal different orientations toward the role of student agency in their educational decision making. Policies themselves, along with the ways that they are enacted and communicated, can be viewed as falling along a continuum, with the promotion of institutional control at one end and the promotion of student

agency at the other. Thus, some matriculation policies and practices are designed to counter a fear that too many students are trying to "game the system" by avoiding or manipulating placement procedures in order to seek the highest-level placement possible. Other policies and practices are orientated toward providing high-quality information and guidance to students about the implications of various choices in order to facilitate students' own informed decision making.

For language minority students, many of whom represent the first generation in their families to attend college, accurate, transparent, comprehensive, and comprehensible information about the matriculation process and instructional options is essential to make informed decisions about their own education. Olsen (2010) reports that although many language minority students in high school say they want to go to college, they are uninformed about what is needed to graduate or prepare for college. It is rare for these students or their parents to be provided with information about the relationship between the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and course placement, the level of English proficiency that is required for academic purposes, or the implications of English proficiency for college preparation.[6]

Yet inaccessibility of information that could enable students to make more informed decisions is a well-documented problem in community colleges, both in California (Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine, 2010) and across the US. In case studies of 14 community colleges in the Midwestern US, Person, Rosenbaum, and Deil-Amen (2006) found that community college students make initial decisions based on incomplete or incorrect information, and, once they are in college, college practices themselves are sometimes responsible for hindering students from obtaining the information needed to properly guide their choices. The researchers point out that without accurate and comprehensible information, students often do not take the courses they need, or they take unnecessary courses. Either of these scenarios can contribute toward students delaying progress toward completion or dropping out altogether. On the other hand, with accurate information, students can consider relevant individual factors, such as the amount of time and money they have available for their studies (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person, 2006), and make informed decisions regarding what degrees are most likely to be obtained.

While promoting student agency is important for all students, research has documented that community college students with relatively high levels of social and cultural capital are the most successful at accessing college support services, and college practices that place the onus of responsibility on students alone to navigate the system create disadvantages for many students (see Karp et al., 2008). The problem, as we will discuss later in this report, is not only a matter of insufficient amount of information available to students, although it is true that some colleges provide very little information to students about what are often high-stakes matriculation decisions. Also important are how accessible information is, how comprehensible it is to language minority and other first-generation college students, and how intimidating the messages are. As Person, Rosenbaum, and Deil-Amen (2006) argue, simply overloading students with information does not create a more informed student body and can even create more confusion. In fact, what Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt (2002) call "gatekeeper language" (often found in course catalogs, Web pages, and "service encounters" between students and staff at institutions of higher education) is sometimes more linguistically complex than actual course content (p. 12, 32).

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[6] We describe the K-12 English language testing and classification process in our accompanying report, *What's in a Test?* (Llosa & Bunch, 2010).

In addition to potentially delaying progress toward students' goals, lack of transparent information creates an uninformed and disempowered student body. Uninformed students are unlikely to make wise decisions concerning their educational trajectories or to fully embrace the responsibility and severity of the decisions that lie before them throughout their college careers. On the other hand, well-informed students can work collaboratively with counselors, mentors, and peers to actively plan their education and career paths and take greater responsibility for their own education.

FINDINGS

We organize our findings into four overarching areas: (1) how community college personnel characterize language minority students who have studied in US secondary schools before matriculating in community colleges; (2) the testing, placement, and other matriculation policies that students encounter as they enter community colleges; (3) the instructional options available to US-LM students to fulfill prerequisites for enrollment in college-level English courses often required for degrees, certificates, or transfer to a four-year institution; and (4) the ways in which colleges communicate information about matriculation practices and instructional options to students.

Characterizing Generation 1.5 Students

It is important to examine community college faculty and staff characterizations of US-LM students because policies, practices, and attitudes are influenced by assumptions about language learning and language learners. We begin, therefore, by exploring how faculty members, counselors, and others involved in matriculation define and describe "Generation 1.5" students. As discussed earlier, the term Generation 1.5 is commonly used among counselors and ESL and English faculty at many colleges to describe language minority students, and in our interviews we asked specifically whether our participants were familiar with the term and how they would describe students who fit the label. Most college personnel we interviewed, many of whom were English or ESL instructors or staff familiar with the term, pointed out that few faculty or staff outside of English and ESL were familiar with the term or aware of this population's characteristics and needs. Several participants we interviewed outside of ESL were unfamiliar with the term or had heard the term but could not describe what it meant.

Contrasting Characterizations of Generation 1.5

We asked faculty and staff members to describe the Generation 1.5 population on their campuses, and to describe how Generation 1.5 students' needs differed from those of other ESL students or native-English-speaking students. We found variability in how faculty and staff defined Generation 1.5 students across colleges, within colleges, and even within departments. Age of arrival to the US was the most common factor used to describe Generation 1.5 students, yet faculty and staff members used a wide variety of different ages to define Generation 1.5 status. Other demographic characteristics were also ascribed to Generation 1.5, as were aspects of students' English language proficiency, academic literacy skills, prior knowledge and experiences, and self-identification (or lack thereof) with "ESL". Many faculty and staff members associated the term Generation 1.5 with what students were missing or lacking, while others countered this perspective, critiquing negative uses of the label, and pointing out the strengths of US-LM students. As we discuss below, the comments of college personnel also represented varying understandings of and orientations toward bilingualism itself.

Demographic Characteristics. Some interviewees identified Generation 1.5 students as those born in the US or arriving before the 3rd grade. In contrast, others believed that students born in the US were 2nd generation and therefore the Generation 1.5 label did not apply. Others had a more expansive definition, using the term Generation 1.5 to describe students who were born in the US as well as students who arrived in the country at any point during their K-12 schooling. For this latter group, "Generation 1.5" appeared to signal students' immigrant origins and aspects of language proficiency and academic backgrounds more than specific immigration patterns.

Consistent with the literature on Generation 1.5 discussed earlier, some faculty and staff members characterized US-LM students as those who have rejected the ESL label. According to some respondents, Generation 1.5 students are those who embrace the "American" identity, are comfortable with US cultural and social references, and are part of youth cultures different from those of ESL students. In the words of one respondent: "[Generation 1.5 students] see ESL [as] more of an immigrant population thing and, you know, they aren't immigrants. They were raised here, if not born here."

At some colleges, the Generation 1.5 label seemed to be used predominantly for Latino students, even if immigrant students from other racial and ethnic groups had similar ages of arrival to the US. Respondents at multiple colleges described Generation 1.5 students as Spanish-speaking, or specified Mexico as a country of origin either for the students themselves, or for their families. Because the colleges in our sample had significant numbers of Hispanic students (ranging from 15% -57% of the total college populations), in one sense these comments are not surprising. However, all the colleges we studied had students from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds, and it is notable that interviewees at two colleges that serve significant Vietnamese populations rarely referred to Vietnamese students as Generation 1.5. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that in some cases the use of the term Generation 1.5 was conflated with perceptions of Latino students more generally.

English Language Proficiency, Literacy, and Bilingualism. Faculty and staff members we interviewed also frequently cited language abilities as a determining characteristic of Generation 1.5 students. At the majority of colleges (8 out of 10), we heard that Generation 1.5 students could be identified by their strong speaking skills but weak reading and writing skills. In describing students' language abilities, faculty members often focused on students' weaknesses compared with other students rather than their relative strengths. At most colleges (7 out of 10), Generation 1.5 students were described as suffering from grammatical problems in English (what one ESL instructor called "deviant grammar") and interference from their first languages. Some faculty also reported that Generation 1.5 students lack a *first* language, are not "really bilingual," or "don't understand how language works."

Such comments can be understood as reactions to students' developing language proficiency in English, their often-limited *literacy* skills in their first languages, and their lack of familiarity with grammatical terms that other ESL students may have studied explicitly for years. However, these portraits of US-LM students' language proficiency often focus on students' grammatical infelicities rather than on their developing ability to communicate in at least two languages for a variety of social, professional, and academic purposes. They also represent several misunderstandings about the nature of bilingualism. For example, although students may not have developed literacy skills in their first languages, a well-established research finding in linguistics has been that all human beings, barring severe abuse, have developed at least one native language (see Lightbown & Spada, 2006; MacSwan, Rolstad, & Glass, 2002). Furthermore, bilinguals use two or more languages collectively to fulfill their communicative purposes (Grosjean, 1982; Valdés, 1992, 2003), so the fact that US-LM students may not be able to use *one single* language for *all* their communicative purposes is not an indication of lacking proficiency in *any* language. As we will explore throughout this report, as well as in the accompanying *What's in a Test?* (Llosa & Bunch, 2011), conceptions of bilingualism have important implications for the ways that US-LM students are tested and placed in community colleges.

Understandings and attitudes toward bilingualism have implications at the classroom level as well. For example, at one college, we were told that English teachers "will snap" at students "if they break into Spanish" in the classroom. One instructor at this college reported that she "corrects" students when they speak "Spanglish." Such orientations are consistent with attitudes often prevalent among monolinguals that code-switching (the use of two languages in the same utterance) is ungrammatical "jargon or gibberish" resulting from speakers' lack of proficiency in either language (Grosjean, 1982). These beliefs, however, are inconsistent with insights from linguists, sociolinguists, and bilingual users of language themselves showing that code-switching is a linguistic resource that fulfills an immediate communicative or social need, is grammatically rule-governed, and is an indication of high levels of mastery of both languages involved (Grosjean, 1982). In fact, codeswitching is the norm rather than the exception in communication among people who share the same two or more languages.

Other faculty members argued that the language used by Generation 1.5 has more in common with the non-prestige varieties of English spoken by native English speakers in remedial courses than it does with that of students in the process of learning a second language. One pointed out, "What I find is that the Gen 1.5 students tend to have more in common with the native English speakers in Basic Skills [than with traditional ESL students], in that the native English speakers at the Basic Skills level have also fallen through the cracks. Not cracks of being between two languages, but having nonstandard English as the dominant form of expression." Such comments reflect the fact that what at times appear to be non-native-like features in the English of some bilingual speakers may be instead fully-developed features of non-prestige varieties of English (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994).

Academic Skills and Prior Knowledge and Experiences. At half of the subset colleges, faculty and staff members characterized Generation 1.5 students as lacking academic skills, such as higher order thinking, the ability to make connections with academic text, and the ability to analyze college level material. In some cases, the term Generation 1.5 itself was equated with low academic status, low motivation, and lack of study skills. One interviewee said that Generation 1.5 students are those enrolled in the lowest level of remedial English classes, and that more successful students (e.g. those in honors and transfer tracks) are not considered Generation 1.5, regardless of other background information. Another interviewee indicated that students who are academically motivated and have strong study skills are not considered Generation 1.5.

Some interviewees focused on what they perceived to be limited life experiences and cultural knowledge in their descriptions of Generation 1.5 students. Faculty members at two colleges described Generation 1.5 in terms of what they perceived to be a lack of knowledge about the world. One faculty member said the following about these students: "it's not that they're not bright. It's that they don't know very much. They have . . . problems with cultural literacy, and they don't know much about anything." A different instructor said that these students do not know about philosophy, science, art or history, adding that it is "hard to write a paper when you really don't have anything to say." Consistent with concerns raised by some researchers about this tendency for the term Generation 1.5 to emphasize students' deficits and ignore their strengths (e.g. Benesch, 2008; Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003; Oropeza, Varghese, & Kanno, 2010), other personnel expressed concerns about the ways in which the term was used at their colleges. We turn to those comments now.

Countering Monolingual and Deficit Perspectives

In contrast to many of the comments excerpted above, some interviewees challenged the use of the Generation 1.5 label or sought to counter what they perceived to be deficit orientations

often associated with it. Responding to the use of the term "Generation 1.5," one counselor had a strong negative reaction to the label, arguing that it was the latest method of discrimination against bilingual students: "Generation 1.5 is a new definition… it is a connotation of deficiency." An English instructor at another college pointed out that "universally the students hate the label… they think it's negative."

Others highlighted US-LM students' intellectual curiosity, their unique life experiences, and their desire to succeed. One ESL instructor criticized the fact that many faculty members believe that language minority students have diminished thinking skills or are uninterested in their own education. Comparing US-LM students to her own experiences as a bilingual person who has learned to do academic work in a language other than her first, she said, "I speak with an accent, but I do not think with an accent." Such comments are consistent with research that has highlighted the cognitive, sociolinguistic, and linguistic strengths of students from immigrant backgrounds (Valdes, 1992, 2003), as well as the cross-cultural knowledge and life experiences on which these students can draw when given the opportunity to do so (Oropeza et al., 2010; Yosso, 2005).

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Summary of Key Findings: Characterizing US-LM students

- According to interviewees, few community college personnel other than English and ESL instructors were familiar with the term "Generation 1.5".
- Those who were familiar with the term defined the population in widely different ways.
- Most descriptions of US-LM students focused on students' linguistic and academic deficits, rather than English proficiency and bilingualism.
- Some faculty compared US-LM students to native-English-speakers in developmental courses.
- According to some faculty members, US-LM students themselves do not generally use the term "Generation 1.5" nor see themselves as immigrant students.

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Matriculation Policies and Practices

As US-LM students transition from California high schools to community colleges, they encounter a matriculation process that is designed to include a number of different steps: application to the college, placement testing in mathematics and either English or ESL, an on-line or in-person orientation, counseling and the use of multiple measures for placement decisions, and course enrollment. Although state regulations mandate the use of multiple measures for recommending placement and fulfilling prerequisites, funding for counseling services is severely restricted, resulting in astronomical student-to-counselor ratios (Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 2008; Grubb, 1996; Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine, 2010). Meanwhile, the extent to which multiple measures are used varies widely from college to college, with some colleges using them only if students challenge their placements. Therefore, a single placement test score remains the dominant source of information used to place students.

At the colleges we studied, we found variation in the order in which various matriculation steps occurred, and in what transpired as part of each of the components. For example, some colleges instruct students to complete a placement test before they attend orientation or meet with a counselor. Some interviewees pointed out that this arrangement

streamlines the process and provides counselors with more information with which to advise students. At other colleges, students attend orientation and/or meet with a counselor before they take the placement test. A counselor at one college said that she herself was unclear as to the college's official policy on the preferred order of events, but that in practice students have the option of whether to see a counselor before or after the placement test. She said that she prefers to see students *before* they take the placement test, because sometimes they "could lose some people in between [the] process" of applying to the college and taking the placement test.

At the heart of almost every college's matriculation process for ESL and English is a placement test. Every one the 10 colleges we studied used an English placement test, and all but one used an ESL test (see Table 2).[7] Our accompanying report (*What's in a Test?*) describes the most commonly used English and ESL placement tests in California community colleges and analyzes the content and constructs of those tests. Here, we limit our discussion on assessments to the selection and use of ESL and English tests at the 10 subset colleges we examined, and at how students are advised regarding whether to take an ESL or English test.

Table 2
Placement Tests Used at the 10 Subset Colleges

	ESL Test	English Test	Writing Sample
College A	COMPASS	COMPASS	No
College B	Locally developed	ACCUPLACER	For ESL only
College C	ACCUPLACER	ACCUPLACER	No
College D	ACCUPLACER	ACCUPLACER	No
College E	TELD	CTEP	No
College F	Directed self-placement	CTEP	No
College G	CELSA	CTEP	No
College H	CELSA	CTEP	No
College I	COMPASS	COMPASS	For ESL only
College J	CELSA	COMPASS	For English; Unknown for ESL

ESL and English Test Selection and Implementation

In this section, we review how placement tests were selected at the 10 subset colleges, the involvement of staff and faculty in this process, and the levels of confidence faculty had in both alignment of tests with curricula and the ability of placements tests to place US-LM students appropriately.

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[7] One college used a directed self-placement process for ESL, described in more detail in the following section.

Colleges varied in the extent to which English and ESL faculty were involved in the selection or development of testing instruments[8]. At one end of the spectrum, the locally developed ESL test at one college was developed by ESL faculty members themselves. On the other end, faculty at nearly half of colleges we studied complained that they had little or no involvement in the selection of testing instruments or in the placement process. At two colleges, faculty reported that the English department lost its role in the placement process when the college made the decision to stop using writing samples. Several faculty and staff members we spoke to were not deeply knowledgeable about the assessment and placement process at their colleges. At one college, neither an administrator who oversaw matriculation nor the matriculation director understood which tests in the ACCUPLACER battery were used, how the tests branched students between ESL and regular English placement tests, or how multiple measures embedded in the tests were calculated into students' final placement levels.

At one college that had recently adopted ACCUPLACER, ESL faculty members voiced discontent with the college's decision to discontinue a locally developed writing test and adopt a computerized test; in the words of one instructor, "Frankly, it was kind of pushed down our throats by counselors." While faculty were not pleased with the adoption of a computerized test, the matriculation coordinator said the college had "taken a tremendous leap from the dark ages of the paper and pencil" and another administrator described problems in the past with inconsistency in student placement. At another college, faculty were involved in the decision to choose COMPASS over ACCUPLACER. Although faculty at this college decided that COMPASS was the "lesser of two evils," they were not optimistic about the choice. Despite this lack of confidence in COMPASS, faculty at this college agreed that it had done a good job in placing students, and they were now satisfied with using that instrument.

Faculty members at half the colleges we studied described their lack of confidence in their college's placement tests. One tenured English instructor pointed out that she and an English department colleague each took the ACCUPLACER themselves to learn more about the test. She said that she herself scored one level below college English, and her colleague scored two levels below. However, although she found the test difficult and stressful, she said it was "rare" to see a student in her classes who was "not supposed to be there," because "there's always room for working and editing and so on." This support for placing US-LM students into low-level English courses in order to perfect grammar and writing skills was evident in many interviews across colleges.

Other than at the college that had developed its own ESL test to align with its curriculum, few faculty members we spoke with believed that their own college's ESL or English placement tests were well aligned with their ESL and English curricula. At half of the colleges, faculty complained about the lack of a writing sample, with several faculty members questioning how students can be appropriately placed in a writing course without a writing sample. One English instructor explained, "the student I'm looking at is a very good writer, but the test isn't going to capture that because the test is concerned with vocabulary and grammar questions . . . a lot of students don't know how to answer grammar questions in isolat[ion]."

Concerns regarding how students who have lacked formal grammar instruction in English perform on placement tests are particularly relevant to US-LM students, who may be able to engage in many productive tasks in English, but who perform poorly on a tests that

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[8] The selection of testing instruments by individual colleges, along with the development of their own instruments, is regulated by an extensive set of statewide validation procedures (CCCAA, 2005).

focuses on their discrete grammatical skills (see *What's in a Test?,* Llosa & Bunch, 2011). An ESL instructor at one college argued that, instead of the current placement tests, it would be more useful to have a diagnostic for US-LM students that would "assess the skills and strategies [students] bring to the class, or [use] some sort of academic language or vocabulary index test that I can use to kind of gauge where the academic language ability is."

In the one college that used directed self-placement for ESL, there was disagreement between ESL faculty and matriculation officials over its use. Directed self-placement at this college was a process whereby students attended ESL information sessions led by bilingual assessment staff. [9] At the information sessions, students were provided with examples of written materials from various ESL levels, topics and skills covered in the different levels of ESL, a 45-minute general orientation to college, and assistance in enrollment for the students' chosen course. Although the matriculation officials supported self-placement and pointed to institutional research showing that it did a superior job of placing students correctly compared with the previous ESL placement test, ESL and English faculty were critical of the practice. One English instructor believed students prefer to take a test that will inform them which class to take, and she asserted that students' self-esteem about their writing has too great an effect on their self-placement for it to be accurate.

Summary of Key Findings: ESL and English Test Selection and Implementation

- English and ESL faculty involvement in the test selection or placement process ranged from little involvement at some colleges to deep involvement at others, including one college where faculty designed their own ESL testing instruments.
- Many faculty members expressed lack of confidence in testing instruments and believed their ESL or English tests were not well aligned with curricula.
- Despite this lack of confidence in alignment, faculty generally reported that students were placed correctly into their classes.
- In the one college using directed self-placement for ESL, matriculation officials cited positive results but faculty distrusted the process.

Which Test to Take? Choosing an ESL or English Test

US-LM students, because they are neither recent immigrants nor monolingual English speakers, often face a dilemma regarding whether they should take the ESL placement test or the English placement test. This can prove to be a high stakes decision, because the choice usually results in placement in the corresponding program (see Bunch, 2008; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). Table 3 demonstrates the courses students face in ESL or English, depending on their placement results.

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[9] For more information about directed self-placement, see Bedore & Rossen-Knill, 2004; Felder, Finney & Kirst, 2007; Lewiecki-Wilson, Sommers, & Tassoni, 2000; Royer & Gilles, 1998; Royer & Gilles, 2003).

Table 3
ESL and Remedial English Course Sequences at the 10 Subset Colleges

	ESL Sequence	Transition	English Sequence
College A	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5	From ESL Level 5, students go directly into college-level English	Level 1 Level 2 + Reading Course College-level
College B	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6 Level 7 (degree-applicable)	From ESL Level 7, students go into English Level 5 (two levels below college-level)	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6* College-level
College C	Level 1 Level 2	Parallel ESL and English tracks feed into college-level English	Level 1 Level 2 College-level
College D	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	From ESL Level 4, students go directly into college-level English	Level 1 Level 2 College-level
College E	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6 Level 7 Level 8	ESL Level 8 is a designated transition course; upon completion, students go directly into college-level English	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 College-level
College F	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6 Level 7 Level 8 Level 9	From ESL Level 9, students go into English Level 2 (one level below college-level)	Level 1 Level 2 College-level
College G	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	From ESL Level 4, students go into English Level 3 (two levels below college-level)	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 College-level
College H	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5	From ESL Level 5, students go into college-level English	"Preparatory English" courses** College-level

College I	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6	From ESL Level 6, students go into college-level English	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 College-level
College J	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	From ESL Level 4, students begin in English Level 1	Level 1 Level 2 College-level
*Although there are six levels before College-level English, two levels can be replaced by one 6-unit course, reducing the number of levels to five before College-level English. **This college does not provide publically available information on the number of course levels in the "preparatory English" sequence before College-level English. <u>Note:</u> At some colleges, after completing the ESL sequence, students are able to take the English placement test to try to place at a higher level within the English sequence than the designated transition course.			

We were interested in exploring what information was available at each college for students regarding the decision surrounding which placement test to take (ESL or English), and how colleges guided students in making this decision. We also sought to learn whether students who initially elected to take the ESL test could be referred to an English test as a result of their score, or whether students taking an English test could be referred to an ESL test. Based on state regulations, colleges are advised that they cannot require any student to take an ESL test: "A college or district--using established and defined criteria that have been carefully scrutinized by college faculty, staff, and administrators--may *advise* students regarding the appropriateness of the English and ESL assessments, but students must be free to choose which assessment they wish to take" (CCCAA, 2005, p. 14, emphasis added). While English placement test results generally cannot, according to regulations, be used to place students into ESL courses,[10] they can be used, along with multiple measures, to refer a student to an ESL placement test (but not require a student to take that test).

Guidance for Students. Slightly over half of the websites we reviewed (14 of 25) included some information regarding how students from language minority backgrounds should decide between an ESL or a regular English placement test. Many of these references used "self-evident" language that provides limited guidance for students, such as "the ESL test is for students whose native language is not English and who wish to enroll in ESL classes." Other websites attempted to guide students based on whether students believed English or another language was their strongest, by asking students to consider questions about their linguistic practices (such as whether they use English to speak with friends and coworkers), or what the language of instruction was in their elementary and secondary education. While such questions are undoubtedly designed to assist students in making informed decisions, the information requested oversimplifies the complex linguistic backgrounds of many US-LM students and is not always relevant to which instructional setting (ESL vs. English) might be best for them (see Bunch & Panayotova, 2008).

One college website directed students to review sample questions for both the ESL and the regular English placement test: "You can look at the questions on these tests to help you decide which test to take." Another college indicated that it uses student self-reported information on the admissions application to steer some students toward an ESL test.

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[10] Local colleges can permit placing students in ESL courses based on an English placement test "provided the content-related validity evaluation adequately documents the appropriateness and representativeness of the English language's test items for the objectives of the ESL course" (CCCAA, pp. 14-15).

Meanwhile, there was no indication of any college using K-12 information such as scores on the California English Language Development Test, or whether they had been redesignated as Fluent English Proficient during their K-12 schooling (see *What's in a Test?*, Llosa & Bunch, 2011). Personnel at several colleges were unfamiliar with these sources, and it is unclear whether most community colleges have access to such information.

Choosing English over ESL. Overwhelmingly, our respondents at colleges where students can choose either an ESL or English test told us that language minority students who have spent a number of years in US public schools at the K-12 level choose to take the English placement test instead of the ESL test. Comments by a faculty member at one college were typical: Generation 1.5 students "would be highly insulted if you said they were ESL in any way."

According to college faculty and staff, there are a number of reasons for this self-selection into English instead of ESL. Faculty pointed out that students believe that ESL courses are designed for international students and more recent arrivals, and that they may be less focused on the academic goals of US-LM students. Additionally, according to faculty, US-LM students often perceive a stigma associated with ESL, due to the low status associated with ESL in their K-12 experience. Especially for students who have arrived in the US as adolescents, assignment to ESL at the college level may become conflated with other negative experiences in middle and high school. According to one academic support instructor, students who arrived in US schools during their "awkward" middle school or high school years had a heightened awareness of being labeled and placed in special programs that resulted in separation from their English-speaking peers, and a sense that "the teachers didn't want to deal with them." These students, according to the instructor, still deal with the "traumas" associated with their secondary education, which have resulted in "a distrust of teachers in general, kind of distrust of the academic system."

In addition, students are eager to begin earning credits toward a degree or transfer as quickly as possible, and they may see the multiple levels often associated with ESL as a potential delay in their academic progress. At most colleges we studied, ESL course sequences were significantly longer than English course sequences (see Table 3). Although it is unlikely most US-LM students would start at the lowest level of these longer ESL sequences, interviewees at several colleges told us that it does take longer for students to progress through the ESL sequences than it does the regular English sequence. Meanwhile, student perception regarding the number of ESL courses needed to reach college-level English, whether that perception is correct or not, was cited as one reason students tend to avoid ESL courses in favor of regular English courses.

Steering Students to ESL. The views of community college personnel regarding whether US-LM students *should* be placed in ESL courses will be explored later in this report. However, it is important to point out here that, despite US-LM students' self-selection into English courses, or perhaps because of it, there was a concerted effort at some colleges to persuade more students to take the ESL placement and consider ESL coursework. One college website directed students to choose ESL if they were undecided between ESL and English: "If you are not sure, take the ESL test." Other colleges included information on websites or handouts that were clearly designed to attract students to ESL programs, enumerating the "advantages" of ESL without presenting any potential liabilities.

At one college, the testing coordinator informed us that faculty members generally believe students should be placed in lower level courses because they are unprepared for their classes. This coordinator also viewed the *greatest* challenge with testing and placement at the

college to be US-LM students' frequent decision to take the English test instead the ESL test. One English instructor at this college said he wanted all students at the college to take one test that would automatically place students in ESL or English.

At a different college, the assessment director referred to the ESL test as the "bilingual test" and the English test as the "native speaker test," terminology that suggests that bilingual students, regardless of their proficiency in English, should take the ESL test instead of the regular English test. An ESL instructor at this college explained that when students take the placement test at their high school (a program coordinated by the college counselors), if their home language is English they are given the English placement test, and if their home language is something other than English, they are given the ESL test: "So then half of your AP English test kids [those already enrolled in Advanced Placement English] . . . take the ESL test." At this college, this practice had clear ramifications for US-LM students, who appeared to be directly steered into ESL courses simply by virtue of coming from a household where English was the non-dominant language, even if their English was strong enough to succeed in AP English.

At another college, students speak first with the receiving staff at the assessment center. According to one source at the college, "If they speak fluently" they are referred to the English test, and if they "obviously [have] trouble expressing themselves" they are referred to the ESL test. Through this process, many Generation 1.5 students are referred to the English test, a practice that was described by one English instructor as "unfortunate." This instructor also reported that there were efforts underway to educate counseling and assessment staff to identify Generation 1.5 students and steer them toward ESL.

Consequences of Choosing an ESL or an English Placement Test. We found evidence that students' self-selection to take an ESL or English test can be a high-stakes choice. At one college, for example, we were told that if students take the ESL test, they will be placed in the ESL sequence "no matter what", and that the same was true for the English test. Faculty members at several colleges reported that it would take at least an entire semester for a student to be referred for regular English placement if initially placed in ESL, or vice versa.

On the other hand, some colleges refer students from one test to another based on their initial scores. Six of the subset colleges either used the scores on the English test to refer students to an ESL test or the scores on an ESL test to refer students to an English test, but not always both. One college's website indicated that if students receive a low score on the English reading test, and if "English is not their primary language," then they are referred to the ESL placement test. However, referrals from one test to another are not always successful. Matriculation staff at one college informed us that students take the ESL test and are referred to the English test, yet when they take the English test they are often referred back to ESL. In the words of the interviewee, students are "caught in between both" and become "frustrated because they didn't get placed anywhere."

Lack of Student Choice. Two colleges did not give students a choice between an ESL and English test, because both tests were embedded into the computer-delivered ACCUPLACER that all students take at the college. While taking the test, students are unaware of whether they have "branched" into an ESL test or an English test, a feature praised by advocates of the ACCUPLACER's branching capabilities. Matriculation staff at one college, however, pointed out one of the unintended consequences of the branching as set up at that college: a number of monolingual English-speaking students at the college get automatically branched into the ESL portion on a "frequent" basis due to poor performance on either the regular English or ESL components of the test. Based on their test results, these native speakers of English receive

recommendations to enroll in ESL courses. Although such students do not actually enroll in ESL courses, it is likely that a number of US-LM students, who otherwise might have profited from regular developmental English courses, are referred to ESL in a similar way. Although some US-LM students may indeed benefit from ESL courses, such courses are not always designed with the needs of US-LM students in mind, and steering students toward ESL test batteries without their knowledge clearly diminishes students' agency in their educational decision making and is ultimately unlikely to address US-LM students' sometimes-negative perceptions of ESL.

Summary of Key Findings: Which Test to Take? Choosing an ESL or English Test

- Students' decision to take an ESL or English tests represents high stakes because it most likely determines into which program students are placed.
- Most college websites provided limited guidance to students regarding whether to choose an ESL or English placement test.
- According to faculty, counselors, and staff, US-LM students overwhelmingly choose English tests over ESL tests, and efforts were underway at some colleges to persuade US-LM students to take ESL tests instead.
- No colleges used language-related K-12 information, such as students' scores on the California English Language Development Test or English Learner designation.
- At some colleges, students' ability to choose between ESL and English tests had been removed by the use of ACCUPLACER's computerized branching mechanisms.

Test Preparation and Retesting

In this section, we discuss policies and practices, as well as the views of faculty and staff members, related to students' preparation for placement tests and options for taking the tests more than once. Many interviewees maintained that students did not understand the stakes or implications of placement tests, and that students often did not take the tests seriously. In many cases, college counselors visit local high schools and administer the placement tests to students who may not have explicit plans to attend community college and may not fully understand the purposes for the tests. According to many staff and faculty members at the colleges we studied, students do not usually take the test seriously, and student test scores are often adversely affected by test anxiety, lack of sleep, test fatigue, and lack of preparation. Because many students are surprised by their lower-than-expected placement results, test preparation and retesting policies are a critical component of the assessment process.

Preparing for the Test. College personnel expressed different viewpoints on the question of whether students should be encouraged or even allowed to prepare for placement tests. One testing coordinator said that students do not currently prepare for the placement tests, a practice he found appropriate: "I don't feel that [they] should [prepare]. It should be based on where they are now... retests, if they happen right away, don't usually change their scores."

This perspective contrasts with that of a counselor at the same college, who spoke about the high-stakes nature of assessment and the lack of student knowledge concerning placement tests. She advocated for an orientation that would occur before the assessment process, to highlight the importance of placement tests and encourage students to prepare for them. She argued that preparation was particularly important for Generation 1.5 students. Promoting students' best performance on the tests, according to the counselor, leads to a more accurate

placement that challenges students and enables them to move more quickly through course sequences. At a different college, in response to concerns about testing conditions, the testing director explained how he makes a concerted effort to ensure that students are not overtaxed when they take placement tests; for example, the college does not allow students to take the math test and the ESL or English test on the same day.

Contrasting Policies and Perspectives on Retesting. Our analysis of 25 websites found that colleges varied in retesting policies, with some not allowing any retesting, some allowing students only one retest during their time at the college, others allowing several retests per academic year, and others allowing three retests per enrollment at the college. Waiting periods required for retesting varied from 24 hours to 3 years. According to an interviewee at one college that had recently implemented a limitation on retesting, the decision was made because it was "felt that students were simply retesting too much." In order to retest, students at some colleges must justify their rationale and request permission from counselors, the assessment center, the admissions and records department, or the matriculation director. In apparent contradiction to statewide regulations, one college website stated that students would be charged a $10 fee for retesting, unless they requested and were granted an exemption to the fee.[11]

At one college, if students decide to retest and receive a lower score than they did during their initial testing, only the lower score is valid for placement recommendations and waiving of prerequisites. An administrator at this college said that if students place "at the bottom of the barrel," counselors have a conversation with them and try to determine if these were "true placements" or if the students simply need to brush up before taking the test again. At a different college, if students enroll in a course, they must wait six months before retesting. This policy was set to ensure that students are not using the test as a method to "jump levels." At another college, a matriculation staff member reported that, for "logistical" reasons, students are not allowed to retest at all once they have started a sequence. This staff member also reported that faculty believe students who retest are "cheating the system."

Meanwhile, it is unclear how students at many colleges learn about the option to retest. Only 14 of the 25 college websites we examined provided information on retaking the English test, and only 7 provided information about retaking the ESL test.

In contrast to colleges that discouraged retesting, at one college retesting was found to be beneficial to student success. The testing administrator at this college cited data showing that 80% of students who retested were placed into a higher level the second time they took the test. These students had higher success and persistence rates than students who took the placement test only once, leading the college to provide more opportunities for students to retest. At the same time, the college was mindful of the costs associated with retesting and has embarked on a campaign to encourage students to prepare for taking the tests the first time.

To conclude this section, first generation college students in general, and US-LM students in particular, may lack knowledge concerning the stakes of college placement tests, often do not prepare for the tests, may be discouraged or disallowed from retesting, and may have their lowest rather than highest score used for placement purposes. In contrast, in order to prepare for high-stakes college entrance exams for four-year colleges (e.g. SAT, ACT), many students spend great amounts of time and money preparing for the tests, retesting is not only

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[11] According to the Student Fee Handbook, no fee may be charged for placement tests that are a condition of enrollment for a course, even if the student takes the test multiple times (Legal Affairs, 2010).

allowed but expected, and the highest score is typically used by colleges. While it could be argued that placement tests are not typically designed to be high-stakes, and therefore test preparation and retesting are not crucial, we have pointed out throughout this report the high stakes associated with these tests in California community colleges. Given the stakes involved, colleges' testing policies and practices should be designed to support students to do their best.

Summary of Key Findings: Test Preparation and Retesting

- College personnel expressed different views on the value and appropriateness of encouraging students to prepare for placement tests.
- College retesting policies varied widely, with waiting periods varying from 24 hours to 3 years.
- Most colleges discouraged retesting, with some requiring students to request permission, provide justifications, or pay a fee to retest.
- Some staff and faculty members viewed retesting as "cheating the system" because students retested too frequently or tried to "jump levels" into higher courses.
- One college used student data to show that students were more successful when placed by scores the second time they took the placement test.

Beyond the Tests: Multiple Measures, Counseling, and Challenging Placements

The assessment process in California's community colleges is designed to include more than placement tests. One of the fundamental principles of testing in educational settings is that no single test should be used for high-stakes decisions (see American Education Research Association, 2000; American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999). For US-LM students in particular, who may perform poorly on placement tests that focus primarily on grammar skills but may be able to fulfill many language functions in English, additional assessment practices are necessary. Ideally, multiple measures and conversations with counselors can inform placement by providing a more complete picture of students' language strengths and needs, as well as their academic backgrounds and goals. Meanwhile, policies surrounding the formal and informal mechanisms whereby students can challenge initial placement results either enhance or diminish the tools they have at their disposal to be agents in key decisions impacting their education.

Policy and Practice Relevant to the Use of Multiple Measures

Based on state regulations, systemwide community college policy requires that all colleges use "multiple measures," both in order to recommend placements and to satisfy prerequisite course requirements for ESL, English, and mathematics course sequences:

> Multiple measures are a diverse battery of procedures and methods for gaining information about individuals or groups of students. These procedures may or may not include standardized testing. While a carefully selected, valid, reliable and unbiased test instrument certainly provides important information regarding basic skills needs, the objectives of matriculation legislation (Assembly Bill 3, Seymour-Campbell) and the clarifying regulations of Title 5 endeavor to effect a more complete description of the student than does testing alone . . .

"In implementing matriculation services, community college districts shall not…use any single instrument, method, or procedure, by itself, for placement, required referral to appropriate services, or subsequent evaluation of any student…" [Title 5, Section 55521(a)(3)]

Thus, matriculation assessment should provide a holistic profile of student strengths and weaknesses based on a variety of informational sources (*multiple measures*).

<div align="center">(CCCAA, 2005, p. 3)</div>

According to information provided to the colleges (CCCAA, 2005), "typical" multiple measures include the following:

- Standardized placement tests (assessment instruments) – *require validation and Chancellor's Office approval*
- Writing samples – *require validation and Chancellor's Office approval*
- Performance-based assessments (listening comprehension tests, structured oral interviews, etc.) – *require validation and Chancellor's Office approval*
- Surveys, questionnaires
- Past educational experience (e.g., courses or degrees completed, high school or college grade point average, recency of completion of subject area courses)
- College plans (e.g., units intending to carry, number of hours intending to work while going to college, intended major)
- Student motivation
- Student self-assessment or self-evaluation

For placing students into ESL courses, colleges may use two test instruments that are not highly correlated with each other (e.g. a grammar test along with a reading test or listening/speaking test, but not a grammar test along with a writing sample) (CCCAA, 2005, p. 15).

According to the Assessment Association, other measures used by colleges include the following:

- Student's first/primary/native language
- Length of time living in the United States
- Years of schooling in native country
- Years of schooling in the United States
- Frequency of use of English in speaking, reading, and/or writing (outside the classroom)
- Student self-assessment of English speaking, reading, and/or writing abilities
- Student employment hours while enrolled at the college
- High school and/or adult education school ESL courses
- Parents' or spouse's proficiency in English

<div align="center">(CCCAA, 2005, p. 15)</div>

Choice of which specific multiple measures are to be used is left to individual colleges, to be "decided jointly by counselors, advisors, pertinent discipline faculty, assessment directors and assessment staff, matriculation coordinators, and research staff" (CCCAA, 2005, p. 4). While a placement test score plus one additional measure (such as an interview with a counselor)

constitutes an appropriate use of multiple measures, colleges are directed to err on the side of more rather than less information (CCCAA, 2005, p. 4).

Although these guidelines are relatively clear, there is little publicly available information about what multiple measures individual colleges actually use in practice and how they are used to inform student placement.[12] Despite the fact that the use of a placement test is not actually required by state regulations, and because placement tests were used at every college we studied for English (and all but one college for ESL), the term "multiple measures" was typically used to refer to sources of student information beyond the tests themselves.

Our interviews at the local college level revealed a wide variety of policies and practices surrounding what constitutes multiple measures, how and when they are employed and for what purposes, and how much information students are provided regarding their use. We also found that at some colleges, the question of what multiple measures are used, and how they are used, is a source of tension between faculty and counselors. To our surprise, we learned that at some colleges, multiple measures are only employed if students officially or unofficially challenge the placement results that derive from the placement test, in apparent contradiction with state policy.

Communicating with Students about Multiple Measures. In terms of students' access to information about multiple measures, only 14 of the 25 college websites we examined mentioned the use of multiple measures to place students, and those that did rarely detailed which measures could be used or how they were used in the placement process. In fact, only one website both defined multiple measures and specified the potential sources of information that could be used. Websites are clearly not the only source of information about multiple measures, but given the decreasing accessibility of guidance counselors due to inadequate funding, they represent an important source of widespread access to information.

Selected Use of Multiple Measures. According to our interview participants, at several colleges no information other than the placement test score is used for placement unless students question the results of the test, either formally or informally. This means that for the vast majority of students at these colleges, there is, in effect, no use of multiple measures for placement purposes. For example, at one college, students must question their placement recommendations during a group orientation session of 40 to 150 students, in order for a counselor to use multiple measures to assess the student's placement and potentially re-place the student. At this particular college, if a student does not raise any concern, his or her placement recommendation is based entirely on a single test score. Consistent with practices at this college, two different college websites characterized multiple measures as a process students request only if they are not happy with their initial course placement based on a single test score, such as the following:

> Students most often indicate that the placement test results provide a clear and accurate assessment of their current academic skills. *On occasion*, however, students have requested the use of additional measures of their academic skills and abilities. *In this case*, counselors are prepared to work with you to review and assess multiple measures to determine your correct course placement. (Emphases added.)

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[12] The survey conducted by the Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment (2008) did not include questions about multiple measures.

Students' Responsibility to Supply the Information. This same college emphasized that it is the student's responsibility both to request multiple measures to be used in course placement, and to provide the sources of information to be used.

> It is your responsibility to provide multiple measure assessment tools if you wish to deviate from your placement test recommendations in English, reading, writing, and mathematics when enrolling in courses that have skill prerequisites.

Embedding Multiple Measures into Placement Tests. Although students may not be aware of the practice,[13] several colleges embed their multiple measures into the placement test itself, through a set of questions delivered as part of computer-based placement tests. As mentioned previously, tests such as ACCUPLACER give local colleges the option of developing their own set of questions that appear as part of the placement test itself, either before, during, or after the actual test questions. According to matriculation personnel at one college, ACCUPLACER also provides a list of potential questions to use. Our discussions with matriculation personnel at one college revealed that multiple measures at this college consist of five questions added to students' computerized tests. Students' responses to these questions, which include questions about when students last took English, grades received in high school, and what language skills they typically use in their job, are quantified and integrated into students' overall placement test score. At another college with questions embedded in the English placement test (CTEP), these questions are only considered if the student is near the cutoff score.

In some cases, a numeric score is assigned to students' responses on the questions and the total "multiple measures" score is combined with the placement test score to recommend placement levels and to fulfill prerequisites. For example, one college administers 15 questions during the test, and students can receive between one and three extra points to be added to their raw score based on how they answer these background questions. At two colleges, answers to these questions can subtract points from the students' raw scores. In other cases, student responses are potentially available to counselors for placement decisions, but it was unclear in the case of at least one college whether this information is actually provided to or used by counselors. Results of demographic questions embedded in the ACCUPLACER can also be set up to determine whether students receive an ESL test or the regular English ACCUPLACER, although we did not find evidence of this practice being used in the colleges we studied.

Colleges varied in the number of multiple measures used and the weight placed on them in the matriculation process. One college had suspended the use of all multiple measures by counselors themselves, considering only the college-generated questions embedded in the computerized test. As an administrator at the college explained, the use of multiple measures other than the questions embedded in the test had been suspended until it could be ensured that they were being applied uniformly and fairly.

Use of K-12 Measures. Counselors or administrators at four out of the ten subset colleges discussed using students' high school transcripts to inform placement, but community colleges in California have no direct access to high school transcripts, so they can only be used if students bring them to counselors or if counselors conduct assessment and registration at local high schools. One counselor discussed the fact that transcripts from different feeder high

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[13] No college website in our sample discussed the use of multiple measure questions embedded in a computerized test.

schools included different information. While all transcripts include course numbers and names, grades, and total credits earned, not all transcripts included English language proficiency levels and scores on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Additionally, college personnel discussed being skeptical of the value of information on high school transcripts, pointing out that courses with the same name at different high schools might cover very different curricula.

In sum, multiple measures were often employed only when students indicated a desire to challenge their placements, and it was students' responsibility to provide the additional data to be used. Yet little or no information was made available to students regarding what information could be used or how it would be used. Relying on language minority students to investigate and navigate the multiple measures process with minimal guidance from colleges seems unlikely to result in either colleges benefiting from potentially helpful sources of additional information or in students' rights during the matriculation process being upheld.

Summary of Key Findings: Multiple Measures Policy and Practice

- State regulations require colleges to use multiple measures as part of the placement process.
- In practice, the use of multiple measures varied widely across colleges.
- Colleges communicated little information about the use of multiple measures to students.
- At some colleges, multiple measures were only employed if students officially or unofficially challenged the placement results that derived from the placement test.
- Practices surrounding the use of multiple measures was often a source of tension between faculty and counselors.

The Role of Counselors and ESL and English Instructors

Counselors' Professional Judgment. Counselors play a key role in the recommendation of placements and the student prerequisite challenge process in general, and in the use of multiple measures in particular. Interviewees at several colleges described how counselors used professional judgment to interpret various data at their disposal to recommend student placement and to certify that prerequisites had been met or successfully challenged. Counselors discussed wanting to use a holistic picture of students' backgrounds, experiences, and goals to override what they often considered to be inaccurate testing results. As one counselor put it, "a really low score and excellent grades . . . raises a flag . . . What happens is sometimes the students get given this test and they don't have enough information or they don't take it seriously and . . . they don't try." This counselor explained that because community college placement tests are given at local high schools before students are knowledgeable about community college placement procedures and stakes, many students do not take the test seriously or understand the outcomes.

Conflict Between Faculty Members and Counselors. The extent to which counselors could override placement exam recommendations was criticized by faculty at some colleges, and at other colleges faculty felt they had little role in the matriculation process in general. Although questions about the working relationship between faculty and counselors were not part of our

interview protocol, in their answers to other questions, personnel at four out of the ten subset colleges described conflict between the faculty and counselors over use of multiple measures.

At one college, English faculty perceived counselors to be abusing multiple measures to override placement scores and place students into higher level English courses. At this college, and some others, an ideological distinction was evident between English faculty and counselors, with faculty wanting counselors in borderline cases to err on the side of placing students into courses lower than their ability levels. One faculty member argued that students should be placed in lower level classes whenever possible, so that students could improve their grade point average and build higher self-esteem, a philosophy he summed up as "when in doubt, always go lower." In the words of this instructor, "I kind of want people to take classes lower than they should in some ways because it's good for them." At another college, an English instructor promoted "erring on the side of caution and getting students in [lower level English courses] who have some issues . . . They're at a community college, so it's a fairly cheap way of learning these skills."

Faculty Professional Judgment. For their part, some faculty were concerned that their own professional judgment is not respected in the matriculation process. One English instructor felt frustrated that "people that don't know the discipline [are] placing students in the discipline." According to this faculty member, English faculty could identify Generation 1.5 students "in two seconds... every person in my department would be able to do that, because we've been teaching these people for 20 years, and we know who they are." There was a range of ways in which faculty at different colleges could (or could not) influence their students' placement decisions once students enrolled in the course. English and ESL instructors often give diagnostic writing sample assessments to their students the first day of class. At some colleges, these are used to adjust placements; at others, they are simply used to inform the instructor of student skill level. One English instructor explained:

> Say for example, we have a lot of students who are truly ESL students who don't belong in the English track. They'll do the writing sample, and we'll say, "You know it really looks like you're really going to have trouble in this class. Have you ever thought of taking an ESL class?"

At another college, ESL faculty members speak with students and fellow instructors in order to move students to different levels. According to one faculty member, "we maybe have a writing sample where we would talk to the teacher of the next level and say, 'What do you think?' […] and then we move them back or forth." At a different college, an English instructor said she had tried to recommend placement changes for students, but it was logistically impossible to re-place students once the semester had already started, due to shortage of space in other courses.

Funding Limitations. Meanwhile, funding shortages in California community colleges have severely limited the role that counselors can play in the matriculation process. In response to calls for mandated matriculation services, the Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment (2008) reported that funding at that time (even before the most recent rounds of budget cuts) did not allow for adequate services. For example, in Fall 2006, more than half of students did not receive mandated counseling services (p 4). According to the Task Force, "[a]ssessment without orientation and counseling services denies a student the information he/she needs to make an informed choice about which classes to take" (p 5).

In our research, conducted before the most recent round of cuts, we found multiple examples of the impact of inadequate funding for counseling. A large box accompanying one

college website's counseling hours states, "DISCLAIMER: Due to staffing levels, advisory services may be limited or not always available." During a site visit at another college, we saw a large sign in the counseling center stating that although the college is "very pleased that you are seeking counseling services," due to a heavy volume of students during the first two weeks of the semester, drop-in counseling is limited to 15-minute sessions for counseling related to immediate enrollment. Students were encouraged to schedule a longer appointment for the "comprehensive assistance you need and deserve" in order to reach academic goals. However, counselors at some colleges described how difficult it is for students to get such appointments in a timely manner. A counselor at one college reported having telephone appointments with students on her cell phone as she walked to and from her car in the parking lot, as a means of trying to reach more students.

In concluding this section, we return to the different perspectives on remediation and acceleration we discussed in the Frameworks and Orientations section earlier. The dominant orientation of most ESL and English faculty we interviewed at the 10 subset colleges valued remediation, as faculty sought to promote policies and practices that aimed to place students into precollegiate coursework designed to address their various academic and linguistic needs *before* those students entered college-level coursework. English faculty at one college went as far as to say that they preferred to place students one level *below* the level indicated by the placement test, consistent with their belief that remedial English coursework provides a solid foundation for students before moving up through the English sequence. However, as we will discuss further in our conclusions and recommendations, the exploration of options for greater acceleration of US-LM students seems warranted, given the time it takes for students to progress through precollegiate course sequences, the questionable outcomes associated with such sequences (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010), and the need for students to experience language and literacy in authentic academic and professional settings.

Summary of Key Findings: The Role of Counselors and ESL/English Faculty

• Counselors play a key role in the placement process, yet lack of adequate funding curtails this role.

• Conflict was reported between faculty and counselors over the role of counselors' professional judgment in placement.

• Faculty often argued that, when in doubt, students should be placed lower rather than higher in remedial course sequences.

• Counselors often argued for using as much information as possible to place students, including overriding test results when necessary.

• At some colleges, faculty recommended students be placed in a different course after the first class session, but at other colleges this was logistically impossible or against college policy.

The Challenge Process

College websites often describe the courses assigned to students as a result of the placement process as "recommendations," and it is true that students cannot be required to take any particular course. However, students can be prevented from taking other courses based on their placement results. As one interviewee explained it, students who wish to make progress

toward the college-level English course required for degrees and transfer are "basically obligated" to take the courses they have tested into, "because of the prerequisites and the way they're written." An administrator at one college put it this way: "we can't require students to enter these courses . . . but we have a fairly robust set of prerequisites [to encourage them to do so]." Due to this role of the placement process as determining access to gatekeeping English courses, it is important for US-LM students to have the ability to ensure their placement results are accurate, allowing them to enroll in courses that give them the greatest opportunity to progress toward academic goals. Colleges have mechanisms in place whereby students can challenge placement results, yet despite the fact that instructors indicated that students are often surprised and upset by their test scores and low placements, interviews at 8 out of 10 subset colleges reported that students usually accept their placement recommendations. US-LM students and other underrepresented students were reportedly least likely to dispute their course placements. In this section, we discuss options available for challenging placement results, and some of the obstacles impacting US-LM students' likelihood of doing so.

What Does it Mean to "Challenge a Placement"? Two types of "challenges" are discussed in California community colleges. First, "*prerequisite* challenge" is a process governed by state Title 5 regulation, which places the burden on students to present evidence that a prerequisite is inappropriate based on a number of grounds. Grounds for this kind of challenge are the following:

(1) The prerequisite or corequisite has not been established in accordance with the district's process for establishing prerequisites and corequisites;
(2) The prerequisite or corequisite is in violation of this section;
(3) The prerequisite or corequisite is either unlawfully discriminatory or is being applied in an unlawfully discriminatory manner;
(4) The student has the knowledge or ability to succeed in the course or program despite not meeting the prerequisite or corequisite;
(5) The student will be subject to undue delay in attaining the goal of his or her educational plan because the prerequisite or corequisite course has not been made reasonably available; or
(6) Such other grounds for challenge as may be established by the district governing board.
(Title 5, Section 55003(m))

Second, local colleges also discuss "challenging *placements*," which, depending on the individual college, is either a formal or informal process that allows students to retest on the original placement exam or take a special "challenge exam"; speak with a counselor, instructor, or divisional administrator; or present evidence of having met the prerequisite through other means (e.g. high school course transcripts or "alternate proof of course equivalence or competency"). Perhaps in part due to the two different types of challenges, the challenge process is often difficult to understand. Many faculty and staff we interviewed, even some of those involved in matriculation functions at their colleges, were not clear on the details of their colleges' challenge process, or the number of students use it.

Obstacles to Challenging Placements. Although challenge policies are supposed to be published online and in print materials such as course catalogs, our website analysis and interviews suggested that this information is often incomplete or difficult to comprehend. Over one quarter of the websites we analyzed (7 out of 25) included *no* information about the challenge process, and only 6 of the 25 colleges included information about how students can challenge *placement* recommendations (as opposed to the official prerequisite challenge process). While the two types of challenges are related, in that placement exams and multiple

measures serve as the fulfillment of a prerequisite, this might not always be clear to students, especially when reading college websites that describe the prerequisite challenge process without explaining that the placement exams and multiple measures serve as prerequisites. College websites varied in the extent to which they clarified the difference between the two types of challenges. Colleges also varied in the extent to which their presentation of information about the challenge process seemed designed to encourage or discourage students from taking advantage of this option, as we will discuss later in this report.

Our interviews with faculty and counselors also indicated that students are often neither aware of nor likely to use the challenge process. Interviewees at several colleges reported that students generally do not know they can challenge their placement recommendations. Faculty members at one subset college told us that students are simply not informed they can challenge their placements. At three colleges, interviews cited bureaucratic obstacles created by the college to informally discourage students from trying to change their placements.

Likelihood of Successful Challenges. Interviewees at four colleges described flexible retest policies and opportunities for students to "argue their case" with counselors. At one such college, the assessment director said that there were a substantial number of students placing one and two levels below college-level English who successfully argued their cases with counselors to be re-placed into college-level English.

Other colleges appeared to more firmly enforce placement recommendations. At one college, students may not register for any course higher *or* lower than their placement recommendation. An instructor at this college said that high achieving students end up in lower level classes because they did not take the test seriously, but these students do not have any recourse and must complete the course they placed into. At one college, the matriculation director explained that students are informed that they can challenge their placement but that it would be unlikely for such challenges to succeed: "The student would have to show that he or she . . . had the proficiency, and if they don't have the proficiency in the assessment, then how do they have the proficiency outside of that?" She could only recall one student (a published author) who had actually challenged a placement, although she could not recall whether that challenge was successful.

Which Students Are Most Likely to Challenge? In the words of one ESL faculty member, students from non-dominant groups exhibit "a lack of awareness of what their rights or what their responsibilities as a student are" because they are so "used to people telling [them] 'this is what you have to do' and not having that feeling of agency that 'I can have control over what I choose to do,'" so they learn to accept being "bored" in their classes. Several college personnel commented that marginalized students are the least likely students to challenge their placements, due to lack of information about the process as well as having been socialized to respect institutional authority. One English instructor said that native speakers are more vocal about their dissatisfaction with placement results. According to her, the most vocal tend to be white males. In addition, "there tends to be more of a sense among our Latino students that the college is the expert or that our tests... must be good measures if that's what the college is using." Another faculty member reported that international students tend to use the challenge process more than US-LM students do, perhaps because of the higher fees paid by international students and the tendency for them to be placed in multiple ESL courses simultaneously.

Summary of Key Findings: Challenging Placements

- The challenge process at most colleges was difficult to understand, even for faculty and staff, and not widely publicized to students.
- Although students were reportedly "shocked" by placement recommendations, most students did not challenge their placements.
- Bureaucratic obstacles at some colleges most likely discouraged students from trying to change their placements.
- Some colleges were more flexible, and provided opportunities for students to speak to counselors to change their placements.
- According to faculy and counselors, US-LM students rarely knew they could challenge placements and were less likely than other students to express dissatisfaction with placement results.

Instructional Options for US- LM Students

Having reviewed the assessment and placement process, we now turn to a discussion of instructional options for US-LM students. As in community colleges nationally, US-LM students in California community colleges generally face two instructional options: ESL or developmental English courses. Often, neither option is well suited for this population (see Bunch, 2008, 2009; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Harklau et al., 1999), and it has been argued that US-LM students are rendered invisible as their needs are conflated with those of other groups (Roberge, 2002). But before turning to perspectives among interviewees regarding how well suited ESL and English courses at their colleges were for US-LM students, it is first necessary to discuss the wide variety of goals and foci of ESL and English departments at the 10 subset colleges in our sample. The conception, design and focus of each college's ESL and English programs impact how these departments respond to the needs of US-LM students, and where these students might be best served at the particular college.

ESL Curriculum and Goals

ESL Course Levels and Sequences. ESL curricula and course sequences vary greatly among colleges. As presented earlier in Table 3, the 10 subset colleges had ESL sequences ranging from two to nine levels. Depending on the college students attend, and where they initially place in the course sequence, they could spend anywhere from one to five years in ESL and subsequent remedial English courses before reaching transfer-level English, even if passing all courses and not taking any time off.

The ESL Stigma. Many ESL departments struggled with the stigma associated with ESL courses. One English instructor explained that students "feel it's a demotion and that it's insulting because they can often be with classmates who didn't even go to a high school here." Two colleges reported that their ESL enrollments were suffering as a result of US-LM students' selection of English courses over ESL. Interviewees at another two colleges reported discussions about changing the name of the ESL program due to the "shame" Generation 1.5 students associate with ESL courses. Notably, two other colleges had already changed the name of their programs to attempt to avoid the ESL stigma. At one of these colleges, it was reported that ESL had a "real bad PR problem" and ESL courses were renamed "English for Multilingual Students" in an attempt to sound less remedial and remove some of the stigma.

Traditional ESL Foci. As discussed earlier, the ESL stigma is undoubtedly due, in part, to students' negative experiences with ESL in high school, or, at the minimum, their eagerness to be "done" with ESL. At the same time, US-LM students may not view community college ESL programs, which draw a wide range of students who have many different goals, as meeting their needs. For example, one college website described a range of ESL goals: "The [ESL] program helps limited-English-proficient (LEP) students acquire the language skills they need to get better jobs, achieve their educational goals, and participate fully in the life of the community." An administrator at another college explicitly stated that their ESL program was designed for adults who were reentering formal education. However, due to the college's recent switch from using a locally designed writing assessment to a computerized, automatically branching test (see Testing section above), Generation 1.5 students were being placed into ESL classes, despite the fact that the courses were not designed with these students in mind.

ESL as Academic Preparation. Other colleges attempted to strike a balance between traditional ESL instruction and college preparation. At one large college ESL department with many courses, an ESL faculty member emphasized that ESL curricula can address academic language development. This instructor integrates content-based materials into ESL courses, often based on materials from courses that serve as General Education requirements, and she structures task-based activities that reference academic expectations. For example, this faculty member has designed an entire course around a focus on the health sciences, a popular degree and certificate choice for many ESL students. Some college websites emphasized this academic mission for ESL, variously describing their programs as designed to prepare students to "use English effectively in their academic work," to "help you succeed in English 1 and other courses to insure your successful graduation from X College or transfer to a university," and "to pursue both transfer and career goals."

An academic focus for ESL was even stronger at a different college, where faculty and administrators consistently described their approach to ESL instruction as one of academic preparation. This departmental ethos was deliberately constructed a number of years ago, when, according to interviewees at the college, the ESL department was seen as a low-status, "ugly stepchild," with very few ESL students moving on to college-level courses. Under the leadership of an ESL instructor, the department deliberately set out to transform this image, raising the profile of the department and emphasizing that ESL is a pathway to college. There was some amount of "turf war," according to interviewees, with some ESL instructors still wanting to limit their instruction to traditional "fun [ESL] things." Over time, faculty were hired who were on board with an ESL mission that focuses on preparation for terminal degrees, college transfer, and professional endeavors such as business technology and early childhood education. This focus on academic preparation was consistent with remarks from a top-level administrator at the college, who argued that one of the most pressing issues facing community colleges in California and nationwide is how to integrate disadvantaged students into the academic mainstream. According to the administrator, the goal of ESL cannot just be to "teach English," but rather to prepare students for college. Perhaps not surprisingly, faculty at this college believed that Generation 1.5 students would be well served in either the regular English or the ESL programs.

Summary of Key Findings: ESL Curriculum and Goals
•ESL course sequences began two to nine levels below transfer-level English.
• Some ESL programs were primarily orientated toward adults reentering formal education.
• Some programs were devoted to addressing language errors before moving on to English courses.
• Others focused on academic preparation, pathways to transfer-level English courses, support for professional degrees, and integration with mainstream college-level disciplinary courses.
• Most ESL departments struggled with the "ESL stigma," which in some cases affected enrollments.

English Curricula and Goals

English Course Levels and Sequences. As discussed earlier, interviewees described the fact that most US-LM students choose the English placement test over the ESL test and are placed in precollegiate English courses. As with ESL departments, English curricula and course sequences varied greatly between colleges. The 10 subset colleges had precollegiate English course sequences beginning from two to six levels below college-level English (see Table 3). Depending on the college students attend, they could spend anywhere from one to three years in remedial English before reaching transfer-level English, provided they pass all courses and do not abandon their studies.

Gatekeeping "Mastery" Writing Exams. At one college, an instructor explained that success in the English track is entirely dependent on students' ability to perform on a timed, in-class writing assignment. Two other colleges use mastery exams in English courses. At one college, these were described as "board-graded finals" that weigh heavily on students' final grades. According to an ESL instructor, due to these exams, Generation 1.5 students typically spend two to four semesters in precollegiate English courses before they gain access to college-level English. At the second college, an English instructor reported that precollegiate English courses were focused on preparing students to pass the mastery exam, which was an 80-minute in-class writing exam, worth roughly 60% of a student's course grade. Students cannot move on to college-level English until they have passed the exam. According to this instructor, many students fail the first time they take the test, and some remain "stuck" in precollegiate courses. He also reported that, because the course is focused on preparing students to pass the mastery exam, students are not taught to write multiple draft essays before they reach transfer-level English.

Discrete Skills Approaches. At another college, the English department focused on providing a sequence progression from sentence to paragraph writing to essay writing, with a course dedicated to each of those skills. The lowest level course (three levels below college level) was described as "a big holding-tank class" which was created because "there needed to be some type of class before the grammar class, some type of sifting, triage class." In this gateway class, one instructor said he "had to throw out the curriculum" and cover study skills, such as note taking, paying attention in class, and how to ask a question. Faculty described the vast majority of students in this course as being Generation 1.5 students, with a smaller number of disabled students, students with severe brain injuries and other problems, and deaf students.

Beyond "Basic Skills." Critical thinking, reading, and writing are clearly valued at the collegiate level (ICAS, 2002), and several English instructors discussed efforts to include these skills in precollegiate levels as well. At one college, an English instructor said that the English department was currently trying to build in critical thinking and research skills even at the lowest level course (two levels below college level). Student retention in the English track was an issue raised at several colleges, with English instructors noting that some students will repeat courses multiple times. "It's got to be frustrating for them. It's frustrating for me."

Summary of Key Findings: English Curricula and Goals
• Precollegiate English course sequences began two to six levels below transfer-level English.
• Some colleges' English curricula focused on preparing students for end-of-course "mastery" exams.
• Other colleges focused on mechanics and organization, with separate courses focusing on writing sentences, paragraphs, and short essays.
• Others focused on critical thinking, reading and writing around intellectually challenging topics.
• Faculty reported that students were often "stuck" at precollegiate levels, especially in courses with "mastery" exams.

Transitioning From ESL to English

ESL and English departments are organized differently and situated in different institutional units from college to college.[14] At some colleges, faculty highlighted the lack of communication and coordination between ESL and English departments. For example, English faculty commented that, except for individual instructors who happened to teach in both the ESL and English departments, there was little formal or informal communication or collaboration between the two departments. Personnel at three colleges reported constructive efforts at collaboration between ESL and English faculty relevant to the education of US-LM students. As a result of collaboration between the ESL and English departments at one college, each level of developmental ESL and English below college level have common curricular goals leading up to college-level English. As one English faculty member described it, instructors use different strategies in ESL courses compared with English courses, but students should be able to do the same things when they leave an ESL or English course at the same level.

Table 3 lists how students transition from ESL or remedial English to college-level English and, where relevant, how students transition from ESL to remedial English. Notably, at six colleges, students proceed directly from the highest ESL level to college-level English. At the remaining colleges, students must begin the English sequence either one or two levels below college-level English, even after completing ESL. A faculty member at one college commented that, although ESL and English courses at the college are designed to be parallel tracks leading up to college-level English, ESL faculty often recommend that students completing the ESL

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[14] Among the colleges we studied, we found at least one joint ESL/English department (each with a different director within the department); several ESL and English departments in the same division (e.g. Humanities or Communications); and some in different divisions (e.g. the ESL department in its own division along with international education and the English department in a school of liberal arts).

sequence begin one level below college-level English. This practice, according to the faculty member we interviewed, undermines the integrity of the parallel tracks. In a counter example at another college, students who complete the ESL sequence have to take two semesters of English courses before moving on to transfer-level English. This policy is set by the English department as a "gate-keeping mechanism before 1A," but one ESL instructor informed us that she advises students exiting the ESL sequence to avoid these English courses by taking the English placement test and attempting to place directly into transfer-level English.

At many colleges, a belief in the value of precollegiate work was demonstrated by the existence of numerous levels of basic skills coursework in ESL and English (see Table 3). In one college, after completing four levels of ESL, students are required to begin two levels below transfer-level English. A staff member at the college expressed frustration with this policy: "We finally said that's ridiculous, they'll never finish. They'll get their AA degree in English before they get out of here." An English instructor at another college discussed his frustration at policies that prevent students from making more rapid progress through remedial course sequences: "You know, I think if I would have entered a system like this in 1976, I still would be in college."

At a different college, statements by a high-level administrator emphasized the importance of integration with the academic "mainstream" as quickly and effectively as possible. This goal echoes recent calls, both in California and nationally (e.g. Bailey, 2009), to find ways to accelerate the progress of underprepared students. This college used the current budget climate as a catalyst to examine the length of their ESL course sequences and their success rates. After working with the college's institutional researcher to examine student data showing that students who enrolled concurrently non-ESL courses were more successful than those enrolling in ESL alone, the college determined it would be beneficial to integrate previously separate courses into fewer courses. The college also encouraged students to enroll concurrently in non-ESL courses, especially mathematics and computer science, and ESL courses were scheduled to allow students to take these other courses.

Summary of Key Findings: Transitioning from ESL to English

• At some colleges, cross-departmental collaboration led to common ESL and English goals and parallel tracks to transfer-level English.

• In practice, parallel tracks did not always function as designed.

• Some faculty and staff expressed frustration at the number of ESL and English courses required for students to reach college-level English.

• One college, after reviewing student data, reduced the number of ESL units students take per quarter and encouraged students to enroll concurrently in non-ESL courses.

Appropriateness of ESL and English Courses for US-LM students

Although most US-LM students are reportedly enrolled in remedial English courses, interview respondents at seven of the ten colleges said that these students *should* be in ESL courses. One ESL instructor said that English instructors at her college "were constantly telling us they had students that should be in ESL." It was related by another English instructor at a different college that some English faculty had strong sentiments about students who "do not belong" in English courses. As discussed earlier, there was a concerted effort at many colleges to

encourage students to take the ESL placement test and place into the ESL pathway. An ESL instructor at one college argued that Generation 1.5 students are "better served by well-trained ESL teachers, linguistically" because ESL teachers can teach these students "what they need to know about verbs and articles." This instructor mentioned that English courses, on the other hand, were focused on nonstandard English issues, such as comma splices.

ESL instructors at two colleges said that Generation 1.5 students were not served well by either ESL or remedial English courses. But English instructors at several colleges indicated not only that they were comfortable with Generation 1.5 students in their classes, but that they viewed serving these students' needs as part of the central mission of English departments. Interestingly, at one of the colleges where ESL instructors argued that English instructors were not prepared to teach Generation 1.5 students, some English instructors themselves seemed to be comfortable with these students. One English instructor at the college, who considers herself to be Generation 1.5, pointed out that she took a job in community colleges because she wanted to work with Hispanic, first-generation college students. She described students in English classes as having a wide range of language and literacy strengths, characteristics, and needs. At a different college, one English instructor argued that "our students are our students and it's our job to teach them . . . the skills that they need to survive and to thrive in college and in life." Another said that with her background and training in pedagogy, she can "cater to all the groups," including ESL, Generation 1.5, and monolingual English-speaking students.

The conception, design, and focus of each college's ESL and English programs affect their ability to focus on the needs of Generation 1.5 students. At one college, where the ESL program focused explicitly on older, reentry adults, an administrator argued that Generation 1.5 students were better served in the English sequence because students there were more likely to move to college-level coursework. An ESL instructor at a different college said that most students in the program were traditional ESL students, and therefore instructors "teach to them rather than to the 1.5 Generation students." This instructor said that the department had not investigated how to better serve Generation 1.5 students. At another college, a counselor stated that one of the greatest challenges was trying to educate both traditional ESL and Generation 1.5 students in the same ESL courses, but that the college could not "economically" split the two groups. An English instructor at a different college noted that all multi-ability classrooms are difficult to teach: "I don't know if I could even teach in the community college if I hadn't taught high school and been taught specific things with how to bring a class with so many different abilities together."

At four colleges, faculty members were engaged in professional development activities to learn how to better support US-LM students. An English instructor from one college reported that Generation 1.5 had been an "exciting topic" for the past five years, and the English department had brought in guest speakers and sent faculty to conferences to learn about these issues. At another college, both an ESL and an English instructor discussed the need for English teachers to have a background or training in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) in order to identify "ESL errors" in their Generation 1.5 students' writing. The English instructor stated that such a background is also needed to realize when not to attribute errors to students' native language background. According to him, "the mainstream English teacher may just assume they're ESL . . . and just attribute all their grammar mistakes to their native language when that isn't necessarily the case." At a different college, an instructor explained, "rather than identifying different classes, what we've done is we've tried to identify different faculty members who have had training . . . across levels." An administrator at this college argued that "all the faculty in ESL and developmental reading and English are aware of Generation 1.5."

Summary of Key Findings: Appropriateness of ESL and English courses for US-LM students
•Because most ESL programs are focused on "traditional " ESL students, ESL curriculum is often not designed for US-LM students. •Nonetheless, faculty and staff at a majority of colleges said that US-LM students should be in ESL courses. • ESL faculty generally reported US-LM students would be best served by ESL courses, but some claimed that these students were not well served by either English or ESL. • Some English faculty viewed serving US-LM students as a central mission of English departments. • Faculty training around Generation 1.5 students was cited as a positive development at some colleges, and an area of need at others.

A Third Path?

At several colleges, interviewees discussed the need for separate courses or programs that address the needs of Generation 1.5 students. As one ESL instructor put it, Generation 1.5 students "need to have some kind of course that combines all the rhetorical modes and the critical thinking [and] developing writing skills that they can get from the English side, but also some work on the structure, on the editing that they can get from ESL. So we need some kind of combination that we don't have yet." At one college, a course was developed and approved that would have targeted the needs of US-LM students with a variety of needs, but because of fiscal constraints and a shortage of faculty qualified to teach it, the course has never been offered. No college in our sample had actually mounted a course exclusively designed for Generation 1.5 students.

At another college, the Reading/Writing Lab was a designated space for faculty across disciplines to share ideas and collaborate on ways to provide language support for students in general. For example, one history professor identified a need for his students to better prepare for a reading quiz, so the lab developed a workshop to provide specific language support for students enrolled in this history course. At a different college, the English department had created a remedial English course one level below transfer level that was specifically designed for nonnative speakers (although not necessarily US-LM students).

The desire for courses targeted to Generation 1.5 courses was not unanimous. When asked about the desirability of such a course, one English department chair remarked "I don't know what kind of animal that would be," and pointed out that the lowest level of English at that college was created for the purpose of placing Generation 1.5 students, as well as other low-performing students and students with disabilities. At the same college, another English instructor noted that offering such a course "would be strange, because if we made a separate track for 1.5 . . . there would be nobody left in the [English] track."

Communicating with Students

In this section, we review how colleges communicate information about the matriculation process and instructional options to students, and the particular implications for US-LM students. As discussed earlier in the report, we were informed by faculty and staff members across our subset colleges that students generally do not understand the stakes or implications of placement tests and do not take the tests seriously. We were also informed that US-LM students may not generally contest their placement results, even if they are surprised by the results. In an effort to understand why students many not understand the stakes of the testing process, or why they do not often challenge their placements, we examined how colleges communicate testing and placement information to students.

Although we did not have the opportunity to investigate firsthand two important sources of information, student-counselor meetings and on-site orientation sessions, we did explore the quality of information available to students, both on 25 college websites and in printed materials made available to students at the five campuses we visited. Although websites are sometimes considered unreliable sources of information, they serve as one important source of information for students. In fact, personnel at the colleges consistently referred us to websites, and indicated that they referred students to them as the source of the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on the matriculation process.

Access to Information about Tests, Testing, and Retesting

On college websites, information about the assessment process was dominated by discussions of logistics, such as how students should sign up for a testing session and the times and locations that the tests are administered. All 25 colleges also included at least some information about the stakes of the assessment process, although colleges varied widely in how they described those stakes, the extent to which they emphasized or downplayed the stakes, how they discussed who has agency in deciding what courses students take, and the amount of information provided to students regarding how the assessment process translates into course placement.

Information about Tests. Although most colleges in our sample (21 of 25) included at least minimal information about the areas tested (e.g. writing, sentence structure, reading, etc.) and the format of the test (e.g. the number of questions on the test or whether the test was timed or untimed), just over half (14) provided the names of the placement tests they use for both English and ESL. Meanwhile, colleges varied greatly regarding the comprehensiveness of the

information they provided, meaning that students at some colleges had greater access to information to help them understand and prepare for the tests than did students at others.

Descriptions of the content and constructs of the placement tests on most websites consisted of very brief descriptions of the test topics (e.g. "The . . . Assessment covers three skill areas: reading, writing and mathematics"), and less than half of the colleges (10) named the sections of each test. In contrast, about one third of the colleges (7) included more detailed information about what students would have to do on the test ("Sentence skills: correct a sentence by choosing another word instead of the underlined one; rewrite a sentence without changing its meaning)." Two colleges included more comprehensive descriptions of the battery of tests used for English or ESL placement with specifics about the types of skills the tests measure, such as the following:

> The Reading Skills test evaluates comprehension of short passages. ... Half of the Reading Skills test contains straightforward comprehension items (paraphrasing, locating information, vocabulary on a phrase level, and pronoun reference). The other half assesses inference skills (main idea, fact vs. opinion, cause/effect logic, identifying irrelevant information, author's point of view, and applying the author's logic to another situation).

Sample Test Questions and Study Guides. In an effort to provide at least minimal information regarding the nature of the tests students needed to take, 18 of the 25 college websites we examined provided sample test questions for regular English placement tests on their own websites or referred students to sources of sample questions, such as testing company websites or college counseling offices. However, only 11 colleges, fewer than half of those in our sample, provided sample questions for ESL tests. Fewer than half of the colleges (10 of 25) referred students to test-taking tips, study guides, or full-length sample tests, available on their own websites, on other websites, or at a physical location in the college.

Several college websites (5 of the 25) referred students for information about placement tests to second party websites, including the College Board's website for information about the ACCUPLACER and the ACT website for information about the COMPASS. However, in several cases the links were inoperative or sent students to outdated and irrelevant sections of the test companies' websites, from which it was impossible to find information about the target placement test. In these cases, it is possible that students would be led to believe that the tests they needed to prepare for were other tests that these companies own, such as entrance exams for four-year colleges and universities. Also potentially confusing to students was one college's website, which linked students to another college's website for sample questions for the ACCUPLACER, a situation that could cause potential confusion if a student accidentally stayed with that college's website for information about matriculation policies, instead of remembering to return to the original college's website once done with the sample questions.

Access to Information about Course Sequences

College websites varied in terms of whether and how much information they provided about the ESL and English course sequences into which students must make the decision to enroll. Slightly over half of the colleges (17 of 25) provided some information on ESL or English course sequences, but we found that language minority students attempting to learn about, and perhaps compare, sequences of *both* ESL and English/reading courses could do so on fewer than half of the colleges' websites (11 out of 25).

Information about Course Credit. Regarding the crucial issue of which courses include credit that can be used toward either a terminal degree or transfer to a four-year university, only 6 out of the 25 colleges presented some information on these topics for ESL and only 9 colleges did so for English. Meanwhile, only 3 of the 25 colleges presented what we consider to be the "full" picture: that is, information for *both* ESL and English on which courses carry degree credit *and* which courses carry transfer credit. Even among the few websites offering information about what courses carry what kind of credit, information was sometimes minimal and incomplete, such as labeling a course as "transferable" but not indicating whether it granted credit for a degree.

Clear and Transparent Information. Several colleges provided clear and comprehensive information, demonstrating the kind of guidance that could be helpful for students in understanding which ESL and English courses grant credit for what. One college, for example, organized its list of the entire English course sequence into three categories, making it clear for every English course what kind of credit was involved: "READINESS for college-level reading"; "COLLEGE LEVEL (AA/AS degree-applicable)"; and "TRANSFER LEVEL (satisfies reading competency for AA/AS degree and transfer to CSU)."

A different college's webpage describing ESL course sequences explained that "completion of ESL 170 satisfies the Written Composition graduation requirement" and that "Students who wish to transfer to 4 year college or university must complete courses in the general ENGLISH program." The college also made it clear on its English course sequence page which courses were required for the Written Composition graduation requirement and which were "recommended" for transferring to a four-year college or university. This college also made an even more explicit effort to educate students about the credit associated with each course. An on-line "quiz" regarding information included on its orientation materials duplicated the

English and Reading course sequence chart and asked students to click on course descriptions and then answer questions such as the following: "READ 420 is transferable to: UC, CSU, Both, or Neither." Requiring students to access course descriptions not only prompts students to find specific information to answer this question, but also familiarizes them with various sources of information and highlights the importance of their thinking about transfer credit when planning their courses.

Information on Course Placement. Although there are a variety of means by which students can be informed about how test scores are used for placement recommendations (Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment, 2008), we found limited information provided on college websites about how test scores are translated into placement or how students should go about selecting courses. Most college websites were silent on the issue, and those that did provide information tended to steer students towards the classes that the placement test has recommended, rather than outlining for students the relative pros and cons of different decisions.

In summary, we found that college websites provided students with little access to information concerning placement tests, retesting, and course sequences. Information provided to students on college websites about placement tests was dominated by logistics, and students were provided with very little information regarding how placement scores would be used. Fewer than half of the websites provided information for students to learn about or compare ESL and English course sequences, and information about which courses would provide credit toward a degree or transfer was available on only a few websites. Websites thus generally provided an incomplete picture of both the placement process and instructional options available to US-LM students.

Summary of Key Findings: Access to Information about Course Sequences

- Language minority students at fewer than half of the colleges could use the websites to learn about or compare ESL and English course sequences.
- Fewer than one quarter of colleges provided any information on website about which ESL or English courses would provide credit toward a degree or transfer.
- Only 3 out of the 25 colleges provided information about degree AND transfer credit for both ESL AND English courses.
- Websites provided limited information regarding how assessment scores were translated into course placements.
- Several websites provided clear and transparent information on these topics.

Access to Information about the Purposes and Stakes of Assessment

Describing the Purposes of Assessment. All 25 college websites characterized the assessment process as providing the college or students themselves with information to place students in "appropriate" courses, with about two thirds of the colleges (17) describing the assessment process as important in contributing to students' academic goals or "success." About two thirds of college websites (18) also described assessment as prerequisites for certain courses, especially those in English, ESL, or mathematics. A small minority of colleges (3) stated that assessment was required for enrollment in *any* courses, and three (3) websites described the assessment process as required for priority registration or early enrollment. Slightly fewer than half of the websites (12) pointed out either that placement tests were *not* college entrance

examinations or that they were not "pass/fail" tests. Meanwhile, three (3) colleges stated that placement tests could not be used by students to gain credit for previous coursework or to advance through course sequences they had already begun.

Students' Role in Selecting Courses. Websites provided contrasting messages, both across colleges and often within each college's own website, about the role students play in using assessment information to make their own course-taking decisions. Over half of the websites (14 of 25) included references to students themselves using the information garnered from the assessment process; 12 described the use of assessment information as a joint endeavor between students and counselors; and 9 presented the information provided to students as recommendations, suggestions, or guidance.

On the other hand, over half of the websites (16), including many of the same websites that elsewhere suggested that students could use information from assessments to make their own decisions (with or without consulting with a counselor), included references that de-emphasized student or counselor agency. These websites often presented assessment results as *determining* (the word most frequently used) student placement. Students at many colleges, therefore, were presented with mixed messages regarding the stakes of the assessment process and their own potential agency in using placement information to make their own educational decisions. On one website, for example, students were told that the placement gives students and counselors "an indication of which classes are right for you," and that the matriculation process helps "students make better, more informed educational choices," but also that "it is important to follow your placements because they include prerequisites," which are "strictly enforced."

Characterizing the Stakes of Assessment. Finally, colleges varied in the extent to which they explicitly emphasized the stakes of placement testing, and in the amount of information they provided to students regarding how assessment results translate to course placements. Seven (7) colleges included language emphasizing the stakes of testing, such as one that stated, "Taking math/English assessments is one of the most important steps you will complete in your college life").

On the other hand, one college explicitly de-emphasized the stakes: "Please do not worry that your scores on the math and English assessment tests might prevent you from attending college. Test results are used by the college's staff only to help you select the English and/or math classes that best correspond to your skills so you can be a successful student." Although it is true that placement tests do not prevent students from attending community college, such messages, undoubtedly meant to reduce students' potential anxiety, may inadvertently send the message that the tests are not important.

Communicating with Students: Stance and Tone

In addition to varying in the *amount* of information they provided to students regarding the testing and placement process, college websites also varied in terms of *how* they communicated this information to students, signaling different stances toward colleges' responsibility to provide transparent and useful information for students' decision making. For example, when describing the stakes involved in the placement process, one college used language that can be characterized as authoritative and even condescending to students:

> Note that some students breeze through the assessment test and thus place little attention to questions/answers and in the end are dissatisfied with their performance. You are best advised to take the assessments seriously and take your time in approaching each and every question. Excuses such as "I did not take the test seriously" will not alter our adherence to testing policies. Your Performances is [sic] solely your responsibility."

In contrast, a different college presented language that emphasized students' own agency in the process:

> At the top of the interpretation sheets, you can see the range of scores needed for each class. If you just missed the higher class by a couple of points, you may want to take the assessment over. If you do choose to retest in any area, review your printout to determine which of the subsections you should focus on to improve your score. You can retest through the Assessment Office Monday through Thursday. Our phone number . . . is listed on this handout if you want to schedule an appointment. Don't forget to review the appropriate math study guide or use the self-paced tutorial computer program before retesting!

> If your score falls in a "Decision Zone," this will be noted under the course listed on the computer printout. Your skills appear to be on the borderline in terms of your readiness for the higher course[;] the higher course is the one listed. You will need to decide which course will be best for you to enroll in. You may find you must apply good study skills and probably more time than other students to be successful if you choose to enroll in the higher course. You may wish to discuss your options with a counselor before you make your decision.

In these more student-friendly excerpts, the college provides information regarding how to interpret their test scores, directs students themselves to review cutoff scores, and

provides explicit information about how students can retest if they are close to reaching the course at the next highest level. The information provided also allows students themselves to make placement decisions if they are within a certain range of each course: "You will need to decide which course will be best for you to enroll in."

Differences in tone and stance were also evident in colleges' discussion of the process whereby students could challenge their placement results. Almost three quarters of the college websites we reviewed (18 of 25) made some mention of a student "challenge" process; yet, as with other topics, there was a wide range in the tone and accessibility of the information presented. In describing their challenge processes, it was not always clear whether websites were referring to students' challenging the existence of a prerequisite or challenging their own specific assessment results. Furthermore, not all colleges listed the documentation needed for the challenging placement or described how the process works. For example, one college included a statement about the existence of the challenge process and who might be interested, but no instructions as to how students might go about doing that or where they could seek more information: "If you believe you have the skills to succeed in the course but haven't taken the prerequisite, you can challenge the prerequisite."

Technical, Legalistic, and Intimidating Language. Meanwhile, some colleges that did provide information on the challenge process did so in technical or legalistic language that would most likely be difficult for language minority or other first-generation college students to understand. For example:

> In keeping with the requirements and provisions of Section 55201(f) of Title 5 and Section I.B 1-3 of the XX Community College District Model Policy, XX College has established a procedure by which any student who does not meet a prerequisite or corequisite, or who is not permitted to enroll due to a campus limitation on enrollment, but who provides satisfactory evidence, may seek entry into the class according to the college's challenge process.

Similarly, a different college explained that in order to challenge placements, students must challenge the prerequisite for the course. The website provided detailed information about the grounds for challenging prerequisites but did so using language that would likely be intimidating and discouraging to any student actually considering such a challenge. For example, students considering mounting a challenge were told that they would have to do one or more of the following, depending on the grounds on which they were challenging the prerequisite:

> Cite the State regulation or District-approved process the prerequisite has violated. Indicate the chapter and section of the law, if known. If available, attach a copy of the regulation or District-approved process to the Challenge Form.

> Explain how the prerequisite, corequisite or limitation on enrollment is discriminatory. Does it discriminate against a person on the basis of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual preference? What is it, specifically, about the enrollment limitation that results in discrimination against a person from one or more of these groups.

> [Use the following to document how the prerequisite] is not valid because it is not necessary for success in the course for which it is required:

- Letters of verification from instructors, employers or other persons qualified to certify as to their skill level;
- Certificates from schools, colleges, government agencies or other reputable sources verifying the attainment of specific skill levels;
- Transcripts of academic work at other institutions accompanied by copies of appropriate catalog pages, if available;
- Examples of work (painting or other art forms, writing, drafting, etc.), which demonstrates the quality of work the person has performed.

This same college's description of the challenge process concluded with the following statement:

> It is the responsibility of the student to provide compelling evidence and documentation to support the challenge. If there is no documentation provided, then the challenge will automatically be denied.

Personnel at colleges including such language may or may not have intended their descriptions of the challenge process to be intimidating, discouraging, or difficult to understand. However, regardless of the intent, it is unlikely that students, especially those from language minority backgrounds or others inexperienced with higher education bureaucracies, would find these descriptions inviting, even if they felt they had strong grounds to challenge a prerequisite.

Aiming for Accessibility. In contrast to the examples just mentioned, the information presented on other college websites was clearly designed to be more accessible to students from a wide range of linguistic and academic backgrounds. For example, the one website among the 25 that contrasted the two different kinds of challenges did so in a clear and straightforward manner:

> If you do not agree with your placement test results you have the option to retake the placement test once per semester, or challenge your placement test result. To challenge your English placement test result, contact XXXX.

> If you believe you have the skills required to succeed in a course but haven't taken the prerequisite, you can challenge the prerequisite. For example, if you have been living in France and believe you have the skills to be successful in French 2, you can challenge the prerequisite of French 1. Submit the Challenge Form in person, by mail, or by fax (XXXX). If your challenge is denied, you will be notified in writing.

Other colleges provided "student-friendly" information about what is involved in the challenge process, the kind of documentation that might be required, and where students can seek consultation. Several colleges provided detailed but accessible step-by-step guides for how to engage in the prerequisite challenge process.

Two thirds of the college websites we examined (17 of 25) included at least minimal information about the testing and placement process in languages other than English, including (depending on the college) Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, or Lao. The amount of information and topics covered in these languages varied from one sentence informing students that bilingual counselors were available at one college to a more detailed description of the enrollment steps and course descriptions and sequences at other colleges.

During our interviews and site visits, we found that some college personnel were concerned about the limited amount of information available to students about placement tests and the stakes involved. At several colleges, efforts were underway to better educate students about the placement process and to encourage them to prepare for the exams. One college had prepared a postcard to distribute around campus that includes on one side a large photograph of a young man holding car jumper cables and looking as if he had been shocked by electricity. The picture is accompanied by the words "Taking a placement test? Take it seriously!" The backside of the card contains the following message:

> "Attention students! Are you planning to attend XX College? Plan ahead and study for the Placement Test! Why waste your time in classes you don't need to be in! Preparation for this test is essential. To see examples and study for the placement test, visit our website: www. . . "

An administrator at another college described efforts to find high-quality test preparation experiences available to students on the Web and elsewhere to help them be as successful as possible on placement tests. At this small college, the testing director attempts to discuss with students, immediately after they take the placement exam, how their scores relate to course placement recommendations and options.

Summary of Key Findings: Communicating with Students: Stance and Tone

- When discussing the purposes and stakes of assessment, different colleges presented different messages in terms of the role of student agency in the placement process.
- When discussing the challenge process, some college websites employed technical or legalistic language that would likely be intimidating and/or difficult for US-LM students to understand.
- Other colleges used clear or "student-friendly" language on their websites and used other means to attempt to communicate effectively with students.

CONCLUSIONS

In this section, we discuss several conclusions that emerged from our analysis of telephone interviews, site visits, and review of college websites. We follow the conclusions by discussing specific recommendations for improving the testing, placement, and education of US-educated language minority students in California's community colleges.

Despite the Linguistic Diversity of the State's Population, US-Educated Language Minority Students are Neither Identified nor Well Understood in California's Community Colleges

Precise numbers of US-LM students in California community colleges are unknown, but it is likely that the number is sizable given the fact that 40% of California's K-12 students have grown up in homes where languages other than English are dominant. However, our findings indicate that there is little awareness of this population among community college personnel other than those in English and ESL departments. Meanwhile, among faculty and staff members who are aware of the population, there is little agreement regarding these students' characteristics and needs. While some college personnel viewed US-LM students as developing bilinguals and focused on how they might support US-LM students' linguistic and academic development by capitalizing on the linguistic, cultural, and experiential resources that US-LM students bring with them, many others emphasized how US-LM students' language deviates from monolingual norms or how students lack the kinds of backgrounds and experiences common among students from more dominant groups.

Meanwhile, both statewide and in many colleges, there is a lack of research surrounding US-LM students, due in part to the difficulties inherent in identifying the population. Working toward better means of identifying US-LM students would help in documenting their progress through coursework and attainment of degrees, certificates, and transfer. However, identification of these students is not sufficient in the absence of rethinking the instructional options available to them. For example, faculty and staff members at two colleges in our sample were investing considerable time in identification of the Generation 1.5 population, yet personnel at both colleges conceded that there were no appropriate instructional options in place for these students even if they could be identified.

Colleges Employ Different Strategies to Steer US-LM Students Toward Either ESL or Remedial English Placement Tests and Course Sequences, yet "ESL vs. English?" May Be the Wrong Question to Ask

Both in this report and in previous work (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008), we have highlighted the fact that US-LM students often receive little guidance regarding whether to take an ESL or English test. For example, most college websites we examined included either no information guiding students regarding this decision or used "self-evident" terms such as "native speaker" or "second language" that might be ambiguous for US-LM students. On the other hand, despite the fact that US-LM students typically self-select regular English placement exams instead of ESL exams (or perhaps because of this fact), some colleges make a concerted effort to steer US-LM students toward ESL tests and courses. These efforts take the form of website information that guides students toward ESL courses based on questions about their

language use among friends and coworkers, on-line publicity about the benefits of ESL without suggesting any liabilities, and the use of the ACCUPLACER's branching mechanism to steer students toward ESL placements without their prior knowledge or consent.

Among ESL and English faculty we interviewed, a wide range of viewpoints was expressed regarding whether the US-LM population was generally better served in ESL or remedial English courses. Some faculty believed that the language issues confronting US-LM students could best be addressed by ESL faculty, either in traditional ESL classes or perhaps in special courses designed for Generation 1.5 students (although we found no actual examples of such courses being offered). Faculty at one college argued that the best place for Generation 1.5 was in the lowest level of remedial English, along with academically underprepared monolingual English speakers and students with disabilities, although this view was not widely held at other colleges.

Beliefs about where US-educated students should best be educated are related to conceptions of language minority students, bilingualism, and the most appropriate conditions for the development of academic language and literacy. Discussions at most colleges regarding whether US-LM students should be placed into ESL or regular English courses were often grounded in concerns surrounding what we described in our Frameworks and Orientations section as *linguistic* or *remedial literacy* pathways, focusing on the discrete skills US-LM students were lacking and which program might do a better job of "teaching" those skills. The ESL vs. English decision was rarely discussed, on the other hand, in terms of students' *academic pathways*. For example, none of our interviewees mentioned whether there were efforts at colleges to ascertain whether ESL or English courses were better serving US-LM students in completing precollegiate courses and progressing toward their academic goals.

Ultimately, however, the "ESL vs. English?" question may be the wrong question to ask in the first place. A more appropriate question might be, "To what extent are the curricula and instruction *within* ESL and remedial English programs conducive to facilitating US-LM students' academic language and literacy development as well as their academic progress toward degrees, certificates, and transfer?" In most colleges we studied, neither ESL nor remedial English courses were typically designed with the needs of US-LM students in mind. On the other hand, some faculty members and programs in both ESL and developmental English were either already attuned to the needs of US-LM students or were involved in initiatives designed to learn more about the population. At other colleges, faculty had developed curricula that were promising for US-LM students, and some ESL departments have centered their entire program around the preparation of students for the academic mainstream.[15]

Each of these proposed remedies comes with its own set of assumptions about language learners, bilingualism, and the development of academic language and literacy. Assumptions about the relative merits of remediation and acceleration also underlie colleges' responses to US-LM students. The orientation of some faculty members can be summed up in the words of one instructor regarding the placement of US-LM students: "when in doubt, always go lower." Other instructors and many counselors were worried about the implications of such a stance for students' long-term academic success, given the length of ESL and remedial English course sequences at some colleges, the obstacles students face while moving through those sequences,

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[15] Our forthcoming report on innovative practices will discuss additional promising practices in colleges throughout the state.

and the danger of attrition the longer students must enroll in courses that do not bear credit toward certificates, degrees, or transfer (Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010).

Multiple Measures that Could Prove Useful for Placing and Instructing US-LM Students Are Often Unavailable, Unsolicited, or Underutilized

Although state regulations call for the use of multiple measures, we found that at some colleges, even before matriculation regulations were suspended due to the state budget crisis, no multiple measures were utilized unless students challenged their initial placement results. Yet because of the high-stakes nature of community college placement tests, and because both ESL and English tests measure a relatively narrow set of language and literacy competencies (see *What's in a Test?*, Llosa & Bunch, 2011), these multiple measures are especially important for US-LM students. We also found that potential student data that could prove useful for making placement decisions about US-LM students, such as scores on K-12 standardized assessments and their K-12 classification as either English learners or Fluent English Proficient, were either unavailable or unused by community colleges. As a result, students who might be able to use such measures in conjunction with the placement test to demonstrate their ability to use English effectively for academic purposes have no opportunity to do so.

Access to Comprehensive--and Comprehensible-- Information About Policies, Practices, and Stakes Relevant to Testing, Placement, and Instructional Options Is Essential for US- LM Students, Yet Colleges Vary in the Amount and Quality of Information Made Available

Throughout this report, we have made the case that the testing and placement process in California community colleges represents high stakes for students. Despite the fact that placement results are often characterized as "recommendations" by the colleges, results of the placement process are used to determine whether or not students have met prerequisites for college-level English and mathematics courses, into which course in ESL and remedial English sequences they can enroll, and whether they have met English and mathematics prerequisites for those college-level disciplinary courses that have them.

Given these stakes, information about the process and results of testing and placement is essential, especially for US-LM students and others who may be less familiar not only with testing and placement procedures, but also with navigating higher education more generally. One ESL instructor who was also involved in the Basic Skills Initiative described it this way:

> It seems as if it's a really straightforward way to people who are inside the system, but it isn't really that clear, you know, what it takes and how you can take certain classes and how you can choose to take classes, especially when you come from cultures where there is more of a hierarchy of information and authority figures and so on where you don't have that many choices. Being aware of those choices and knowing how to negotiate them is important.

Yet we found that colleges varied widely in the amount and quality of information provided to students. Some colleges provided clear and useful information regarding such areas as the stakes of the matriculation process, the tests used, and the challenge procedure. On the other hand, many colleges provided little or no information regarding these areas. Other colleges provided relevant information, but the information was either difficult to comprehend

or presented in a way that likely would have discouraged students from utilizing and acting upon the information.

The ways in which colleges communicate with students represent different approaches along a continuum between maintaining institutional control and promoting student agency. A range of assumptions about US-LM students and other underprepared students was evident in how policies and practices were communicated to students at the colleges in our sample. On one end of the spectrum were policies, practices, and comments that positioned students as attempting to "cheat the system." The underlying assumption in some cases was that students cannot be trusted and will attempt, at all cost, to make their way into higher level courses. Thus the matriculation policies and practices at some colleges seemed to be designed to prevent students from getting their way: Some colleges made it very difficult for students to retest, information on websites about the challenge process was limited to what was technically required by law, and the challenge process was made as difficult as possible.

Reacting against this orientation, a counselor at one college, frustrated with the fact that students often do not have information about the challenge process, pointed out that students do not know what they can ask for and that they should question policies they see as counter to their interests: "I wish I would have questioned this all along, during my [own] education." Consistent with the research discussed earlier by Karp et al (2008) reporting that support services are most available to students who already have the social and cultural resources to find and utilize them, we were told at several colleges that it is typically only students who already have large amounts of social and cultural capital (e.g. White and middle-class students) who challenge their placement results. According to the faculty, counselors, and staff we interviewed, US-LM students, along with other students from non-dominant backgrounds, rarely challenge the results of the placement process. We were told that few students overall utilize the challenge processes prescribed by state regulations, and those who do are rarely students from minority backgrounds.

A different set of assumptions, therefore, presumed that students should be agents in their own education and, when equipped with high-quality information, could be trusted to make their own decisions regarding steps in their academic futures. For example, a counselor at a different college, in an attempt to respond to students interested in enrolling in a level that is slightly higher than the one recommended by the placement test, tries to make clear to students the expectations of the higher level class in a way that is "realistic,'" and contains no "sugar-coating." She allows students the decision of whether to attempt the higher level class or not. Another example of promoting student agency is directed self-placement for ESL. At one college, students are provided target materials representing reading and writing levels associated with each ESL course. In consultation with assessment staff, students choose the level they feel is most appropriate.

Adequate Funding for Matriculation and Counseling is Essential for Colleges to Meet US-LM Students' Needs, Yet Funding Alone is Not Sufficient.

Clearly, community college policies and practices related to testing and placement are constrained at multiple levels by limited financial resources. As documented in the Consultation Council Task Force on Assessment (2008), colleges have insufficient funding to offer orientation and counseling services. Cost is also a major factor in determining which placement tests colleges adopt, and is probably one reason that an ESL test not even initially designed for use in academic programs is the most commonly used ESL test statewide (see *What's in a Test?*, Llosa

& Bunch, 2011, as well as Bunch & Panayotova, 2008). Many faculty members, backed by what is known about best practices in writing assessment (e.g. Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee on Assessment, 2006), advocate for the use of writing samples in the placement process. Yet these same instructors report that their colleges cannot afford either the expense of computer-scored essay tests or the cost of hiring faculty or others to score writing by hand. In fact, one college has a fully validated writing test for English, but faculty reported that the college cannot afford to implement it. Retesting policies are also impacted by financial concerns: Retesting costs colleges staff time, facilities, and per-test charges by testing companies. Finally, the limited availability of space in classes plays a crucial role in placement decisions by colleges and students, as exemplified by the English faculty member who gave up the practice of recommending more appropriate placements to students the first week of class because there were no spaces available in any other classes.

Funding cuts for community colleges in general, and matriculation and counseling in particular, results in disproportionate negative impact on those already disadvantaged. Students who already have greater social and cultural capital will continue to use it, and those who have less capital will have fewer means by which to catch up. At the same time, funding alone will not create more equitable and effective policies and practices. Changes must also be made in a wide range of other areas related to the education of language minority students in California community colleges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

California community colleges are not alone in facing important questions regarding the equity and efficacy of their testing and placement policies, both for US-LM students and students more generally (e.g. Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). Institutions of higher education nationwide are attempting to understand the characteristics and needs of US-LM students (Harklau et al., 1999; Roberge et al., 2009), and K-12 schools continue to struggle to meet the needs of these "long-term English Learners" (Olsen, 2010). Meanwhile, in a study of 15 community colleges nationwide, Perin (2006) found that while the colleges used a wide variety of assessment instruments and practices (both in the use of single and multiple measures), college personnel were generally unsatisfied with their assessment approach. She also found that "a lack of trust in the accuracy of the state and commercially available measures in evaluating students' academic ability" led individual colleges to use a range of more informal assessment practices.

Yet the challenges are particularly great in California, where the community college system is charged with serving students from greatly varied backgrounds, fulfilling multiple functions in educating these students, and doing so with minimal financial resources. Meanwhile, the strong traditions of local college and district autonomy in California community colleges, along with shared faculty governance (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010), mean that responding to any issues necessarily involves the participation of policymakers and practitioners at multiple levels.

In this section, based on the frameworks and findings presented earlier, we make several recommendations to promote the improved academic success of US-LM students in California's community colleges. Because of the rapidly shifting policy sands, and because reform requires action at multiple levels, we organize our recommendations around several broad areas. Under each of these areas, we suggest who (e.g. faculty and staff at local colleges, the Board of Governors, the Chancellor's office) might be in the best position to lead efforts to act on each recommendation. Some recommendations are most appropriate for consideration at the college or district level; others require more statewide or systemwide action. Some recommendations may be enacted via faculty and staff development or collaboration among stakeholders at local colleges; others may require policy responses. Some may be considered and implemented with no participation from those outside the system; others may require funding and research from outside organizations. Ultimately, all parties responsible for the education of US-LM students in California community colleges must take collective action.

We present the recommendations roughly in order of distance from current policy and practice, beginning with the need for colleges to communicate more transparently with students about existing policies and practices and ending with the need for sustained and comprehensive education of all community college faculty and staff about the needs of language minority students and the development of academic language and literacy. A forthcoming report will discuss efforts currently underway that address promising practices in many of these areas.

Our recommendations focus particularly on improving access and success for US-LM students, and many of them are targeted to meeting the specific needs of this population. However, because improving the prospects for this group of students necessarily involves reforms relevant to all students, and because US-LM students share many of the characteristics and needs of other community college students from marginalized backgrounds, many of these

recommendations are relevant to other community college students and consistent with those made regarding the general student population (e.g. Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010).

A. Transparent information about current matriculation policies and instructional options is essential for US-LM students to make informed decisions about their own education.

Students from language minority and academically underprepared backgrounds are especially in need of transparent, comprehensible, and complete information regarding the policies that will impact their educational opportunities, and students from marginalized backgrounds are most in need of encouragement to exercise agency in matters related to their own education. Language minority students and others who may not have experience navigating complex policies in bureaucracies in general and in higher education in particular often are unaware of how challenging such a process can be. Unless concerted efforts are made to provide students with high quality, transparent information, along with policies that allow them some agency in their own education, the same patterns of inequality that have placed students in a marginalized position in the first place will be replicated.

Recommendation A1. *Colleges, with the support of other stakeholders, should communicate transparently and comprehensibly with US-LM students about policies and practices related to testing and placement, and about the stakes involved.*

We begin with the most basic recommendation, one that is necessary even if no testing and placement policies and practices are changed, and one that is relevant to all students but essential for students from language minority backgrounds and others inexperienced with educational bureaucracies. Colleges must provide sufficient information for students to understand and navigate the policies and practices that represent such high stakes for their own education.

Colleges should provide clear, accessible, and transparent information to students regarding the purposes and stakes associated with the assessment and placement process, as well as how to navigate each step of the process. Students should have access to information about the format, content, and constructs of the placement tests used at each college, including sample questions and test preparation materials. Students also need explicit information regarding how placement tests will be used, what course sequences students will be placed into as a result of testing, and whether those courses earn credit toward degrees, certificates, or transfer. *All* students (not only those who indicate dissatisfaction with their initial placements) should be made aware of what kind of additional information they can provide to be used as multiple measures, and they should have clear and transparent information about how they can challenge the initial results of the placement process (and the difference, discussed earlier, between challenging prerequisites and challenging placements). Colleges should endeavor to make this information as "student-friendly" as possible, rather than using incomprehensible or intimidating bureaucratic language that meets legal requirements but is not useful to students attempting to understand and navigate the matriculation process.

Ideally, much of this information could be provided to students as early as high school (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010); in order to facilitate this process, community college personnel should educate high school students, teachers, counselors, and administrators about community college testing and placement procedures relevant to US-LM students. Such efforts could be facilitated by streamlining the number of placement tests used statewide.

At community colleges themselves, this information should be made accessible to students upon their first encounters with the college. Communicating with students is undoubtedly done most effectively when students can meet with counselors, preferably individually or, if necessary, in group settings, and it is crucial that the state adequately fund counseling services. Until such funding is secured, however, colleges will have to use as many means as possible to educate students, including larger group orientation sessions, print media, and on-line outreach through websites and social networking outlets. In the findings presented earlier, we highlighted efforts at some colleges to create student-friendly outreach materials, both on-line and in print, emphasizing the importance of students' preparing for and taking the assessment process seriously.

In order to assist college personnel in learning about other colleges' successful outreach efforts, the Chancellor's office, Basic Skills Initiative, and/or private foundations could support an effort to develop sample "best practices" website templates and intake materials for colleges to use to help students make informed choices. Although specific assessment instruments and matriculation practices may vary from college to college, basic principles for communicating effectively with students could be developed for use by *all* colleges.

Another potential tool for communicating with large numbers of students at a relatively modest cost could be CCCAssess, the pilot student assessment data warehousing project discussed in the Introduction. Among other features described later in these Recommendations, one proposed feature of CCCAssess is a portal for students to access information about placement tests, matriculation policies and practices, and perhaps even data about success rates in various courses by students with similar assessment results as their own. The student portal feature of CCCAssess should be developed to its full potential, providing an effective and efficient means of providing community colleges statewide with accurate, up-to-date, and clear information about placement tests (e.g. linking to sample questions and study guides). Such a portal could also link students to matriculation policies and practices, such as what kind of multiple measures students can provide and how they can challenge the initial results of the assessment process.

Recommendation A2. *Colleges should clarify for students, in a balanced way, the difference between ESL and remedial English, the stakes of choosing one over the other, and the potential consequences for future course enrollments.*

As US-LM students make decisions regarding whether to take ESL or English placement tests, which often determines into which sequence they will be placed, they need to know something about the goals of each program, the course sequences involved, and the potential consequences of being placed in either program. Colleges can explore a variety of practices for doing this. As is the practice at some colleges, students could be encouraged to preview sample questions from the ESL and English placement tests and, preferably with guidance, make a decision as to which test to take. Another possibility might be for colleges to encourage some US-LM students to take both the ESL and English placement tests and then, again with guidance, consider the relative merits of the assigned placement in each program.

In communicating with students about the ESL and regular English options, it is important for colleges to be forthright about the relative merits and drawbacks of each option for US-LM students. If the "ESL stigma" is as strong as many of the faculty and counselors that we interviewed implied, then it will not be overcome by mere "advertisements" for the benefits of ESL that do not deal frankly with the potential drawbacks for this particular population.

B. Testing, placement, and instructional policies and practices must promote access to and success in *academic* pathways by US-LM students.

We found that community college staff and faculty at many colleges view assessment and placement as a way to ensure that US-LM students are provided with the "building blocks" (e.g., correct grammar, sentence skills, and paragraph formation) perceived as necessary to prepare students for future academic instruction. Yet while it is certainly appropriate to focus on such areas as part of the instruction provided to US-LM students, such support must be part of larger efforts to foster academic pathways for students, rather than ends in and of themselves. That is, the diagnosis and treatment of discrete language and literacy problems needs to be contextualized in the promotion of academic language and literacy through academic pathways. Such efforts require collecting and analyzing data about students' progress toward completing their academic goals.

Recommendation B1. *The Board of Governors, the Chancellor's Office, and local colleges and districts should promote the use of student success data for high-stakes practices such as those establishing prerequisites for college-level courses.*

The Board of Governors should exercise caution in considering proposed changes aimed at making it easier to establish English and mathematics prerequisites for college-level courses in other content areas. The proposal currently before the Board of Governors to allow faculty to use "content review" alone instead of statistical validation to establish English, ESL, and mathematics prerequisites for courses in other disciplines would raise the stakes of the matriculation process even higher than they are now. It is true that the proposed changes would give local college faculty more autonomy in the establishment of prerequisites. However, given the problems with the matriculation processes documented throughout this report (problems that existed even before the suspension of many state matriculation regulations due to the budget crisis), it is difficult to imagine sufficient student safeguards being put in place to mitigate the increased stakes involved with the proposed changes.

Because many ESL and developmental English courses do not bear credit for degrees, certificates, or transfer to four-year colleges and universities, enrollment in regular college-level courses outside of mathematics and English is often the only way that many language minority students can begin to earn credit toward pursuing their academic goals. Therefore, if the proposed changes in regulations result in more college-level courses with English and mathematics prerequisites, then the stakes associated with the matriculation processes that place students into ESL and developmental English courses will be even higher than they are currently.

Partially as a result of the MALDEF settlement described in the introduction, current statewide policies are relatively robust in terms of the selection and validation of assessment instruments, the use of multiple measures, and the provision of student safeguards such as the ability to challenge prerequisites. However, underfunding of counseling and matriculation services has resulted in widespread variation in the extent to which these policies are implemented at local colleges. Even before colleges were relieved from some matriculation regulations as a result of the current budget crisis, our research found that although some colleges made widespread use of multiple measures and employed a variety of ways to communicate effectively with students about the matriculation process, at other colleges multiple measures were unevenly applied and students had little access to information about the testing and placement process or the

stakes involved.

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group, 2010) has highlighted other concerns. The RP Group argues that, without statistical validation of prerequisites, it would be difficult if not impossible to know whether the establishment of prerequisites leads to improved student success. If statistical validation is no longer required for the establishment of prerequisites, other research will be essential to ensure that there is indeed a relationship between the new, content-review-established prerequisite requirements and students' ability to succeed in particular courses. Similarly, research will be needed to measure the overall impact of the proposed regulatory changes on students' access to and success in pursuing their academic goals, especially for language minority students and other minorities underrepresented in higher education.

Recommendation B2. Colleges should investigate and document the impact of retesting and the challenge process on students' academic success.

In the Findings section, we described a wide range of current practices at some colleges discouraging retesting (e.g. requiring long waiting periods, requiring administrative approval, using lowest instead of highest scores, charging fees, and, in contradiction to state policy, charging fees for retesting). Colleges should investigate the impact of such policies on students' ability to progress toward their academic goals. Colleges' own institutional data could be used for this purpose, as was done at one college in our sample that found that, upon retesting, most students placed into a higher course and were successful in that new placement.

Similarly, in response to our finding that students are either implicitly or explicitly discouraged from challenging their initial placement results, colleges should assess whether students who challenge their results are more or less successful in their new placements, and in attaining their longer term educational goals, than the general student population.

Recommendation B3. *Colleges, with support of other stakeholders, should move beyond the "ESL vs. English" debate to focus on how a wide variety of instructional environments, within and beyond ESL and English courses, can be improved to foster the development of students' academic language and literacy and their preparation for college-level coursework.*

In our conclusions, we suggested that those responsible for the education of US-LM students must ultimately move beyond the "ESL vs. English" question in order to better meet the needs of US-LM students. Colleges, with the support of the Chancellor's office, private foundations, and research enterprises, need to develop, implement, and document the results of efforts in both ESL and English programs, as well as in other areas, to design instructional opportunities that offer what Valdés (2004) has called "support without marginalization." Such approaches (whether in ESL courses, English courses, courses designed specifically for US-LM students, or other approaches such as learning communities that give students access to college-level coursework), can integrate language development and academic preparation. These approaches focus on the development of academic language and literacy, and they create opportunities for language minority students to use such language and literacy in more authentic settings. Because it is impossible to measure the potential success of US-LM students in courses to which they have never had access, flexibility in placement practices will be required in order for the outcomes of different instructional options for US-LM students to be studied.

Recommendation B4. *Colleges, with support from the Chancellor's office and outside foundations and researchers, should develop, implement, and research the efficacy of instructional programs that seek to accelerate US-LM students' progress toward college-level coursework.*

As presented in Table 3, at most of the colleges in our sample, many US-LM students face multiple course sequences in either ESL or remedial English before reaching college-level courses. Many faculty members expressed faith in such sequences to remediate students appropriately, yet recent reviews of the research show that remedial coursework has produced "mixed results at best" (Bailey, 2009, p. 3; see also Bailey et al., 2010) for the general student population. These reviews have not included data on the success of ESL courses, nor have they disaggregated data on the success of language minority students in remedial education. Yet it is likely that US-LM students are in particular need of courses that provide the integration of language and content in academically rigorous curricula.

At the minimum, both ESL and developmental English courses must include some academic content and literacy *throughout* course sequences, even at the earliest levels, instead of restricting courses to basic grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development alone. Another possibility is to accelerate students' progress by placing more students who score on the borderline between precollegiate and college-level courses directly into college-level courses, and to provide them additional support within or alongside those courses (see Bailey, 2009). Other options include the creation of shorter and more challenging pre-collegiate sequences, as well as learning communities in which students take developmental coursework while also enrolled in credit-bearing, college-level coursework. The efficacy of all such initiatives must be researched, both for students in general and US-LM students in particular.

C. Throughout the community college system, a better understanding is needed of the backgrounds, characteristics, needs, and academic progress of US-LM students.

Given that almost half of California's public school students have grown up in families where English is not the dominant language, US-LM students do not represent a fringe group of concern only to those who specialize in ESL or second language education. It is incumbent upon *all* personnel who work with students in California community colleges to have an awareness of US-LM students and a fundamental understanding of the nature of bilingualism, academic language and literacy, and the difference between a resource and deficit orientation toward language minority students. Such an understanding is particularly important in light of state and national movements toward common core standards in K-12 schools, and the need to prepare *all* students for college and career readiness. Meanwhile, language minority students must also be considered in policy discussions, at the state, systemwide, district, and college levels. One English instructor we interviewed put it this way:

> These students are kind of invisible to our campus. And yet, they're most of our students. How can this be the majority population and be invisible?

This statement echoes calls by some researchers to consider language minority students, along with other students from non-dominant and marginalized backgrounds, as the "new mainstream" (Enright, in press.).

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Recommendation C1. State policy makers, the Chancellor's office, colleges and districts, and K-12 officials should work together to strengthen the availability and use of multiple measures, including those from K-12, both for placing US-LM students and for supporting them once placed.

Given the relatively narrow range of language proficiency measured by ESL and English placement tests (see *What's in a Test*?, Llosa & Bunch, 2011), additional information is necessary, including data from the K-12 system, in order to appropriately place and support US-LM students. Most US-LM students in California community colleges have done at least some of their K-12 schooling in California public schools, which uses a single assessment system, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), along with a statewide system for classifying students as English learners and reclassifying them as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) that draws on the CELDT, the mainstream California Standards Test (CST), and teacher input. Yet we found that colleges rarely used any sort of K-12 data in the placement process, and we found no examples of colleges using students' K-12 language proficiency levels, English learner classification or reclassification, or CELDT scores for this purpose.

Several obstacles would need to be overcome in order for colleges to effectively use K-12 data in the placement process. First, of course, community colleges would need access to such data. Although current projects such as the CCCAssess and intersegmental data-sharing arrangements such as Cal-PASS are not designed to provide student information to colleges for placement purposes, other arrangements can be envisioned. Secondly, local college matriculation personnel, faculty, and counselors would need to become more knowledgeable about the K-12 assessment and English learner classifications of US-LM students (see Recommendation C4 below). Given the fact that some community college personnel are skeptical as to the value of K-12 information, part of this process needs to be dialogue and increased awareness between high school and community college practitioners about each other's processes.

One promising avenue that does not require access to additional data or extensive training of community college personnel is the Early Assessment Program (EAP), which can be used to exempt students who are prepared for college-level coursework from the testing and placement process (Kirst, 2010; Perry et al., 2010, p. 90). This could save colleges the expense of testing and placing already-prepared students, and minimize the danger of placing students into remedial courses they do not need.

Recommendation C2. The Chancellor's office, institutional researchers in colleges and districts, and researchers outside the community college system should conduct more extensive research on US-LM students' linguistic and academic needs, and on their progress through course sequences.

Beyond additional sources of information to be used for placement purposes, more research is needed, both by colleges and outside research organizations, on the characteristics, needs, and progress of US-LM students. If such information is not currently available, community colleges and K-12 systems need to work together to make it available. Additionally, data documenting students' progress from high school into, through, and beyond community college should be used. Efforts by consortia such as CalPASS to facilitate the sharing of relevant data should be encouraged. Efforts such as unified data systems should also be supported to improve the quality and accessibility of data that can be used to measure student progress, both overall and through different course sequences (see Vernez, Krop, Vuollo, & Hansen, 2008).

Recommendation C3. College faculty, counselors, staff, and researchers inside and outside the community college system should solicit students' input to inform policy and practice.

A limitation of much research on community college policy and practice, including our own, is the lack of student voices.[16] Students should be included in discussions and decision making about the assessment and placement process and the use of pre-requisites and other gate-keeping mechanisms. Students should also be included in campus discussions related to curriculum and program design. Speaking directly with students, whether it be as part of informal inquiries by faculty groups or more formal research, is important to help unpack the causes of the "ESL stigma" described to us by faculty and staff. Although the origins of the stigma may be traced to US-LM students' K-12 experiences, there may also be contributing factors at community colleges themselves. Efforts to make ESL more attractive to US-LM students, such as adopting a name other than ESL, should be accompanied by more substantive changes that draw on students' perceptions and address their concerns.

Recommendation C4. All responsible parties (the Chancellor's office, Basic Skills Initiative, local colleges and districts, and partners such as private foundations and research organizations) must work together to create opportunities for educating community college faculty, counselors, staff, and administrators about the characteristics, strengths, and needs of US- LM students, the nature of bilingualism, and how to create optimal conditions for students' academic and language development.

Although our study was not designed to evaluate the knowledge bases among faculty, counselors, and staff with regard to US-LM students, we did ask community college personnel about this population, and we include a recommendation in this area because the capacity of the community college system to implement the other recommendations must be accompanied by greater knowledge of this student population.

Given the wide range of conceptions—and misconceptions—held by community college personnel about bilingualism in general and US-LM students in particular, efforts to better serve this population must begin with, or at least be accompanied by, a greater understanding of these areas. At several colleges in our sample, the ESL department had provided training or presentations to the English department or counselors regarding issues related to the education of "Generation 1.5" students, and faculty and staff members at several colleges expressed the desire for more information and guidance regarding US-LM students. Such efforts should be augmented by opportunities for faculty to learn about the nature of bilingualism and conditions for the development of academic language and literacy.

Faculty also need to be better informed about the high stakes of language testing and related equity issues. These efforts need to include ESL, basic skills, and college-level English faculty; mainstream disciplinary faculty; career and technical education faculty; counselors; and matriculation staff. Matriculation and assessment staff need to know more about the US-LM population in general; and community college faculty and staff should be specifically educated about K-12 curricula, tests, language proficiency designations, and reclassification processes for language minority students. In addition, faculty should explore ways to integrate academic language and content for US-LM students, both in precollegiate courses and college-level

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[16] One exception is recent interviews conducted by Venezia, Bracco, and Nodine (2010) documenting the perspectives of students on navigating the matriculation process at a number of California community colleges.

courses. Finally, institutional researchers and others should study the impact of different courses and course sequences on the academic progress of language minority students.

It is beyond the scope of our expertise and this project to recommend specific mechanisms for such professional development. We are aware of the obstacles to such efforts-- that community college faculty, like their counterparts in four-year colleges and universities, are not required to have training in student learning, pedagogy, or other foundations of education in order to be hired to teach; the fact that large numbers of faculty are adjunct and therefore not often available for such training; that "one-shot" professional development workshops are not the most effective means of promoting change. The use of existing structures, such as faculty inquiry networks and professional learning councils, could be promising, especially if the groups draw on student data and seek expertise on this student population from a wide range of sources within and outside of the community college system.

D. All stakeholders involved in the education of US-LM students should simultaneously (a) continue to advocate for adequate state funding for community colleges and (b) explore costs and benefits of potential money-saving testing, placement, and instructional practices and policies.

Given the crucial role that community colleges play in the education of the state's most vulnerable students, as well as its role in educating demographic groups that collectively represent the state's majority population, adequate funding for community colleges is essential and provides long-term benefits to the state. For example, services such as counseling are expensive in the short term but represent a long-term investment for students, colleges, and, ultimately, the public. Therefore, efforts must continue to advocate for such funding.

At the same time, colleges, districts, and the system as a whole can explore reforms that could simultaneously strengthen student success and save costs, either in the short or long term. While an economic cost-benefit analysis of these proposals was beyond the scope of this study, there are potential cost savings in several of the recommendations already mentioned:

- The Early Assessment Program, in which high school students demonstrate readiness for college-level English and mathematics courses, could save colleges the cost of testing and placing these students once they get to community college.

- The central warehouse for assessment data (CCCAssess) could save colleges the costs of providing their own placement tests; result in overall efficiencies on the part of the system through negotiating a systemwide contract with vendors; and provide college researchers, faculty, and students with a low-cost source of data.

- Directed self-placement could be less expensive than using commercially developed placement tests. According to matriculation officials at the one college in our sample that used it for ESL, it has proven to be as valid as the test formerly used by the college.

- Given the enormous costs of remedial education, both for community colleges and students themselves (Bailey, 2009), acceleration strategies could both improve student success and save money.

Similar efforts to simultaneously strengthen student success and save financial resources can be undertaken at the local college level as well. At one of the focal colleges in our study, staff

and faculty members used student data to explore how they could better serve students and reduce costs. Working with their institutional researcher, they discovered that students who were enrolled only in ESL courses during any given semester had lower retention rates than other students. In response, the college integrated and consolidated the ESL curriculum into fewer courses and units per ESL course, and counseled students to enroll in non-ESL courses while they were completing the ESL sequence. These reforms, designed to improve student success, also represented cost savings for the college.

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APPENDIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to map the terrain of California language testing and placement policies relevant to language minority students, we collected public information available from the California Community College Chancellor's office and 25 individual college websites; conducted 51 telephone and in-person interviews with faculty and staff at 10 colleges representing different sizes, geographic areas, and student demographics; and visited five focal colleges. We reviewed colleges' own websites to gather information about the policies and practices related to testing and placement and how those policies and practices are communicated to students. Phone interviews and site visit conversations with matriculation staff, administrators, counselors, and ESL and English faculty allowed us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of matriculation policies and practices enacted at individual colleges, as well as to study how matriculation relates to ESL and English course sequences.

Because we were primarily interested in policies and practices that potentially impact the academic trajectories of language minority students who have studied in US high schools, we focused our research primarily around placement into English courses and "credit ESL" courses (those designed for students who seek terminal degrees, vocational certificates, or transfer to four-year institutions), instead of "noncredit" ESL courses (those designed to fulfill the basic adult education mission of community colleges by helping students develop English for functional purposes such as employment, shopping, participating in the health care system, etc.) (Blumenthal, 2002).

Collectively, phone interviews and site visits allowed us to address questions such as the following:

1. How are statewide assessment policies enacted at the local level?
2. How are assessment policies communicated with students? How transparent are the policies?
3. How do college personnel understand the characteristics and needs of US-LM students, and how do policies respond to the needs of this population?
4. How do faculty and staff articulate the link between assessment and curricula?

Table A.1
Types and Uses of Data

	COLLEGE WEBSITES (25 Colleges)	**SUBSET COLLEGES FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS (10 Colleges)**	**FOCAL COLLEGES FOR SITE VISITS (5 Colleges)**
Types of data	• Individual colleges' websites	Phone interviews • ESL and English department faculty • Counselors • Matriculation personnel • Administrators (Deans, VP's, Presidents)	• Telephone and on-site interviews (see previous column) • Campus visits • Documentation collected by participant researchers and research team
Uses of data	• Learning about placement policies relevant to language-minority students • How community college materials guide students to choose either the ESL or regular placement tests • What other testing and placement policies are articulated in these publicly available materials	• Verification of the web-based information • Further information on the testing and placement process, including locally designed assessments and validation reports • Individual and college description of student population and "Generation 1.5"	• Comprehensive profile of testing and placement processes, including policies and practices governing students' pathways through the ESL course sequences

Analysis of 25 College Websites

We chose 25 California community college websites that represented a range of college sizes, locations, and demographics. We included colleges from all four state regions (Northern, Bay Area, Central, and Southern). We searched and browsed each website for information directly related to matriculation and enrollment, coding all relevant material for its pertinence to (a) the different steps in the matriculation process (e.g. application, orientation, assessment, and counseling) and (b) exemptions, course placement, and the challenge process. The data were also coded for more fine-tuned information about the testing and assessment process: the name of the ESL or English test used; how students are steered toward one test or the other; how the purpose and stakes of the tests are presented; information about the test content, constructs, and format; and whether sample test questions are provided or not.[17]

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[17] We started with the home page of each college website and followed all the links that provided information about the matriculation and enrollment process. Missing web pages and inactive links were noted and later revisited to ensure that all relevant data had been collected. Upon completion of the college web data collection, a second researcher used the A-Z index of the college's web page to verify that

The 25 college websites came from a larger sample of 36 originally chosen for the project:

- 16 community colleges that were part of a pilot study (Bunch and Panayotova, 2008). This decision was made (a) because this set of colleges already represented extensive demographic and geographic diversity (within Central California and Bay Area Regions) and (b) because the current study involved a more extensive analysis than that done for the pilot study.
- 10 additional colleges that (a) had interesting and/or innovative practices that we were aware of, (b) serve a high percentage of Hispanic students, a demographic group which has low community-college completion rates and a high number of language minority students, and/or (c) had contacts that could lead to potential access for further study.
- 10 additional colleges chosen at random among all remaining California community colleges.

For the purposes of in-depth analysis, we decided to examine a subset of 25 colleges that represented the diversity of the initial 36 colleges. This smaller sample consisted of several colleges from the pilot study, additional colleges identified as developing innovative practices, and colleges selected randomly. Digital files were converted from html to rtf (for text) or jpg (for graphics, pictures, etc.). The rtf and jpg files and the coding were entered in a qualitative software program, HyperResearch. To verify accuracy, two researchers compared the digital and hardcopy database.

Telephone Interviews with Personnel at Ten Subset Colleges

Drawing primarily from the 25 colleges analyzed in our website study, we selected 10 subset colleges that met one or more of the following criteria: They (a) represented the range of policies and practices identified in our analysis of websites, (b) highlighted innovative or interesting policies and practices, (c) represented the demographic and geographic diversity among California community college students and locations, especially in terms of numbers of students from traditionally underprepared and underrepresented groups, and (d) were potentially accessible to us through our previous networking activities. [18] We also included several colleges chosen at random, in order to ensure that we did not have sample bias based on (b) and (d) above. The colleges for which we conducted telephone interviews represent a diverse mix of community college regions (Bay Area, Central, and Southern California); location and area served (e.g. small city, urban, rural); population served (from colleges with a majority Hispanic population to those with majority White populations); and size of college (from under 8,000 FTE to over 22,000 FTE) (see Table A.2).

Using snowball sampling, we invited a number of ESL and English faculty members, counselors, and testing and matriculation personnel to participate in hour-long telephone interviews. We designed separate interview protocols for use with each category of faculty and staff. Our goal was to interview at least three people at each college; we met that goal for all but

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the relevant pages had been downloaded. Three researchers performed iterative readings of the data to develop the coding system. Two researchers independently coded each web page for the 25 colleges. The coded pages were compared and differences discussed and resolved.

[18] Three of the ten were not in our original sample, but were added later due to initiatives at the colleges to address issues surrounding Generation 1.5 students.

three colleges. In total, we conducted 51 telephone interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for emerging themes within and across colleges (see Table A.3).

Site Visits at Five Focal Colleges

Among the 10 subset colleges for which we conducted telephone interviews, we chose five to visit, with the goal of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of language testing and placement policies and practices at each college. The colleges were chosen in order to represent diverse geographic areas, demographic profiles, and size. Colleges were also chosen based on their personnel's interest in our study and willingness to participate, and on the existence of potentially interesting practices related to the education of US-LM students.

During site visits, UCSC researchers conducted interviews with English faculty, ESL faculty, counselors, basic skills coordinators, matriculation staff, and college administrators (e.g. deans, vice presidents, presidents). Interview protocols developed for the subset telephone interviews were adapted and used as a starting point to lead semistructured interviews of about one hour each. In consultation with collaborators at each college, some interviews were conducted with individuals and some in small groups (e.g. several ESL faculty members, or a group of faculty and matriculation staff interested in issues relating to Generation 1.5 students). UCSC researchers used knowledge gained from website information and subset interviews to ask follow-up questions specific to the site. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed along with researcher field notes and matriculation-related documents collected at each site.[19]

Additional reports were solicited from college collaborators, who were asked to discuss the challenges and successes the college has had surrounding policies and practices relevant to language minority students transitioning from U.S. high schools to community college. Project collaborators provided information regarding key issues and initiatives involving these students on their campuses; data collected relevant to testing, placement and instruction of language minority students; and training provided for faculty and staff to help them support the education of language minority students.

Analysis of Interview Data

Based on categories and themes that emerged from an analysis of a smaller set of transcripts as well as researcher logs throughout the telephone interviews and site visits, we created a list of codes and definitions (see Table A.4). Each transcript was coded according to protocol, and data were compiled in a chart for each college. We drafted a college report for each of the 10 subset colleges. These reports synthesized coded data from interview transcripts, field notes from site visits, and documents collected during site visits.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, we did not have the opportunity to interview students, an important area for future research. Second, not all faculty, staff, and administrators whom we invited to be interviewed responded to our invitation, so for a few

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[19] Where possible, the following documents were collected and analyzed: Sample tests/questions; writing prompts and rubrics; validation reports; institutional assessment policies; self-assessments done as part of the Basic Skills Initiative; matriculation handouts; course catalogs, student handbooks, and new student packets; and information on ESL programs.

subset colleges we were unable to meet our goal of three interviews. Third, our analysis of the 25 college websites focuses on publicly-available information and may be limited in comprehensiveness and accuracy, because college websites sometimes have outdated or incomplete information (although college personnel often referred us to their websites as the source of the most up-to-date information). Despite the limitations, there is value in providing snapshots, however imperfect, of how colleges throughout the community college system publicly describe their testing and placement policies, as college websites are important sources of data for prospective students and others. Meanwhile, our analysis of interview data from the subset and focal colleges allows us access to a wealth of information beyond that provided on websites alone.

Finally, community colleges typically have little or no disaggregated data on Generation 1.5 students, given both the imprecision of the label and the general lack of K-12 information available to community colleges. This potential limitation did not impact the central goals of our project to analyze the language tests and placement policies used by community colleges: We used literature on this group's language profiles, information obtained from the 10 subset colleges and the five focal colleges as well as documents provided by the Chancellor's office to discuss the implications of these testing systems for the target population. These varied data sources allowed us to report on the ways in which those tests and policies are (or are not) aligned to those used in the K-12 system (see the *What's in a Test?* report, Llosa & Bunch, 2011) as well as to document practices at colleges that have made explicit attempts to respond to the needs of this population.

Despite these limitations, studying 25 colleges websites, analyzing over 50 telephone and in-person interviews with personnel at 10 colleges, and visiting five campuses has provided us the opportunity to explore a wide variety of issues critical to community colleges' efforts to serve US-LM students aspiring to higher education through the community college system in California.

Table A.2
Colleges Selected for Telephone Interviews (A-J) and Site Visits (A-E)

College	College Size*	College Demographics	Area Description**	CC Region
A	Small	40-50% Hispanic 20-30% White 0-10% All Others	Suburban Small City	SF Bay Area
B	Large	20-30% Asian 20-30% White 10-20% Hispanic 0-10% All Others	Urban Major City	SF Bay Area
C	Small	> 50% Hispanic 20-30% White 0-10% All Others	Rural Small City	Southern Calif.
D	Small	> 50% Hispanic 20-30% White 10-20% Unknown 0-10% All others	Rural Medium-sized City	Central Calif.
E	Large	40-50% Hispanic 30-40% White 10-20% Asian 0-10% All Others	Urban Large City	Southern Calif.
F	Small to Medium	> 50% White 20-30% Hispanic 0-10% All Others	Suburban/ Rural Small City	SF Bay Area
G	Large	> 50% Hispanic 10-20% Asian 10-20% Unknown 0-10% All Others	Urban Major City	Southern Calif.
H	Medium to Large	40-50% Hispanic 20-30% White 10-20% Unknown 0-10% All Others	Rural Large City	Central Calif.
I	Small	30-40% Hispanic 20-30% Asian 10-20% White 0-10% All Others	Urban Major City	SF Bay Area
J	Medium	30-40% White 20-30% Hispanic 10-20% Asian 10-20% Black	Rural Medium-sized City	Central Calif.

NOTE for Table A.2:
*Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) students: Small = fewer than 10,000, Small to medium = 10,000-12,000;
Medium = 12,000-18,000; Medium to large = 18,000; Large = above 20,000 (2009 ARCC Report).
 ** Small city = less than 100,000; Medium city = 100,000-300,000; Large city = 300,000-500,000; Major city =
more than 500,000 (US Census population predictions for 2008, U.S. Census 2000, U.S. Census 1990)

Table A.3
College Personnel Interviewed By Telephone and During Site Visits

College	Total Interviews	ESL Faculty	Eng. Faculty	Coun	Mat	Basic Skills	Admin	Other
A	9	4	3	1	1	0	1	1
B	6	3	1	2	1	1	0	0
C	10	4	2	1	3	1	1	0
D	7	3	1	2	2	0	1	1
E	8	2	4	1	2	1	0	0
F	4	0	2	0	1	1	2	0
G	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
H	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
I	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
J	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	**51**	**18**	**15**	**8**	**12**	**4**	**5**	**2**

Bold = Site visit colleges.

Coun = counselor

Mat = matriculation staff person

Basic Skills = basic skills coordinators and faculty members

Admin = administrative staff person such as a Dean

Other = interviewees not fitting into one of the other categories (i.e. consultant)

NOTE: Each interviewee at times represented more than one category (e.g. a faculty member who taught both ESL and English or an administrator who also served as the college's matriculation officer). Because we have included each role that an individual interviewee plays, the sum of the numbers of individual categories represented exceeds the total number of interviewees.

Table A.4
Interview Analysis Codes

Code	Definition
Interviewee background	The interviewee's position and educational/professional background.
Counseling	Part of the matriculation process. Role of the counselor and counseling department.
Communicating with Students	How the college provides information to the students, what the information is, the quality of information.
Disciplinary instruction other than English/ESL	Description of other discipline/content courses, how students move into content courses, etc. Content course credit while in ESL or basic skills. Language demands of disciplinary classes.
English	Course sequence and/or description. Goals of English. Connection to Reading department/courses. Role in matriculation process.
ESL	Course sequence and/or description of ESL. Goals of ESL. Role in matriculation process.
ESL vs. English Instruction	Which department is more appropriate for Gen 1.5. Connection/collaboration between the two departments. What is the institutional relationship? In the same dept? Division? How students choose which instructional program. Any discussion of where students would be served best.
ESL vs. English Tests	How students choose/are steered toward ESL vs. English tests. Test results referring students to other test (high ESL score, for example, would give a referral to the English test)
Generation 1.5	Definitions, strengths, weaknesses
Instructional 3rd path	Something (other than traditional ESL/English) more appropriate for Gen. 1.5: Included both descriptions of existing or planned courses/programs, or the need for them, or concerns with this idea. Could include special sections of English/ESL.
Matriculation	Order of process and definition of Matriculation.
Matriculation pros or cons	*Interviewee* perspective on pros, cons or improvements. Evaluation of matriculation at college.
Multiple measures	Multiple Measures, as defined by the interviewee.
Other	Anything of potential relevance and interest that does not fall under a current code
Retesting	References to college's retesting policies or practices, plus interviewee comments about retesting.
Special Programs	Learning communities, Puente, retention programs, thematic courses, or other courses/programs that support LM students.
Students	Descriptions of students: including ALL students, generation 1.5 students, LM students, etc. Either their background, characteristic, language proficiency, etc.
Student response to test results and placement recommendations	Student response to assessment, and what they can do to challenge or change their placement. Includes college's official challenge process and goes beyond it to include informal student responses to testing and placement.
Tests and Testing	ESL test used, English test used, adoption of tests, confidence in tests. Accuracy of the test, how students do on the test. Alignment of tests with curricula.
Role of Funding	Any reference to the role of college financial resources as it impacts matriculation, instruction, communication, or responding to students' needs.
Beliefs about language	Any reference to language abilities, what students can and cannot do with

	language, what language skills are needed to be successful.
Communication, collaboration, & conflict	Comments about communication, collaboration, & conflict among departments, programs, and offices
Beliefs about remediation/acceleration	Comments about the need for more or fewer levels, the need for students to progress faster, the need for them to spend more time in basic skills.
Student agency vs. institutional control	Comments about the need for more institutional control or more student agency.
Focus on students' culture & language	Efforts to be culturally responsive; information in students' first language.