

*Innovative Strategies  
for System-wide Assessment  
for Course Placement*

*November 6, 2008*



**Minnesota**  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES

## Presented by:

---

- *Linda Lade*, System Director for College Transitions, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- *Kathie Montognese*, Director of Testing, Hennepin Technical College and ACCUPLACER Institutional Administrator, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

# Minnesota State Colleges & Universities (MnSCU)

---

- Formed in 1995 by the Minnesota State Legislature
- Consolidated three systems: community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities
- 25 two-year colleges and 7 state universities (54 campus sites)
- 5<sup>th</sup> largest public higher education system in the U.S.

# MnSCU Structure for Course Placement Testing

---

- System Director for College Transitions: housed in the Office of the Chancellor
- MnSCU Assessment for Course Placement Committee: composed of faculty, academic and student affairs administrators, testing directors, and students

## Summary of changes to system assessment for course placement policy and procedure (2005-2008)

---

### ***From:***

- Institutions used various course placement instruments
- Each institution had its own testing set-up
- Each institution had its own course placement scores

### ***To:***

- ACCUPLACER was selected as the system-endorsed placement instrument
- Created a system-wide testing model
- System-wide course placement scores were established and implemented

## Updates, continued

---

- Conducted research and recommended system course placement scores for: introductory college-level writing, reading comprehension, and mathematics
- Amended course placement procedure to reflect these changes

## Additional benefits

---

- Shifted language away from “minimum cut scores” to “assessment for course placement”
- Belief that students can be served better by consistent scores for college-level courses
- Stronger net for catching and helping students
- Credibility with high school partners
- Clearer picture of our students’ academic skills

## Advantages of setting system course placement scores

---

- Consistent message to students about college readiness in three core areas
- Prevents shopping around for a lower score
- Going through the process helped us know ourselves better
- Each system college and university reviewed its local policy

## Assessment for Course Placement Committee website

---

- <http://www.courseplacement.project.mnsu.edu>
- Serves as a document repository
- Provides a resource for staff and faculty involved in course placement work
- Offers transparency to the process
- Supports changes made affecting system colleges and universities

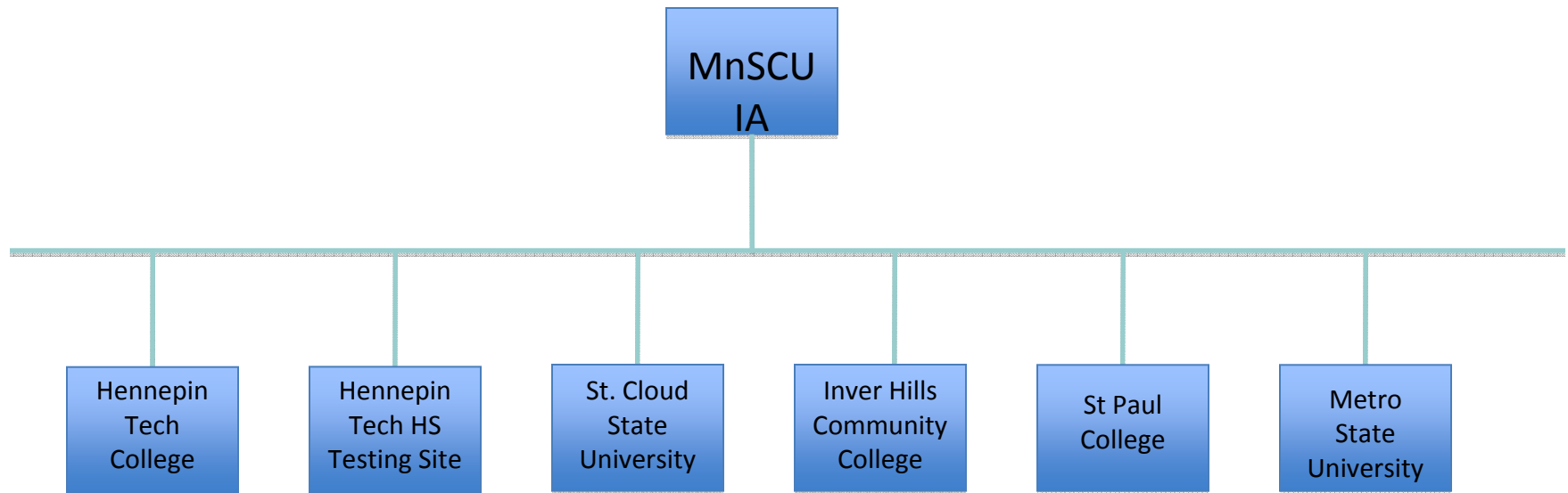
## ACCUPLACER System administrative model

---

- ACCUPLACER new platform included new administrative functions, 4 levels
- Allowed us to set up a statewide testing system never before possible
- An ACCUPLACER institutional administrator was needed to manage and assist testing directors throughout the system

# New model for ACCUPLACER administration

---



Unlimited sites available in the system  
Currently 90 testing sites in the MnSCU model  
Allows data collection system-wide

MnSCU  
IA



Hennepin Tech  
Main Testing  
site

Hennepin Tech  
High School  
Testing site

Hennepin Tech  
Special Projects  
Testing site

Site  
Manager

Site  
Manager

Site  
Manager

Reports

Reports

Reports

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

Proctor

## Advantages of a system administrative model for ACCUPLACER

---

- Provides a consistent testing process to students across the system
- Allows students flexibility in testing locations
- Saves time and work for individual testing directors
- Stronger voice/advocacy between MnSCU and ACCUPLACER
- Improves accuracy of collected data

## Custom reports: more than we hoped for!

---

Custom reports give us information about ourselves faster and more accurately than in the past!

- Example: ESL sub group needed to know which colleges were administering ESL testing, and which sections of the test were being used.
- This information can be easily collected!

## Responsibilities of ACCUPLACER system administrator

---

- Manages system wide ACCUPLACER changes
- Provides training and support to testing directors
- Collaborates with System Director of College Transitions in setting goals
- Works with system IT when upgrades and changes are needed to support data collection process
- Communicates issues to ACCUPLACER

## Distance Proctoring: making students lives easier

---

- A bright idea mentioned by a testing director and member of MnSCU Assessment for Course Placement Committee
- 70% of MnSCU institutions participate
- Administered as a password-protected feature of the course placement website

<http://www.courseplacement.project.mnscu.edu/>

# Benefits expressed by testing directors

---

- Saves time and resources!
  - ***Scheduling, calling, faxing, mailing***
- Cost of test is applied to the student's home institution
- Data is loaded right into home institution's data base (saving time and chance of human error)
- Students take the correct tests to meet placement requirements of the home institutions
- Test set-up is still individualized for each institution
- Students and parents appreciate not having to drive to the home institution just to take the ACCUPLACER

## Next steps

---

- Fine-tuning cut scores
- Train all institutions to use ESL tests
- Improve guidelines for test administration, develop proctor training
- Retesting recommendations
- Use of WritePlacer
- Improving transitions for high school and ABE

Why is it important for us to work together to determine college readiness?

---

- Taking ACCUPLACER while still attending an ABE program helps students know where their skill levels are in relation to what they need to meet their future educational goals
- Encourages students to continue to develop skills required for college success
- Helps students stay focused and more prepared when entering post-secondary education

## Expanding partnerships with High Schools and ABE

---

- Process must be valid, have integrity, and be a true partnership with the high school or ABE staff
- Training of high school counselors and other staff is critical to successful testing and interpretation of results
- Students and parent must understand purpose of the ACCUPLACER, ensures understanding of students' skill levels in relation to what they need to meet their future educational goals

# Hennepin Technical College model

---

- **TOUR:** Hennepin Technical College for career exploration “What programs are available to me?”
- **TEST:** Take ACCUPLACER Placement Test at ABE Center, proctored by college testing staff
- **TALK:** Receive individualized test interpretation with HTC counselors/testing staff at ABE center, sign up students for Advancer when appropriate

Admission Representatives available to give follow-up presentations, i.e., financial aid, application, program information

# *Thank-you!*

---

- For further information, contact:
  - Linda Lade: [linda.lade@so.mnscu.edu](mailto:linda.lade@so.mnscu.edu)
  - Kathie Montognese:  
[kathie.montognese@hennepintech.edu](mailto:kathie.montognese@hennepintech.edu)