MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Student Services Officers
FROM: Denise Noldon Ph.D., Interim Vice Chancellor
Student Services and Special Programs Division

CC: Sarah Tyson, Dean
Student Services and Special Programs Division
SSSP Coordinators

SUBJECT: Clarification on Approval and Use of Assessment Instruments for Placement

The Chancellor’s Office has received a number of questions regarding approval and use of assessment instruments as well as the application of multiple measures in the California Community Colleges system. This memo is to provide clarification on these issues.

In accordance with the Education Code and title 5 regulations, any assessment test used by the colleges for placement, whether second-party or locally managed, must be approved by the Chancellor’s Office. This includes not only tests for English (including English writing samples), Math, and English as a Second Language, but tests for placement into any other credit or non-credit academic coursework, such as chemistry and biology assessments.

Section 78213 of the Education Code states:

No district or college may use any assessment instrument for the purposes of this article without the authorization of the board of governors.

Additionally, title 5, section 5522(c) of the California Code of Regulations prohibits community colleges from using an assessment test for placement (with limited exceptions), which has not been approved by the Chancellor pursuant to section 5522.

Regarding the application of multiple measures in assessment, title 5, section 5522(a) requires colleges to employ multiple measures “when using an English, Mathematics, or ESL
assessment test for placement.” The definition for multiple measures can be found in Section 55502(i):

Multiple measures are a required component of a district’s assessment system and refer to the use of more than one assessment measure in order to assess the student. Other measures that may comprise multiple measures include, but are not limited to, interviews, holistic scoring processes, attitude surveys, vocational or career aptitude and interest inventories, high school or college transcripts, specialized certificates or licenses, education and employment histories, and military training and experience.

Some colleges choose to use SAT or ACT scores as part of their placement process. The Chancellor’s Office has determined that test results from either the SAT or the ACT can be used as a multiple measure, if used along with other measures. Colleges are not required to submit these instruments for approval to the Chancellor’s Office. This determination is in accordance with title 5, section 55522, which grants the Chancellor’s Office authority to “identify other measures of a student’s college readiness that community college districts may use for student placement into the college’s curriculum.”

Colleges may also choose to use the Early Assessment Program (EAP) to provide diagnostic advice or for student placement and are authorized to do so per Education Code, section 99300. Chancellor’s Office approval is not required for the EAP.

Please refer to the Standards, Policies, and Procedures for the Evaluation of Assessment Instruments Used in California Community Colleges for clarification on any other issues. The colleges may also access taped webinars, originally held in fall 2014, explaining the assessment approval process. These webinars can be accessed on this same webpage under the “Training” tab.

Please contact Chris Graillat, SSSP Specialist, at 916-322-7988 or cgraillat@cccco.edu if you have any questions or need assistance. You may also contact Debra Sheldon, SSSP Specialist, at 916-322-2818 or dsheldon@cccco.edu.