DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION FACULTY PERSPECTIVE OF THE TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A PLACEMENT EXAM

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by

Felicia Chunta McAdams

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to every individual labeled “at risk”. You don’t have to live up to the expectations of the title. The journey may not be easy but the reward at the finish line will be great. Know that your current condition is not your conclusion. The worse is behind you and the best is yet to come.

ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students in their classrooms as a result of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. The final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students.

Methods

Using Moustakas' phenomenological design, developmental education faculty were asked to participant in one-on-one interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to qualitative coding conventions. Categories were constructed and then synthesized to identify the emerging themes.

Findings

Seven developmental education faculty were interviewed to understand the essence of their experience with the TSIA as a placement exam for their courses. Overall, developmental education faculty do not believe the TSIA is an effective instrument for placement due to the assessment's inability to assess or take into consideration the non-cognitive factors that interfere with student success. Participants also suggested the level of the cutoff scores also interfere with the TSIA ability to place

students in the correct developmental education course. Four themes emerged from this study; arbitrary cutoff scores, college expectations and non-cognitive factors, content alignment, and an imperfect system. Future studies should focus on cutoff scores and factors suggested by Saxon & Morante (2015) and Conley (2007, 2010) for a systematic onboarding process to increase student success.

KEY WORDS: Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA), Developmental education, College readiness, Placement exams, Perspectives, and Faculty

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We're gathered here today to honor those that helped me along the way. I've always wanted to be an actress so here's my award-winning speech. 'Testing one, two, three. Is this mic on? Hi out there. As you can see, I am a little nervous and excited at the same time. I never thought this day would come. I have so many people to thank so let me hurry before they cue the music. I first want to thank God who's the head of my life. For with Him nothing is impossible. I want to thank my mother for teaching me the true definition of strength. Because of her, I have learned how to overcome any obstacle that comes my way. If it wasn't for Dr. Judith Mann, I would not have known I could make it this far in life. Thank you for believing me and equipping me with the courage to be successful in life. I would like to give a special thanks to my DEA Cohort 2 family, LaShanda Sullivan, Stephanie Broussard, Dr. Deborrah A. Hebert, Dr. Susana Skidmore, Dr. Stephanie Bluth, Dr. Debra P. Price, the Graduate Studies Department, my dissertation support group family, my Combs Hall Staff, my students, my friends, and my colleagues for your support and words of encouragement along the way. I would also like the participants in my study for taking time out to help me complete my dissertation. Thank you Dr. Patrick Saxon and Dr. Nara Martirosyan for serving as members of my committee, and for dedicating their time and wisdom to help me finish my dissertation. Last, but surely not least, thank Dr. George Moore for being my biggest support and encouraging me when I wanted to throw in the towel. He is more to me than my dissertation chair; he helped me accomplish the unimaginable, and for that I will forever be grateful. It takes a village to raise a child. Everyone mentioned here is a part of my village, and I thank all for helping me reach my educational endeavors.'

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Developmental education is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to 1844, when the University of the State of Missouri created a preparatory department (White, Martirosyan, & Wanjohi, 2009). Since the early 1970s, the State of Texas has implemented different initiatives to support developmental education in its public higher education institutions (Boylan & Saxon, 2006). One third of the incoming freshmen were deficient in the basic academic skills needed to succeed in college courses (Grable, 1988; Texas College and University System Coordinating Board [TCUSCB], 1986). During this time, community colleges were mandated by the State to offer remedial programs for students identified as not college ready. The mandate was meant to increase student success; however, there was no uniform policy on testing and placement procedures nor how remediation was offered or assessed (Grable, 1988).

With a strain on state resources (Grable, 1988; Saxon & Slate, 2013) and criticism from employers about college graduates lacking basic communication and computation skills (TCUSCB, 1986), statewide task forces were created to evaluate community colleges' remedial and testing practices (Grable, 1988; TCUSCB, 1986). One task force recommended a mandatory placement policy that assessed all incoming students using an instrument that could accurately identify students at risk of not successfully completing college level work (Grable, 1988). In 1985, the TCUSCB created and charged the Committee on Testing with the task of identifying the purpose, development, and selection of appropriate tests; the impact of statewide tests on stakeholders; the use of test data; the cost of testing programs; and best practices before and after testing (TCUSCB,

1986). The Committee on Testing had similar recommendations as Grable, but also emphasized the importance of advising; mandatory remediation as a result of testing and advising; the cost and evaluation of remediation; and a uniform test with a statewide cut score.

The Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) was implemented by the state legislature during the fall semester of 1989 to improve outcomes in developmental education (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). The TASP was designed based on the recommendations from the *Generation of Failure Report* produced by the TCUSCB. As an assessment and a policy, the TASP was the State's attempt to unify testing practices at public institutions, thus ensuring students have the basic academic skills to complete successfully college level courses (Griffith & Meyer, 1999).

The TASP assessment battery measured students' college readiness in mathematics, reading, and writing (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Martorell, McFarlin, & Xue, 2013). The standardized assessment was used to place students who did not meet a defined cut score into a remedial course in the respective deficient subject area (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Martorell et al., 2013). After successfully completing remedial coursework, students were required to retake the TASP.

In 1993, the TASP policy underwent an update. Students were exempt from taking the TASP assessment based on their performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), or the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). This process allowed students to bypass

developmental education, which addressed the concern of students' increased expenses for non-credit courses, extended time spent in developmental education, and the prolonged journey to graduation (Bailey, 2009; Conley, 2007; Grable, 1988; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). Researchers and policy makers found TASP to be valid, but lacked the ability to rectify the increased need for developmental education due to an uneven implementation of the program across institutions (Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Porter & Polikoff, 2012).

The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) replaced the TASP in 2003 in hopes to address the shortcomings of TASP. After the TSI began, students were no longer required to test after completion of a remedial course, and school officials were given more authority in determining how students strengthened their deficiencies. For example, students were able to participate in and utilize integrated developmental education support services instead of or in addition to taking remedial courses (Saxon & Slate, 2013). Schools had the ability to set cut off scores for different assessments as well as decide whether or not placement was mandatory. Due to the variability in data, the State of Texas searched for a new solution for the on-going trend in developmental education.

During the fall semester of 2013, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) implemented the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) to predict college level courses success more accurately. Upon the completion of the assessment, students received a diagnostic report giving them their score thus helping them and their advisors more accurately place the students in the correct courses. The TSIA was a bold move by the State of Texas to go against the norm in utilizing placement exams such as the ACCUPLACER and the COMPASS to a single assessment. However, Hughes and

Nelson (1991) stated using “only one assessment tool is not the best predictor of success” (p. 46).

Problem Statement

At the start of the fall 2013 academic year, the TSIA was implemented to determine whether students need to enroll in college readiness courses or college level courses. The TSIA is a new exam with unknown accuracy for properly placing students. Inaccurate placement has delayed students’ time to graduation, as well as increased the cost of their education, or put underprepared students in college level courses. Texas has put significant trust in the validity of this new assessment. The implementation of the TSIA has changed the composition of the classroom.

Placement exams such as the ACCUPLACER and the COMPASS are widely used (Bailey, 2009; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010) and determine whether students can enroll in college level courses or college readiness courses. Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2010) noted that the fate of most of these test takers leads them into a developmental education program. Researchers (Frauenholtz & Latterell, 2006; Hughes & Nelson, 1991; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015; Scott-Clayton, 2012) have reported that using placement exams as the sole predictor of academic success to be an ineffective practice. When “placement is determined solely on the basis of whether a score is above or below a certain cutoff,” (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010, p. 1) underprepared students are inaccurately placed into college level classes, and college ready students are incorrectly placed into developmental classes. Complete reliance on placement exams such as the ACCUPLACER and the COMPASS delay students’ path to graduation by adding additional non-credit courses to students’ degree plans, as well as

increase the cost of pursuing their education (Bailey, 2009; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. The final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students.

Significance

From TASP to TSI, the State of Texas has been dedicated to student success in higher education. With the shift to using the TSIA as the sole placement exam, this research can encourage the THECB to reevaluate the new TSI standards. The TSIA is a new phenomenon. Developmental faculty have first-hand experience with this new phenomenon based on the students placed into their classrooms. It is important to understand the impact state mandated policies have on the classroom.

As a result of this study, insight into growing attrition rates were highlighted from faculty perspectives. The findings may be used to encourage policy and decision makers representing the State of Texas to reevaluate current practices to serve the students better. The professors' descriptions of their experiences with developmental education placement within the Texas State University System (TSUS) may or may not also reflect the concerns of professors in other school systems.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do developmental education professors perceive the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for placing students into developmental courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing)? (b) What is the perceived pattern (e.g., students' skills level; cognitive and non-cognitive factors observed; and the quality of the education rendered) associated with placement and developmental education students' ability to succeed in a college readiness course?

Conceptual Framework

A change in consumer needs diversified the dynamics of higher education (Goldrick-Rad & Cook, 2011). More students are graduating from high school lacking basic academic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing. They often find themselves in developmental education. Depending on the state, the responsibility of remediating these students varies. While in some states (i.e. Arkansas, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) remediation is the sole responsibility of community colleges, other states like Georgia, Illinois, and Louisiana have shift their focus to exercising better intervention practices in the high schools to develop their students' skills (Hodges et al., 2017). A remedy for a nation at risk is a comprehensive model for assessment and placement (Bailey, 2009; Hodara, Jaggars, & Karp, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2015) and a comprehensive model for college readiness (Bailey, 2009; Conley, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010).

Accurate placement benefits all stakeholders (Frauenholtz & Latterell, 2006). Therefore, assessment and placement must be valid and be the core of the matriculation process (Gordon, 2006). With a broken system where there is no definite practice across

institutions or states (Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010), a call for assessment and placement reform will ultimately improve developmental education outcomes. Saxon and Morante (2015) proposed a systematic comprehensive model as a solution. This model has seven stages and illustrates the onboarding process, admission through registration, similar to Conley's (2007) model for college readiness.

Saxon and Morante's (2015) systematic model for assessment and placement and Conley's (2007, 2010) comprehensive model for college readiness are the guiding principles for this study. This study will describe the nature of the change. The design of the TSIA addressed a few of the stages within both models. The TSIA is a computer adaptive assessment that provides a diagnostic profile that can differentiate students into three categories; college ready, developmental education, or adult basic education (THECB, 2014).

The first stage of Saxon and Morante's (2015) comprehensive model begins with the College Application. Here, students begin to make the transition from high school to college. They learn about college expectations, the admissions process, and other contextual awareness skills (Conley, 2007). Although Orientation is stage six, it is also at this time that students develop their college knowledge and employ their key cognitive strategies. The second stage is Determine the Need for Testing for placement. Within contextual awareness, prior to students' first visit to campus, students can be made aware of the possibility of needing to test in their acceptance letter. In this letter, the next steps in the onboarding process can be outlined. The third stage is Pre-Assessment: Test Prep and Review. Several studies have found that if students knew the effects assessment would have on their academic journey, they would have performed better (Bailey, 2009;

Safran & Visher, 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015). Pre-assessment can address various topics like cut scores and what they mean to students, test content, and sample questions.

The fourth stage is Assessment Testing and Results. Placement tests measure academic skills and the level of remediation needed (Gordon, 2006). It is during this stage that students demonstrate their academic knowledge and skills (Conley, 2007). The results can be used by faculty to measure skill deficiencies (Saxon & Morante, 2015). Stages five and seven tie into each other, Counseling/Advising for Placement, and Registration.

A best practice in developmental education is mandatory assessment, advisement, and placement (Boylan, 2002; Saxon & Morante, 2015). During these stages, advisors use different measures like high school grade point average (GPA), non-cognitive factors, and placement scores to place students in the course that best suit their abilities. Hughes and Nelson (1991) stated using "only one assessment tool is not the best predictor of success" (p. 46). Non-cognitive factors, which Conley (2007) refers to as academic behaviors, play a significant role in determining academic success (Safran & Visher, 2010),

Definition of Terms

There are several terms that will be used throughout this paper; academic preparedness, college level course(s), college readiness, cut scores, developmental education, placement, placement exams, remedial courses, remediation, Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Texas Success Initiative (TSI), and the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA).

Academic Preparedness

The level of preparation to which a student can be admitted and enrolled in collegiate work without the need for remediation (Conley, 2007; Porter & Polikoff, 2012).

Basic Academic Skills

The ability to make simple calculations, demonstrate reasoning, and communicate effectively (Arendale, 2007).

College Level Course(s)

College level courses or credit bearing courses that lead to the completion of a degree or certificate program (Arendale, 2007; Chen, 2016).

College Readiness

Separate from a college readiness course, which is also known as a remedial or developmental course, college readiness refers to how prepared a student is to complete college level courses successfully without remediation (Conley, 2007). In addition to being academically prepared, college readiness also refers to the level of preparation in information literacy, non-cognitive skills, and contextual awareness (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Conley, 2007).

Cut Scores

Cut scores or cutoff scores are points on a test's score scale that determine a student's level of proficiency in a specific area (Dwyer, 1996; Zieky & Perie, 2006). Cut scores are used to place students into developmental courses or college level courses.

Developmental Education

The Texas Administrative Code defines developmental education as "pre-college, non-degree credit courses, interventions, tutorials, laboratories, and other means of assistance that are included in a plan to ensure the success of a student in performing entry-level academic coursework" (19 Tex. Admin. Code § 4.53 (c)(10)).

Placement

Placement procedures vary from state to state and from institution to institution (Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). On average, placement is the process where advisors use student records such as but not limited to placement exam scores, high school grade point average (GPA), and non-cognitive information to determine whether students go into developmental or college level courses.

Placement Exams

Placement exams typically assess students' skill level in mathematics, reading, and writing (Bailey, 2009; Gordon, 2006; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Based on pre-established cut off scores, placement exams determine whether students are eligible to enroll in college level classes or need remediation (Belfield & Crosta, 2012).

Remedial Courses

Although there is no universal definition for remedial courses, they are typically non-credit bearing courses that prepare students for collegiate coursework (Chen, 2016). In the field, the term remedial course is widely used interchangeably with developmental course or college readiness course and will be referred to as such throughout this paper.

Remediation

Remediation refers to the preparatory or college readiness courses students take prior to enrolling into the related college level course.

Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP)

The Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) was implemented by the state legislature during the fall semester of 1989 to improve outcomes in developmental education by unifying testing practices with public higher education institutions (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). In 2003, the TASP was replaced by the Texas Success Initiative.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

Created in 1965 as the Texas College and University System Coordinating Board (TCUSCB), the now Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is the highest authority governing issues in public higher education institutions (Ashworth, 2010). It was implemented by the 59th Texas Legislature to unify practices through research and to promote excellence.

Texas Success Initiative (TSI)

The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) is the Texas statute that addresses developmental education (THECB, 2012). It replaced the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) program in 2003, requiring all new incoming students entering a public Texas higher education institution be assessed in reading, writing, and mathematics to determine whether students are eligible to enroll into college level or developmental classes (THECB, 2012). Differently from the TASP, TSI allowed institutions to determine college readiness (Saxon & Slate, 2013).

Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)

Effective fall 2013, the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) replaced placement exams created by individual institutions and or departments as well as the ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, and THEA placement exams. The TSIA is the sole assessment used in determining college readiness for new incoming students enrolling in a public Texas college or university (THECB, 2012).

Delimitations

The aim of this study was to describe the essence of the experiences of developmental education faculty with the TSIA as a placement exam. Developmental education faculty in this study must have taught remedial courses prior to the 2013-2014 school year and since the implementation of the TSIA during the 2014-2015 school year. Participation in this study was restricted to developmental education faculty within the Texas State University System (TSUS).

Limitations

This phenomenological study was limited to my ability to epoché in order to truly understand the essence of the phenomenon. As a previous Academic Advisor and now the Director of Advising and Retention, I have first-hand experience with academic placement as a result of the TSIA which would make bracketing difficult but achievable. Due to the specificity of the population reviewed, the generalization scope is narrow. The findings may only apply to the participants chosen for this study, which is a threat to external validity (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Assumptions

This study was based on the assumption that the participants have experienced the phenomenon. Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, assessments such as ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, and THEA were used. It was assumed that the participants were forthcoming in their responses.

Epoché

Before the interviews began, I engaged in epoché or bracketing, setting aside prior knowledge and experiences with the phenomenon to have an unbiased approach when trying to understand the participants' experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, my experiences in academic advising and TSI compliance regulations were set aside. As an advisor, I have heard students complain about the TSIA placing them into a developmental course although they should have been placed in a college level course. I have also witnessed students who were placed into a college level course based on meeting the benchmark scores who lacked the basic cognitive skills to be successful in a college level course. However, prior to my research, I had not heard how faculty perceive the TSIA as a placement tool. Research has shown that the COMPASS and ACCUPLACER have a 60-80% chance of accurately placing students and predicting how well a student will perform in a college level course (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). However, there are no data supporting how well the TSIA accurately places a student or predicts success in a college level course. Understanding my own bias allowed me to be objective in the data collection process.

Summary

On February 16, 2017, House Bill 417 was presented and referred to the Public Education committee during the 85th Legislative session. House Bill 417 is related to repealing the Texas Success Initiative. According to the Texas Education Code 51.3062, students enrolling in a Texas public higher education institution must be TSI compliant, master mathematics, reading, and writing basic academic skills. Moreover, students who fail to exempt from TSI standards through the ACT or SAT must take the TSIA to demonstrate college readiness for mandatory placement purposes. The TSIA was implemented the first day of the fall 2013 semester as the sole placement exam in the state of Texas. At this time, there are no data reflecting the accuracy of using the TSIA as a placement exam. If the bill passes, Texas assessment practices will return to schools using their own assessments to measure college readiness. This phenomenological study described in detail the essence of developmental education faculty in Southeast Texas experiences with the TSIA as a placement exam.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, statement of the purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, definition of terms, delimitations and limitations, assumptions, epoché, and a summary. Chapter II is a literature review of developmental education, placement exams and college readiness. Chapter III describes the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV describes in detail, the results of the interviews. Chapter V is a discussion of

the findings in relation to the research questions, literature, and framework, as well as a discussion of implications for future research and policies and practices.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of the developmental education faculty experiences with students in their classrooms as a result of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. A final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students. An extensive review of the literature was conducted to get a better understanding on the background of the topic. The key terms searched were academic preparedness, college readiness, developmental education, remedial education, remediation, placement exams, and faculty perceptions.

Literature Search Procedure

A generic search of the term developmental education through Google Scholar yields over 2.7 million results. To narrow the results, articles used in the Developmental Education Administration Doctoral Program were given preference. From those articles, the references with the most citations were recorded and used in the literature. A search of different gurus and pioneers within each key term served as the bases for more in-depth searches. Key terms that are often used interchangeably with other terms were also searched; remedial for developmental or academic preparedness for college readiness.

To narrow the search results using the key terms for this study, various databases accessed through the Sam Houston State University Library were used. These databases included the *Academic Search Complete, Dissertations and Theses Full Text,*

Dissertations at Sam Houston State University, EBSCOhost, Education Full Text (H. W. Wilson), Education Source, Orange Search Engine, Primary Search, Professional Development Collection, PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and *PsycINFO*. An appraisal of the citations from the seminal articles guided the collection of additional articles. Articles were identified by the scope of the research, categorized by community college and or university practices. Articles were organized and synthesized to help organize the history, problem, and practices of the key terms.

College Readiness

In an ideal world, when students graduate from high school they are ready to enroll in college level courses or enter the workforce. Unfortunately, college readiness is a growing concern that has called for education reform on federal and state levels (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). The quality of P-12 education is questioned when high school graduates enter post-secondary education and or the workforce underprepared (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The section reviewed how researchers define college readiness, federal and state initiatives, and practices in the State of Texas.

Defining college readiness. College readiness is not a new phenomenon; it is, however, difficult to find a commonly accepted definition or approach (Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). The difficulty of defining college readiness is attributed to the criterion used to define the concept (Porter & Polikoff, 2012). The criterion ranges from college acceptance (Greene & Forster, 2003; Porter & Polikoff, 2012), to academic preparation (Porter & Polikoff, 2012), to a success criterion which is a combination of the cognitive and non-cognitive skills students must possess (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Conley, 2007;

Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Through a review of the literature, Barnes, Slate, and Rojas-LeBouef (2010) highlighted the differences between college eligibility, academic preparedness, and college readiness. College eligibility or academic preparedness is an indication a student demonstrated content mastery (Porter & Polikoff, 2012) in a subject area mainly measured by a standardized test such as the ACT, SAT, or a high school exit level exam, and by taking a certain number or types of courses (Barnes et al., 2010; Conley, 2007). Moreover, college eligibility is determined by meeting benchmark scores on the ACT and SAT (Conley, 2007); these students meet college admissions requirements (Greene & Forster, 2003). Although a student may be academically prepared for collegiate work, non-cognitive factors have also been linked to being prepared for college (Safran & Visher, 2010). Academic preparedness represents one aspect of college readiness (Barnes et al., 2010; Hill, 2012); it does not guarantee student success.

Conley (2007) operationally defined college readiness "as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution" (p. 5). In addition to being academically prepared, college readiness also refers to the level of preparation in information literacy, non-cognitive skills, and contextual awareness (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Conley, 2007). Moreover, Conley described the facets of college readiness as contextual skills and awareness; academic behaviors; key content; and key cognitive strategies. Conley's model is on the other end of the spectrum from Greene and Forster's (2003) definition of college readiness which is determined by students being able to graduate high school; completing certain high school courses; and demonstrating basic literacy skills.

Current Trends. A high school education no longer equips students with the basic academic skills needed for a globalized workforce (Hill, 2012; Strong American Schools, 2008; TCUSCB, 1988) or to meet the expectations to excel in college level courses (Conley, 2007). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (n.d.), the graduation rate for the class of 2015 was 83.2%. In 2003, Greene and Forster reported that high school students graduate at a rate of 70%, but only 32% of those students are college ready. Based on those rates, it comes as no surprise to have a significantly high number of incoming freshmen needing to enroll in at least one remedial course (NCES, 2003; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Abraham, Slate, Saxon, and Barnes (2014) reported of the 2008 first time in college freshmen cohort, 41% required remediation in mathematics.

Using a nationwide sample of high school students, Greene and Forster (2003) evaluated high school graduation rates and college readiness rates. The researchers analyzed their data using the Greene Method and information from the NAEP High School Transcript and suggested a need for K-12 education reform to improve college readiness rates for Blacks and Hispanics whom are disproportionally not prepared for college in relation to other ethnicities (Greene & Forster, 2003). Similar to other researchers' findings (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Conley, 2007, 2010; Hill, 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012), Greene and Forster believed there is a gap between high school graduation requirements and college expectations. One conclusion for the gap is that high school curriculum and assessments are not in alignment with collegiate learning processes (Conley, 2003; Conley, 2007; Hill, 2012).

Federal and State Initiatives. There is a lot at stake when high school graduation outcomes affect college readiness and the workforce economy. The Obama

Administration enhanced existing college readiness initiatives through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (Blume & Zumeta, 2014). The ARRA was a federal stimulus package to aid schools on all levels in funding state programs to address college readiness. The focus of such programs aim to align statewide practices as well as implement nationwide college readiness standards (Blume & Zumeta, 2014). Although the federal government has tried to create a cookie cutter solution to address college readiness, researchers have found that a one-size-fits-all approach is not the answer (Barnes & Slate, 2013). Webb (2007) defined alignment as a measure of how components of different systems match and work with one another. Student failure is a result of gaps in data reporting methods, and misalignment of secondary practices and postsecondary expectations (Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Greene & Forster, 2003; Hill, 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Achieving and measuring student success, requires a properly aligned system between high school competencies and higher education college readiness benchmarks (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Hill, 2012). To evaluate college readiness policies across states and federal and state initiatives to increase college readiness, Blume and Zumeta (2014) suggested it was difficult to generalize findings due to so many variations in how and what information is reported (Porter & Polikoff, 2012).

State of Texas practices. End of course exams assess students' skills in specific subject areas. Research has shown that high school end of course exams are not aligned with the academic rigor of college level courses (Conley, 2003, 2007). Enacted by the Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.051 (b)(13) in 2006, scores on an end of course exam are one of the six indicators of college readiness (Barnes & Slate, 2014; Barnes, Slate, & Rojas-LeBouef, 2010). Like other states, Texas has used high school standardized tests

as a means of placing students in developmental or college level courses (Brown & Conley, 2007). According to TEA (2014),Texas has a long history of student assessment dating back to 1979, when the state instituted its first statewide testing program. Over the years, the assessment program has grown in size, scope, and rigor as a result of periodic changes in legislation and policy. (p. 1)

After adopting college and career readiness standards in 2008, Texas needed a new assessment that could increase accountability academic preparation for collegiate work (TEA, 2010). During the 2011-2012 school year, Texas implemented the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) program to measure the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards (TEA, 2010). With the incorporation of college and career readiness standards into TEKS, performance on the STAAR shows the level of academic preparation for college level courses without the need for remediation (TEA, 2010). Over the years, the State of Texas has increased the academic rigor of its assessments to produce better high school graduation outcomes. An overview of the Texas assessments is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Texas Assessment Historical Overview

Year	Name	Overview
1980	Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS)	Assess minimum skills in mathematics, reading, and writing.
1986	Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS)	First time an assessment was required for diploma.
1990	Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)	Focus changed from minimum skills to academic skills in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11.
2003	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)	Graduation requirement in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
2011	State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)	More rigorous assessment that measures college and career readiness

Developmental Education

Developmental education has been under public scrutiny since before 1844 when the University of Missouri created the first preparatory department (White, Martirosyan, & Wanjohi, 2009). In the beginning, higher education mirrored Europe's post-secondary education system. The student body consisted of privileged white males from wealthy families (Arendale, 2011). The characteristics of the typical college student changed between the mid-1940s and early 1970s; admissions standards were lowered to allow more students to register (Arendale, 2011). The student body became more diverse as well as the students' needs to be academically successful. Although the face of developmental education changed as the dynamics of the student body evolved, it has been a part of higher education, in some form, since the 17th century.

Developmental education equips underprepared students with the foundation and tools to develop the skills students need to excel in collegiate coursework through a sequence of numerous remedial courses and or use of support services. Kulik and Kulik (1991) defined developmental instruction as "college instruction that is adjusted in content, style, or pace to meet the educational needs of high-risk students" (p. 1). Within the United States, each state offers some form of developmental education in the post-secondary education sector (Hodges et al., 2017). What follows is the description of the (a) developmental students, (b) effect of developmental education on graduation, (c) financial issues, (d) best practices, (e) alternatives to remediation, and (f) faculty attitudes.

Developmental students. When students graduate high school, they are under the impression that they are college ready (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Developmental students are underprepared learners whose academic abilities are below collegiate expectations (Boylan, Bonham, & Bliss, 1994). As it was between the mid-1940s and early 1970s, developmental students are non-traditional males and females, students of color, first generation college students, traditional White males, and students from a low socio-economic background (Arendale, 2011). Today, developmental education students come from all ethnicities and races; however, in 1994, Boylan et al. found that majority of the students were White. They are students coming to college after being in the workforce; they are students who are poor test takers; they are students who lack non-cognitive abilities; and they are students who need a refresher or who want to explore content mastery prior to enrolling into college level courses (Arendale, 2011).

Effect of developmental education on graduation rates. Developmental education within itself is complex; some contend the cost outweighs the benefits (e.g., Bailey et al., 2010). There is no set standard for college readiness (Bailey et al., 2010; Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). Bailey et al. (2010) tracked students' enrollment and progress through developmental sequences. They found that less than one half of the students who are referred to developmental education complete their course sequences. Students' graduation dates are also prolonged due to spending their first few semesters in remediation (Bailey et al., 2010; Boylan et al., 1994). These researchers suggested the remediation process be accelerated to reduce the time students have to wait to take college level courses. In a Complete College America (2012) study, researchers reported that 51% of the incoming class of community colleges and 20.7% of 4-year institutions freshman cohort need remediation, but of that population only 35.1% graduate within six years. Full-time non-remedial students enrolled in a Texas public 4-year institution have a graduation rate of 65.8%, whereas remedial students graduate at 32.1% (THECB, 2013). Bettinger and Long (2009) suggested remediation negatively affects persistence rates, and ultimately graduation and labor market returns due to increased requirements that prolong time to degree. However, Bettinger and Long reported students who choose to take developmental education courses had similar outcomes as college ready students.

Using a sample of 9,200 first-time in college freshmen enrolled in a community college over a four academic years period, Fike and Fike (2008) evaluated attributes that contributed to retention. The elements measured included student demographics, completion of all subject developmental courses, participation in the TRIO program

Student Support Services, enrollment in online courses, first semester credit hours including dropped classes, financial need, and parents' education level. In this retrospective, multivariate study Fike and Fike reported the successful completion of the developmental reading course is the strongest predictor of success. Fike and Fike also posited not taking developmental mathematics when needed is detrimental to future success. Fike and Fike further posited the ability to enroll in online courses and receive financial aid increases retention, and it can be concluded that students develop the basics they need to excel in collegiate work.

Calcagno and Long (2008) examined the effect of remediation on educational outcomes. Their study consisted of 100,000 students enrolled in mathematics and reading remedial courses in Florida colleges with marginal placement scores. Using a regression discontinuity design, there was no statistically significant difference between remedial students and their non-remedial peers' academic behaviors. Furthermore, they concluded that remediation increased student persistence but had a minimal effect on graduation rates. Their results only applied to students who scored at or near the cut off score. Further evaluation on policies, practices, and additional services were suggested (Calcagno, & Long, 2008).

Attewell, Heil, and Reisel (2011) conducted a longitudinal study to find explanations for students not completing an undergraduate degree at either 2-year or 4-year institutions. They collected data from first time in college freshmen that entered college in fall 1995 and tracked them for six years. Attewell et al. discovered no single significant factor that determined better chances to graduate; there is typically a combination of factors. Moreover, at 4-year colleges, high school preparation was

reported to be a strong determinant for graduation. Financial aid, nontraditional status, and socioeconomic status are factors associated with low graduation rates.

Financial concerns. Many studies (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Breneman, 1998; Breneman & Harlow, 1998; Martorell, McFarlin, & Xue, 2013; Saxon & Boylan, 2001) discussed the financial concerns associated with developmental education. In 1998, Breneman and Haarlow highlighted that of the $115 billion national public higher education budget, remediation accounted for $1 billion of the annual expenses. During that fiscal year, the State of Texas allocated $172 million for remediation to account for the increase in enrollment in remedial courses. Lawrence Steinberg's commentary in Breneman and Haarlow's study suggested these figures are underestimations and serve as a cover up for a failing public secondary education system. Students endure the cost of remediation as well (Bailey, 2009; Boylan, 2009). Underprepared students are required to pay for developing basic learning skills that should have been developed in high school. Remediation prolongs graduation, which causes many students to drop out (Bailey, 2009; Bettinger & Long, 2009). As a result of dropping out, students earn less wages than their non-developmental peers that go on to obtain bachelor degrees (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006).

Best practices in developmental education. Developmental education looks different at each institution. Although the debate of the effectiveness of developmental education is on-going, 80% of the states within the U.S. still offer courses or support services for underprepared students (Hodges et al., 2017). As a result of limited financial resources and low persistence rates, nationwide, 37 out of 50 states have policies mandating developmental education based on scores on placement exams.

Boylan (2009) developed and proposed the use of the Targeted Intervention for Developmental Education Students (T.I.D.E.S.) model to provide institutions with a framework to better serve underprepared students. The premise of T.I.D.E.S. lies within the objective of understanding the whole student through cognitive, affective, and personal assessments. There are seven stages within the T.I.D.E.S. model. The first stage requires advisors to collaborate developmental education staff to get an understanding of what services and courses are being offered. The second stage requires advisors to develop profiles for the services and courses offered. In the third stage, students are assessed cognitively, affectively, and personally. After students are assessed, they are advised based on the data from the assessments and are provided with interventions to supplement their needs. Advisors are expected to measure student progress in stage six and revise a formulated plan in stage seven.

Course redesigns are policy makers' attempt to address the concern of developmental education students getting stuck in remediation. Acceleration models provide developmental education programs the opportunity to help students maneuver through remedial course work at a faster pace and provide students with the tools to be successful in collegiate work (Edgecombe, 2011). Among the best practices in developmental education are the acceleration models: compression, mainstreaming, and modularization (Nodine et al., 2013).

Compression allows students to enroll in two courses at the same time. The Community College of Denver (CCD) implemented the FASTSTART program to allow students to take either two remedial classes in the same semester or a remedial course and the related college level course in the same semester (Hanover Research, 2013; Nodine et

al., 2013). This course redesign model is a holistic approach (Edgecombe, 2013) that incorporates a learning community (Hanover Research, 2013) and a social support model by providing students an opportunity to network with instructors, peer mentors, case managers, and academic advisors (Brancard, Baker, & Jensen, 2006). It reduces the number of semesters a student enrolls in developmental education.

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) mainstreamed developmental students into college level courses and offered the students extra support from the instructor by providing students with a supplemental class to address any gaps in the learning process (Edgecombe, 2011; Nodine et al., 2013). Students needing a remedial writing course enrolled into the college level English class as well as a supplemental course taught by the same instructor (Nodine et al., 2013). The success of mainstreaming capitalized on the support and rapport with instructors and tutoring services. Developmental education students benefited from this initiative by collaborating with non-developmental education students, seeing the modeled behavior of the instructors, and indirectly bypassing a semester of a remedial course by immediately enrolling into the college level course.

Modularization or the Emporium Model was implemented at Virginia Community Colleges to give students the opportunity to focus only on content areas they have yet to master versus having to sit through a semester long lecture of material the students have already mastered (Nodine et al., 2013). In this model, students are assessed for areas of deficiency and are required to master those areas and those areas only (Nodine et al., 2013). One student may be focusing on one set of modules, and the next student has a different set of modules to focus on. The modules that students must master are also

associated with the major the students are pursuing (Nodine et al., 2013). This redesign method is completed over the course of one semester, with the support of technology to provide feedback and instruction. Students who are highly motivated and have good time management skills benefit the most from this course redesign.

Alternatives to remediation. College preparation or remediation first appeared in higher education in the form of tutoring during the 17th century (Arendale, 2011). Funding, low enrollment, and an increase in new institutions lowered admission standards. As the student body diversified, the type of interventions needed changed. More students were lacking basic academic skills, and that is still the case in today's student body. Boylan (1999) described different types of interventions to address help supplement underprepared students' needs. The most common form of remediation is through college preparatory course work and tutoring. Boylan (1999) noted there are other ways to remediate students: freshmen seminars, supplemental instruction (SI), collaborative learning communities, paired courses, critical thinking instruction, and strategic learning. Freshmen seminars help students get acclimated to campus and make the transition to college. SI provides students with the opportunity to learn from a peer who has previously passed a known difficult course. Collaborative learning communities and paired courses allow students to take classes together to enhance the learning environment. Critical thinking instruction and strategic learning allows students to use logic, analyze information, solve problems and use these skills through various aspects of their lives.

Faculty perceptions. Faculty attitudes can hinder or enhance the academic success of underprepared students. Breneman and Haarlow (1998) interviewed Hunter

Boylan, the Director of the National Center for Developmental Education (NCDE), on different topics within remedial education. Boylan noted that remedial education faculty do not have a background in developmental studies, and, therefore, do not know how to teach developmental classes. For instructors to meet the needs of underprepared students, Roueche (1977) suggested teachers become learning specialists. Spickelmier (1972) discovered community college faculty have a relatively negative disposition toward disadvantaged students and are non-responsive to their needs. To identify and to describe faculty attitudes toward academically disadvantaged students, Spickelmier (1972) developed the Inventory of Faculty Attitudes. Spickelmier defined attitude as "a specific mental disposition toward some idea, object, or person, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all ideas, objects, persons, or situations with which it is related" (p. 3). He further described disadvantaged students as low achieving students who lacked motivation and basic learning skills; and who scored low on an aptitude test. Based on the results of the Inventory of Faculty Attitudes community college faculty reported that although developmental education is needed, underprepared students interfere with other students' learning and decreased the quality of education provided. However, like Spickelmier (1972), Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2010) argued faculty find teaching a wide range of skill levels challenging for both them and for the students.

Using a revised version of the Spickelmier (1972) Inventory of Faculty Attitudes, Harris (1983) analyzed the attitudes and characteristics of college faculty teaching remedial/developmental students. The results of this study were reported to reflect the findings of previous works. Although most of Harris' findings mirrored Spickelmier's

findings, the faculty in Harris' study had slightly more positive attitudes towards developmental students. Like Roueche and Snow (1973), Harris suggested the more training an instructor had, the more positive the instructor was about teaching developmental students. However, in contrast, Harris revealed the more years in teaching, the more negative the attitude towards developmental education. Years of teaching does not substitute for the training in working with developmental students.

With the hopes of gaining an understanding of perceived patterns within developmental mathematics, Zientek, Schneider, and Onwuegbuzie (2014) conducted a qualitative study that surveyed 79 community college faculty and 10 state college faculty. The researchers identified common themes in developmental mathematics that the faculty believed are the factors that contribute to students being placed into developmental mathematics and the factors that lowered students' ability to complete developmental mathematics courses. Identified in these results, placement into developmental mathematics and academic success in developmental mathematics may to some extent be a result of non-cognitive factors. Faculty believed students tended not to complete developmental mathematics courses due to academic behaviors and work habits, dispositional factors, and situational factors (Zientek et al., 2014). Future studies should identify whether or not faculty perspectives will change about placement as Texas implements the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA), a common assessment for all Texas colleges

Assessment and Placement

Placement testing is common in community colleges (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015). It began as a response to an increase in poor

performance on standardized tests (Schmitz & delMas, 1991). Tests serve "as a potentially valuable but incomplete tool for understanding a student's academic strengths and weaknesses" (Horn, McCoy, Campbell, & Brock, 2009, p. 522). Placement assessments determine whether students can enroll in college level courses or college readiness courses, even though the fate of most of these test takers is enrollment in a developmental education program (Bailey, 2009; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015). Commonly used placement exams, the effect of placement exams, validity, best practices, alternatives, and the State of Texas practices will be discussed in this section.

Commonly used placement exams. Forty-two out of fifty states mandate the use of standardized testing (Hodges et al., 2017). Researchers (Bailey, 2009; Boylan, 2009; Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010; Scott-Clayton, 2012) have argued that placement tests are high-stakes exams. Placement exams such as the COMPASS, ACCUPLACER, and ASSET have been used at higher education institutions as a determinant of whether students take remedial courses or college level courses (Achieve, 2007; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Scott-Clayton, 2012; Westrick & Allen, 2014). Some schools have also used entrance exams, SAT and ACT, as placement tests or created a local assessment (Achieve, 2007; Conley, 2010). Although locally designed tests are more aligned with the institution's gateway courses, they are still used to make high-stakes placement decisions (Conley, 2010). Furthermore, the ACCUPLACER and the COMPASS are computer adaptive placement exams that measure students' skill levels in mathematics, reading, and writing (Achieve, 2007; Boylan, 2009; Conley, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; James, 2006; Scott-Clayton, 2012). In comparison to the

ASSET, they required fewer test questions and less time to complete to devise a score (Achieve, 2007). Unlike the timed ASSET, the ACCUPLACER and the COMPASS are untimed instruments that provided students with a report of their skills upon completion (Conley, 2010). Overall these placement exams measure students' numeric, algebraic, and geometric reasoning, as well as students' reading and writing skills (Conley, 2010).

In Texas, the ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, and the THEA were accepted as placement exams prior to the fall of 2013. The Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) was previously the TASP exam, the name was changed a few years after its implementation. The THEA was administered in three ways, via paper and pencil, via computer, or via the quick THEA taken at the institution (Achieve, 2007). Like other placement tests, the THEA measured students' skill level in mathematics, reading, and writing. Although public higher education institutions in Texas no longer utilize the THEA, some private institution still use the assessment for placement.

The effect of assessments on students. Placement exams serve as a consequence for many students, placing them in developmental education (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). In a longitudinal study, Martorell, McFarlin, and Xue (2013) examined the effects of failing a placement exam have on enrollment in Texas public colleges. Using regression discontinuity methods, they examined four groups of Texas high school graduates and concluded that scoring poorly on a placement exam only has little causal effect on enrollment. The sample included only students who took the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) prior to enrolling in college and who graduated between 1998 and 2001. Consistent with Bailey (2009) findings, Martorell et al. (2013) concluded students may be unaware of what remedial education means regarding eventual graduation date,

additional costs, and benefits. Because no statistical significance was identified in their findings, Martorell et al. suggested schools should consider remedial education optional. Furthermore, Zeitlin and Markus (1996) reported that when developmental education services are optional, students do not take advantage of them. Assessments fail to identify students who need developmental education intervention (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010). Bailey (2009) discussed the challenges community colleges face with the high volume of developmental students due to the inconsistent weight of placement exams (Safran & Visher, 2010). Bailey acknowledged the rarity of developmental students graduating and made suggestions on how to reach out to these students; take the focus off placement exams; mainstream developmental students into college level courses; and accelerate developmental classes. These suggestions, especially in Texas where the effect of developmental education is negative (Calcagno & Long, 2008; Martorell & McFarlin, 2010), will improve the functionality of community colleges (Bailey, 2009).

In a longitudinal study, Bettinger and Long (2004) analyzed the impact of remediation on student outcomes regarding placement policies and proximity using data provided by the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR). About 8,600 first-time in college freshmen enrolled in a non-selective college in Ohio from fall 1998 to spring 2002 participated in the data collection. Bettinger and Long also utilized self-reports and data from SAT and ACT exams. They found remedial students were more likely to drop out or transfer early than non-remedial students. Furthermore, students needing only remedial mathematics tend to graduate at higher rates than students enrolled in remedial reading courses.

Furthermore, Bettinger and Long (2009) investigated the impact of remediation on college performance and persistence in regard to proximity and placement policies. Using an instrumental variables strategy on 28,000 traditional-aged, first-time in college freshmen enrolled in a public Ohio college, they discovered underprepared students who did not enroll in remedial courses are likely to drop out. Furthermore, compared to students not in remediation, remedial students have better educational outcomes.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), over 75% of all incoming freshmen are placed in at least one developmental course (Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Martorell and McFarlin, Jr. (2010) examined the effects of remediation on academic persistence and graduation rates, and the labor market. Their study consisted of freshmen enrolled in a Texas public 2-year or 4-year institution between 1991-92 and 1999-00. Data were obtained from the Texas Schools Microdata Panel (TSMP), which provided information regarding academic credit hours, matriculation, and conferment of degree. As indicated in these results, students hardly benefited from remediation. In regard to the effect remediation has on the labor market, Martorell and McFarlin, Jr. collected data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)'s Unemployment Insurance (UI) for the earnings record. They reported no evidence of remediation having a positive effect on labor market outcomes.

Validity. Validity is defined as the degree to which tests measure what they purport to measure (James, 2006). It is a common misconception (Morante, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2015) to expect placement exams to predict student success (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Researchers (Gordon, 2006; Morante, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2015) reasoned that placement exams are achievement tests that

measure a student's basic academic skills level at the time of testing. Therefore, placement tests do not have the ability to predict success (Morante, 2012; Saxon & Morante, 2014, 2015). The issue lies in the how colleges use placement exams. James (2006) evaluated the predictive validity of the ACCUPLACER™ Online for placement into different level of developmental courses based on pre-established cutoff scores. The study consisted of 276 students enrolled at a western university in Canada. James looked at the relationship between the participants' final grades in their developmental course and their score on the ACCUPLACER™ Online. There was a statistical significance in the correlation between the test scores and upper levels of developmental math. The lowest math level placement and the English courses did not have a statistically significant difference. Moreover, the content covered in the classes did not align with the content students were tested over. James suggested more research regarding predictive validity and in pre-established cutoff scores.

Westrick and Allen (2014) evaluated the validity of the COMPASS as a placement exam. In addition to looking at whether the COMPASS accurately placed students into college level and developmental classes, the researchers also measured the exam's ability to identify students who need additional academic support. Factors such as high school GPA, COMPASS scores, and traditional versus nontraditional students were the focus of this study. Westrick and Allen suggested the high school GPA in combination with the COMPASS score serves as a better predictor of success than high school GPA alone. The success of nontraditional students tended to be better predicted by COMPASS scores.

Best practices in assessment testing. To evaluate student success, Hodara, Jaggars, and Karp (2012) conducted a qualitative study interviewing 183 personnel and stakeholders across seven states to understand community colleges' approach to assessment and placement into developmental or college level classes. The focus of the study was "to address poor course placement and inconsistent standards of college readiness" (p. 3). More specific, Hodara et al. sought to gain an understanding of placement policies based on test scores, student preparation, alignment of college curriculum and the exam, and the dependency on single measurements for placement. In the attempt to improve placement accuracy, Hodara et al. found that some schools prepare students for the placement exam by means of providing practice tests and review material (Conley, 2007; Saxon & Morante, 2015); and some schools align the tests with college-level curriculum expectations (Safran & Visher, 2010). To align the standards of college readiness and college-level courses standards (Conley, 2010), the schools adjust cut-off scores, developed customized exams as a second resource to verify mastery, and utilize multiple measures of assessment to also address non-cognitive factors that affect academic success.

Academic advising. Advising plays an integral role in assessment and placement (Boylan, 2002, 2009). Academic advising is a holistic retention initiative at higher education institutions designed to increase persistence and graduation rates. It is a two-way relationship between an advisor and a student, where the advisor acts as a resource facilitator, providing students with the tools necessary to achieve academic success. Not only do advisors help students navigate through their degree plan, they also help students decipher what career path they want to take and connect students with the proper services

(Boylan, 2009) to reach their goals. The most common task advisors are known for is assisting students with the placement process. Depending on whether a school or state mandates placement, advisors help students understand their test scores and choose the best courses that reflect the students' skill levels (Boylan, 2009).

Cut scores. Despite the effect cut scores have on student placement, there is limited research on the topic. Historically, scores on a placement exam served as the sole predictor of academic performance. They characterize students between the dichotomous categories, college ready or developmental (Porter & Polikoff, 2012). In evaluating college readiness or assessment and placement practices, researchers (Bailey, 2009; Gordon, 2006; Saxon & Morante, 2015) have made suggestions about how to utilize cut scores properly. When developing cut scores, Gordon (2006) suggested using empirical evidence of validity to verify accurate placement. Therefore, cut scores must be reevaluated every three years (Gordon, 2006). Bailey (2009) proposed using cut scores as a standard to align college readiness standards across institutions and between high schools and colleges. Currently, cut scores vary from campus to campus and from state to state.

Alternatives. Due to inaccuracies in placement exams, some institutions have considered alternative placement exams. For example, Frauenholtz and Latterell (2006) used an alternative placement exam to test an assessment's validity in serving as a true placement exam. They discovered the reform test was 66% more accurate than a more traditional assessment in placing students in the correct courses by aligning the test material with high school curriculum (Conley; 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). Frauenholtz and Latterell acknowledged that

although using a reform test to place freshman accurately into their first mathematics class increased the likelihood that a student will be successful (make a C or better) in a course, it is not a fail proof solution. "In 2013, Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) to reform developmental education in the state" (Hu et al., 2014, p. 1). Like other community colleges, the higher education institutions in Florida had been experiencing an influx of students unprepared for collegiate coursework. The Florida College System (FCS) [2015] reported a total of 110,374 developmental education students for the 2014-2015 school year. To solve the overwhelming developmental education need and high attrition rates, the state mandated the FCS to provide accelerated curriculums, intrusive advising, access to support services, and give students the option to opt-in or opt-out of developmental education beginning the fall semester of 2014 (Hu et al., 2014). Moreover, students have the option to choose whether they want to participate in developmental education or attempt college level courses regardless of their scores on the placement exam (Hu et al., 2014).

State of Texas practices. The State of Texas has been a leader in developmental education initiatives since the 1970s (Boylan & Saxon, 2006). During this time, about one third of the state's incoming student population were underprepared with the skills needed to be successful in collegiate work (Grable, 1988; Saxon & Slate, 2013; TCUSCB, 1986). Public institutions, mainly 2-year schools, were mandated to offer remediation programs for underprepared students (Grable, 1988; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Horn et al., 2009; Saxon & Slate, 2013) in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing. The Texas College University System Coordinating Board (TCUSCB), now the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), created a task force to evaluate other

states' assessment and placement practices (TCUSCB, 1988) to identify areas in which Texas needs to improve. As a result, the *A Generation of Failure* report was presented to state lawmakers. Comparable to the statistics across American colleges and universities, Texas high school graduates were not prepared for college and were flooding job markets without the ability to communicate effectively nor compute basic mathematical calculations (TCUSCB, 1986). Texas was in need of a change.

Texas Academic Skills Program. In 1987, the State legislature created the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP), which was implemented fall 1989 to improve developmental education outcomes (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). It was the state's solution to strengthen the areas of weakness addressed in A Generation of Failure. Texas Academic Skills Program was created as both a program directive and as an assessment for placement within public higher education institutions (Horn et al., 2009; THECB, 2015). TASP was a comprehensive instructional program that addressed diagnostic assessment, advisement, course placement, developmental education, and program evaluation (Horn et al., 2009; THECB, 2004). All students enrolled in a public institution beginning fall 1989 with fewer than 15 semester credit hours were required to take the TASP. Students who failed one or more sections of the test were required to enroll in at least one of the deficient subject areas a semester until TASP complete (Horn et al., 2009). Students were required to retake the TASP upon successfully completing a remedial course with a passing grade (B or better) or developmental education pathway (Horn et al., 2009; THECB, 1993; THECB, 2001). If a student failed the retake, an institution could allow the student to take the college level course with a developmental co-requisite and must make a B or

better to complete TASP requirements (THECB, 2001). Public colleges and universities were required to offer underprepared students remedial courses and interventions (Horn et al., 2009; THECB, 2015). No set rules on course content nor types of interventions required were established (Grable, 1988; Horn et al., 2009). The program underwent several rule and exemption changes to place students more accurately into the correct courses and to be more inclusive and to allow more students to exempt out of developmental services.

As an assessment, TASP was believed to be a sound instrument (Boylan, 1996; Griffith & Meyer, 1999), but it lacked the ability to rectify the increased need for developmental education due to an uneven implementation of testing and placement practices across institutions (Griffith & Meyer, 1999). Moreover, TASP affected student placement into remedial courses (Saxon & Slate, 2013). It served as a statewide standardized assessment, mandated placement, and required students to demonstrate content mastery through exit testing (Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). The test measured students' basic college readiness skills in mathematics, reading, and writing. Students who met the TASP cut off scores; Mathematics-230, Reading-230, Writing-230 (THECB, 2001) were exempt from developmental education unless the institution or program had higher requirements.

The Texas Academic Skills Program underwent several makeovers beginning in 1993 to address concerns of the impact of the testing and placement policies implemented. Eligibility standards for exemption were lowered to allow more students to bypass developmental education which increased students' expenses for non-credit courses, extended time spent in remediation, and prolonged the journey to graduation

(Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Students were exempt from taking the TASP based on their performance on the SAT, the ACT, or the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test (Griffith & Meyer, 1999).

Texas Success Initiative. The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) replaced the TASP in 2003 in hopes to address the shortcomings of TASP. Under the TSI mandate, students were no longer required to test after the completion of a remedial course, and school officials were given more authority in determining how students strengthened their deficiencies. For example, students participated in and utilized integrated developmental education support services instead of or in addition to taking remedial courses (Saxon & Slate, 2013). School officials had the ability to set cut off scores for different assessments as well as decide whether placement was mandatory. Due to the variability in data, the State of Texas searched for a new solution for the on-going trend in developmental education. *Texas Success Initiative Assessment.* The Texas Success Initiative (TSIA) is cutting edge. It was adopted by the State of Texas the fall semester of 2013. According to the THECB (2014), the TSIA is the first of its kind in the United States. The developers designed the assessment based on best practices within developmental education, and assessment and placement. Making a placement decision based on a cut score alone (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015) negatively affects student outcomes. Therefore, the TSIA features a diagnostic profile, has the ability to classify students into categories, and aligns with the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS) and the national standards for adult education (THECB, 2014). Several studies addressed aligning high school graduation requirements with college placement exams to increase college readiness outcomes (e.g., Conley,

2010; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). One premise of the TSIA was to address the shortcomings of other widely used assessments like the ACCUPLACER, ASSET, COMPASS, and even the THEA. Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2010) reported these assessments did not improve student outcomes although they were a good predictor of student performance. Similar to some existing exams, the TSIA is a computer-adaptive test that provide students and advisors a diagnostic report of students' level of proficiency or weakness in a content area (THECB, 2014). In addition to providing students with a snap shot of their skills level, the TSIA can differentiate students into three categories; college ready, developmental education, or adult basic education (THECB, 2014).

The TSIA adheres to the TSI statewide cut score standard that cannot be raised as previously allowed under the statute. According to the Texas Administrative Code, a student demonstrates content mastery by achieving the following scores: (a) Mathematics-350; (b) Reading-351; and (c) Writing-363 and a 4 essay score, 350 and a 5 essay score, 350, a 5 essay score and a level 4 ABE Diagnostic (See Appendix A). On May 31, 2017, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board released a notice of the proposed changes for the fall 2017 semester. The mathematics and reading standards will remain the same; however, the writing standards will change to (a) a placement score of at least 340 and a 4 essay score, or (b) a placement score of less than 340, an ABE Diagnostic level of at least 4, and at least a 5 essay score (See Appendix B).

"Improving the effectiveness of remedial education requires a consistent, standard placement policy and alignment of college readiness requirements across all public institutions in the state" (THECB, 2012, p. 4). Students who do not meet the standards of college readiness are referred to developmental education. Using the diagnostic profile,

students are referred to the appropriate type of remediation. These students' academic abilities are on the secondary level categorized in Levels 5 and 6 of the ABE Diagnostic (THECB, 2014). Research has shown that students who place into the lowest level of developmental courses are least likely to persist (THECB, 2014). Moreover, students who score into Levels 1-4 on the ABE Diagnostic are referred to Basic Academic Skills Education (BASE) for targeted interventions. These students' basic academic skills levels are below high school. See Appendix C for a description of each level on the ABE Diagnostic.

Like the TASP policy, there are several ways students are exempt from taking the TSIA and remediation. These exemptions include performance on the ACT, SAT administered prior to March 2016, SAT administered after March 2016, TAKS, and STAAR (THECB, 2014). These tests with the criteria are represented in Table 2. Other exemptions granted include students enrolled in a level one certificate program (having less than 42 credit hours) or individuals currently serving or have completed three years of military service with honorable discharge.

Table 2

TSIA Exemptions 2016

Assessment	Composite	English	Mathematics
ACT	23 or greater	19	19
SAT prior to March 2016	1070	500	500
SAT after March 2016		480 Evidence Based Reading	530
TAKS		2200 and 3 essay	2200
STAAR		4000 English III	4000 Algebra II

Researchers (Bailey, 2009; Conley, 2010; Porter & Polikoff, 2010; Safran & Visher, 2012) have argued the benefits of aligning high school graduation requirements with higher education expectations and placement standards. Before students can sit for the statewide assessment, students are required to take a pre-assessment. The idea of the pre-assessment addressed the concerns of researchers (Bailey, 2009; Martorell et al., 2010; Saxon & Morante, 2015) who concluded students may be unaware of what remedial education means regarding eventual graduation date, additional costs, and the benefits. If students knew in advance the effect a placement exam has on their academic journey, they may strive to do better.

Summary

More and more students are graduating high school lacking the basic academic and non-cognitive skills to be successful in the workforce and college. Upon graduation, students are under the impression that they are college ready (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Unfortunately, there is no concrete standard of college readiness across

institutions, states, or alignment between high schools and post-secondary institutions (Bailey et al., 2010; Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). Many students find themselves enrolled in at least one developmental course (NCES, 2003; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Although researchers like Boylan (1999) have found developmental education to be beneficial, others have concluded that it negatively effects persistence and graduation rates (Bailey, et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009). On average, students are labeled as underprepared based on their performance on a placement exam.

Boylan (1999, 2009) proclaimed that a successful developmental education program has a systematic assessment, advising, and placement practice. As a leader in developmental education initiatives, the State of Texas implemented the TASP and later the TSI to improve developmental education outcomes (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). Under the TSI, the TSIA was implemented to address the shortcomings of other widely used placement exams. The TSIA is a diagnostic exam that has state mandated cut scores for college readiness. Moreover, institutions have the ability to set their own cut scores for different levels of developmental education courses offered. The variability in cut off scores may impact the student body represented in developmental education across institutions.

CHAPTER III

Method

When there is a limited amount of literature on a topic, qualitative research provides a lens to understand and generate hypotheses that can later be tested by quantitative means (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) is fairly new and the effect this assessment has on the classroom is unknown. Developmental faculty have firsthand experience with the results of the placement exam.

Purpose of the Study

The implementation of the TSIA has changed the composition of the classroom. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. The final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students.

Research Questions

This study was designed to understand the essence of the participants' experiences. The following research questions were used to guide this study: (a) How do developmental education professors perceive the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for placing students into developmental courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing)? (b) What is the perceived pattern (e.g., students' skills level; cognitive and

non-cognitive factors observed; and the quality of the education rendered) associated with placement and developmental education students' ability to succeed in a college readiness course?

Research Design

To investigate these research questions, a qualitative approach was used. There are eight steps involved in the qualitative process; selecting a topic, determining research questions, designing the study, collecting data, analyzing data, generating findings, validating findings, and writing the report (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Flexible by nature, qualitative research relies on inductive reasoning (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). It explores or seeks to understand the meaning of people's experiences (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A qualitative design was the best design for this study for it gave the participants a voice, an opportunity to describe their experiences with the TSIA as a placement exam.

According to Creswell (2013), "the key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and engage in the best practices to obtain that information" (p. 47). This phenomenological study was designed following the framework of Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology model. The transcendental phenomenology model is a systematic approach that requires the researcher to rely on intuition and imagination to understand the essence of the experience rather than rely on preconceived explanations (Moustakas, 1994). Moreover, Moustakas (1994) stated,

> Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of

> freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience. (p. 41)

The phenomena of this study were the perceptions of the developmental faculty of the usefulness and accuracy of the TSIA. A phenomenological study allowed the researcher to describe the essence of the experiences of developmental education faculty teaching students as a result of the TSIA results.

Participants

I employed a purposeful sampling that Johnson and Christensen (2012) described as a process where "the researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals with those characteristics" (p. 592). Moreover, in phenomenological studies, a purposeful sample ensures that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Further, due to availability and willingness of professors to participate, a sample of convenience was used to obtain participants. Although convenience sampling includes participants that can easily be recruited (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), it posed a threat on relevant information and credibility (Creswell, 2013). Two participants did not meet the criteria originally set for this study, they did not teach within developmental education prior to the implementation of the TSIA.

I solicited participation by using directory information from the departmental website. Participation was restricted to developmental education faculty who have taught at least one remedial course during the 2013-2014 school year as well as taught at least one semester since fall 2014 when the TSIA was implemented. As a result, participants

in this research included 5-7 developmental education faculty employed at a public 2-year institution and a university within the Texas State University System (TSUS). Dukes (1984) recommended 3-10 participants, Polkinghorne (1989) suggested 5-25 participants, and Creswell (2013) proposed using 5-15 participants.

Instrumentation

The qualitative nature of this research allowed me to serve as the primary instrument (Creswell, 2013) for gathering and interpreting data through interviews. Semi-structured, one-on-one, conversational interviews with the members of the developmental education faculty at one Southeast Texas public university and one State college. The interviews were audio-recorded and will lasted between 15 minutes and one hour. A journal was used to take notes during the interview sessions as well as after the interview sessions. The interview questions were open-ended (Creswell, 2013; Edmonson & Irby, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994) and addressed the purpose and problem of the study. The interview questions used in this study are located in Appendix D.

Data Collection

Data collection began after the approval of the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board at each of the institutions involved in the study (See Appendix E). The developmental education faculty were individually approached and asked to participate in the study. Those that agreed to participate scheduled an interview date and time that was convenient for them, and were given the cover letter, the informed consent, and participant profile sheet (see Appendices F, G, and H) to be reviewed and completed by the interview date. Face-to-face interviews were the primary method of

data collection; however, for convenience, Participant 5 had to schedule a phone interview. Confidentiality was ensured by giving each participant an alias to protect his or her identity (Creswell, 2013).

I strived to build a rapport with the participants to increase their confidence and willingness to disclose information (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). To establish a rapport, I researched the participants prior to the interview, remained genuine, and was an active listener (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). At the start of the interviews, participants were given an overview of the purpose of the research then asked a series of interview questions for the semi-structured interview process. The interview questions served as a guide; additional interview questions emerged as a result of the participants' responses. The interviews were audio recorded and a journal was kept throughout the study recording responses verbatim and the essence of the research experience. All audio recordings were encrypted and stored in my possession. After the completion of the interviews, I offered the participants an opportunity to ask questions. Prior to concluding the interview sessions, I thanked the participants and informed them about the member checking process for clarification.

Data Analysis

I began transcribing immediately after the first interview using a paid online transcription service called REV. Once saturation was reached, nothing new was learned from the interviews, I began the process of analysis. Horizontalization is the first step in the phenomenal analysis process, and it is where I looked for significant statements relevant to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). I then created textual descriptions using the significant statements to develop clusters of meaning, identify themes from the

participants' experiences. The next transcendental phenomenological step called imaginative variation, described how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Lastly, I wrote a personal reflection of my own experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Establishing validity in qualitative research is challenging (Creswell & Miller, 200). To validate my findings, I employed several techniques to determine accuracy or credibility. As mentioned before, I bracketed myself. In phenomenological research, bracketing or epoché is when a researcher discloses his or her assumptions or biases regarding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Another technique used was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is the process in which an external reviewer, whom is familiar with the research, serves as a devil's advocate to challenge the researcher's bias, clarify interpretations, and methodological concerns (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My dissertation committee chair was going to serve as my peer reviewer, however, since Lincoln and Guba (1985) do not recommend members of a doctoral committee serving as a peer reviewer, a colleague served as my peer debriefer due to her knowledge of the research.

Informal member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was the last technique I utilized in my research. Member checking allowed me to provide the participants with a transcript of their interview to verify my interpretations, correct errors, potentially add more information, and assess intentionality (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, the participants provided additional information based on the transcripts.

Summary

Qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning of people's experiences (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This chapter reviewed the purpose of this study, the research questions, the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Using a phenomenological framework, in this study I sought to understand the essence of the developmental education faculty experiences with students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. I utilized a purposeful sampling of developmental faculty within the Texas State University System. The participants must have taught prior to the 2013-2014 school year and any time thereafter. Using open ended, semi-structured interviews, I analyzed the data by searching for themes and patterns in the participants' perspectives. I validated the findings through bracketing, peer debriefing, and member checking, and wrote a report in the form of a narrative.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. The final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students.

The following research questions were used to guide this study: (a) How do developmental education professors perceive the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for placing students into developmental courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing)? (b) What is the perceived pattern (e.g., students' skills level; cognitive and non-cognitive factors observed; and the quality of the education rendered) associated with placement and developmental education students' ability to succeed in a college readiness course?

Participant Characteristics

To understand the essence of developmental education faculty perspective of the TSIA as a placement exam, I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with developmental education faculty. Each participant was asked the same six questions, and when needed, additional probing questions were asked to gain a deeper understanding. Interviews were recorded via a digital recorder and the voice recorder app on my cell

phone. Transcription began immediately after the first interview. Confidentiality was maintained by using aliases for the participants.

A total of seven developmental faculty were interviewed. Creswell (2013) suggested 5-15 participants for a phenomenological study. Of those seven participants, two did not meet the delimitations originally used to define eligibility for participation. Six participants' primary place of employment is a 2-year institution and one is from a 4-year institution. There were four male participants and three female participants. A snapshot of the demographic information about the participants in this study is represented in Table 3. Gender, ethnicity, school type, subject, instructor type, whether the participant met the qualifications to participate by teaching prior to fall 2013, and the level of developmental education courses the participants teaches are represented.

Table 3

Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	School Type	Subject	Instructor Type	Taught Prior to Fall 2013	Level of DVED
1	M	White	2-Year	Math	Adjunct	Yes	Upper
2	M	White	2-Year	English	Full-time	Yes	Upper
3	M	White	2-Year	Math	Adjunct	Yes	Lower
4	F	White	2-Year	English	Adjunct	Yes	Both
5	M	Black	4-Year	Math	Full-time	Yes	Both
6	B	Black	2-Year	English	Full-time	No	Both
7	F	White	2-Year	Math	Full-time	No	Both

Participant one is a developmental math adjunct instructor at a 2-year institution. He has over 25 years of teaching experience in the discipline. Prior to the implementation of the TSIA, he taught developmental math for 23 years. Now, he primarily serves as the instructor for the online level II developmental math course. He is familiar with the TSIA, the cut scores range for his course, but has not played a role in developing the institution's cut scores for the different levels of math.

Participant two is a full time developmental English instructor at a 2-year institution. He teaches the level II English course, which is the integrated reading and writing course. He only taught one year prior to the implementation of the TSIA and has been teaching for five years now. He is well versed in the TSIA, its cut scores, and is currently playing a role in developing new cut scores for the institution.

Participant three is a developmental math adjunct instructor at a 2-year institution. He taught two years prior to the TSIA implementation and overall has 5.5 years of teaching experience. He now teaches the first level of developmental math; however, when the institution offered three levels of math, he taught levels one and two. He is familiar with the TSIA but does not know the cut scores for his class. Moreover, he has not played a role in developing the cut scores for the institution.

Participant four is a developmental English adjunct at a 2-year institution. She is now retired after teaching over 23 years; 20 years were before the implementation of the TSIA. Currently she serves as a backup instructor for the department and works directly with the TSIA through the testing center.

Participant five is a full-time assistant professor for the math department at a 4-year institution. Although his institution has a college readiness department, he has over

31 years of experience teaching developmental math with 27 years prior to the implementation of the TSIA. His institute offers three levels of developmental mathematics: pre-algebra, Algebra I, and Algebra II. He teaches all three levels. When the TASP was first implemented in 1989, he played a role in setting cut scores for the institution. At this time, he is no longer involved in that process, but is interested in conducting research in the area.

Participant six is a full-time instructor for developmental English at a 2-year institution. She mainly teaches level one reading, and occasionally the level two integrated reading and writing course. Prior to the implementation of the TSIA, she taught teachers or aspiring teachers how to teach. Her first semester as a developmental education instructor began the semester the TSIA was implemented, fall 2013. She is not well versed in cut scores ranges and does not have any experience in establishing them for the institution.

Participant seven is a full-time instructor for developmental math at a 2-year institution. She mainly teaches both levels of developmental math and also teaches college level courses like college algebra and business calculus at her current institution. She has previous teaching experience at the university level in pre-calculus I. As a recent graduate, she does not have any experience teaching developmental education courses prior to the implementation of the TSIA. She is well versed in the institution's development of cut scores ranges as the Director of Developmental Studies.

Interview Responses

All interviews were conducted in August 2017. I met with each participant in their office with the exception of Participants 5 and 6. Four participants removed

themselves from the study due to undisclosed reasons leaving the total to seven participants overall. Only participants 1-5 met the criteria to participate in the study. Participant interviews concluded after the data collected reached saturation. The 2-year institution recently underwent several departmental changes within the past year and even at the beginning of August 2017 due to the cut score range for writing being lowered by the THECB. The school went from having three levels of developmental mathematics to only two levels.

Interview question 1. In Question 1, I asked each participant to describe the skill levels of the students as a result of the implementation of the TSIA. Participant one began by describing how his classes post TSIA implementation are smaller since students who would have normally placed into his classes are now allowed to register for a higher level course. Therefore, students' "preparation level is not quite as I'd hope for. Some of them were accomplishing certain scores, when in reality, their skills and their talents were not up to level." He also described instances where he encouraged students to retake the TSIA to be in the most appropriate course, "some of them really had the skills and talents above and beyond my course." In comparison to all the placement exams, he believed the TASP has been the most accurate thus far, "with the TASP, there wasn't quite as much displacement. Those scores were probably a lot more reflective of where the students really should have been."

Participant two reported he has not seen a true difference between students placed in his classes based on performance on the COMPASS or the TSIA. He went on to say, "I'm still dealing with the same kind of developmental students in reading." As for writing, "I'm dealing with severely developmental students as opposed to on the bubble

when it comes to college readiness." Furthermore, he suggested I ask "college level comp teachers since they're going to be dealing with students who are entering into their classes based on a lower cut score." He also reported that "it's difficult to teach different kinds of students with different needs and perspectives herded into one class."

Participant three described the changes the developmental math department experienced within the past year. The department originally offered three developmental math courses, and now students who would have been placed in the second level are mixed in with students who would have normally placed into the first level. After discussing the changes within the departments, he explained that before the combining of classes, students who were originally placed in the level one math "basically quit school and never really gotten much math in high school or goofed off and didn't pay attention and got passed along." Overall, he has "not seen much of a difference since the implementation of the TSIA."

Participant four has taught several years before the TSIA and now off and on since the implementation of the test. From her experience, "I don't know that the skill level has changed that much." Furthermore, "the older students need a review and the younger students have to adjust to not being taught the test." Moreover, she believes "instructors are removed from the classroom" due to using software programs like MyLabsPlus which are more standardized programs.

Participant five has been teaching since the late 1980s. After describing his experiences over the years, he expressed that "the skill level of my students hasn't changed. Students are coming to college without the college readiness necessary to handle the rigor of college level math." Furthermore, he communicated "in many cases,

students are being exposed to the content for the first time" in his class. He discussed the differences between the skill level of students who took COMPASS versus the TSIA and noted, "students who took the COMPASS placed into a higher course."

Participant six started teaching the year the TSIA was implemented. Prior to then, she mainly taught teachers pedagogy. However, since she has been serving as a full time developmental instructor, she has noticed "students are more passionate about getting through the course." She also noticed students are more serious, "I have less students now that come into class playing around."

Participant seven recently started teaching developmental math within the past year. However, she has noticed a few patterns. She expressed that "with the TSIA, the students are placed into the course where some struggle while others fly through the course. So really, it's kind of a mixture." Her explanation for the mixture, "it might be due to the range of the TSIA score." Furthermore, she described how students straight out of high school tend to do better in Intermediate Algebra than students who have been out of school for years.

Interview question 2. In Question 2, I asked each participant to share their beliefs about the effectiveness of the TSIA as a placement instrument for their students.

Participant one explained that it is not that he does not have faith in the THECB, for they have been trying to find the best solution for testing for years. He expressed that the THECB would not have recommended or released the TSIA if they did not believe in its potential. However, participant one doubts the effectiveness of the TSIA. He doubts the TSIA's effectiveness because "the cutoff scores are so arbitrary". Furthermore, he

made the statement “you can’t pass the class, but you can take a placement test that claims that you are qualified above and beyond the cutoff standards.”

Participant two is not a fan of the TSIA, but believes it is an “improvement over the COMPASS.” Furthermore, he believed that “the COMPASS did not make a great distinction between the students in his class, which ones needed a refresher versus which ones needed heavy duty instruction.” As far as the TSIA, he believes “it’s not quite what we need, we can do better.” Moreover, he exclaimed that “there’s a gap between the standards the TSIA tests and the standards we expect from a college level, college ready student.”

Because the school underwent a major change in the courses offered, Participant three reported he has not “noticed much of a difference”. He went on to discuss the type of students he would get in his courses. He did, however, believe in addition to the TSIA, advisors should place students based on “their commitment to school, their available time, and their knowing what it takes to be successful in college.”

Participant four believed the TSIA is “a good placement test.” Like other non-traditional students, she expressed that if she were to take the math portion, she would fail due to not being exposed to the material in a long time. She went on to talk about how she believed the “TSIA is pretty accurate when placing students into developmental courses.” She further stated, “a teacher recommendation would be a good companion to placement.”

Participant five expressed the TSIA is biased towards certain students based on the level of math they took in high school. He explained his reasoning as “students who took pre-cal or even calculus in high school are placed into a developmental course.”

This happens because those classes are not algebra based which is what the test focuses on. He believes to make the TSIA more effective in placing students, the students' scores on their exit level exam should be taken into consideration.

Participant six does not believe the TSIA is a sound placement exam for her developmental classes. Her reasoning was "the material on the TSIA does not align with our syllabus or course work." Furthermore, she did express "it indicates whether or not the student's proficient enough to be in the class because I still get students who can't write." She does not believe the "TSIA is a good placement gauge."

Participant seven was not a fan of standardized testing for tests "do not accurately reflect students' knowledge if they have test anxiety." As far as the TSIA, this participant had mixed thoughts about the test's abilities, "I believe that it gets it right sometimes, but it also gets it wrong sometimes." She also expressed that "the content on the TSIA are topics we never cover in our classes, so I'm not sure it's a good indicator of their algebraic skills." She suggested considering students' home situation, and other responsibilities like work, family responsibility, view of school, level of commitment, or time management skills to determine whether they can be successful.

Interview question 3. In Question 3, I asked each participant how the use of the TSIA affected student long term success. Participant one believed the TSIA has a negative effect on student long term success. He stated, "sometimes it can really discourage them if it pushes them down to a level either financially or emotionally they find it almost impossible to dig themselves out." On the other end of the spectrum, the TSIA could have a positive effect on students' long term success. For examples, he expressed "I speculate that a student placed at the highest level, and maybe one or two

other remedial courses, and or able to go directly into gateway courses that give them full credit, they would probably have a lot more success."

Participant two passionately expressed his views about the long-term effect of TSIA. The composition of his integrated reading and writing classes were affected by the THECB's decision to lower the TSIA requirements for writing. He reported that "the TSIA is an imperfect system and an imperfect test." He questioned who really benefits from score standards being changed.

Participant three has a positive perspective about the TSIA. He suggested overall, "the TSIA could place our students into the right level of courses if we adjust our cutoff scores." He went on to explain the reason students are negatively affected by the TSIA, "they don't know what it takes to be successful." Then he shared a personal experience about taking his test seriously because he knew the effect of his placement exam while his students do not have that luxury.

Participant four has mixed beliefs about the effectiveness of the TSIA as a placement exam. She explained her conflict by saying, "if a student takes it over and over again and still fail, they give up feeling they are not smart enough." Moreover, she also expressed "when students pass, they get excited and it helps boost their self-esteem.

Participant five focused more on developmental education than the TSIA when answering this question. "You asked me about the TSIA, but if a student is placed into developmental education we do know, it can become a gatekeeper and not a gateway. Furthermore, "students tend to stay in developmental classes forever, keeps students from moving forward, prolonging their graduation, and potentially affecting their financial

aid." Overall, the effect the TSIA will have on students' long term success is negative if a student makes a score that would place them into developmental education.

Participant six had never contemplated the influence the TSIA has on student long term success. She has mixed thoughts about the potential effect. She gave a scenario of what one of her students experienced. "It may discourage them if they don't score as high as they expected to, or it can be positive if they tested higher than they expected." Furthermore, the placement exam shows students what their abilities are and will encourage them to do better.

Participant seven noticed that many developmental students are not successful. The reason for the negative performance, however, "might not be due to the TSIA." The biggest factor is that "we have such a long developmental sequence so students pretty much lose interest or they give up before they get anywhere." Furthermore, "students who are placed into our level one, the percentages of their success in the college level course is actually pretty low." Depending on which level a student is placed into, correlates to their level of achievement in college level courses.

Interview question 4. In Question 4, I asked each participant to describe the role cut off scores play on placement at their institution. Participant one expressed that cutoff scores are "pretty much like a goal line, your benchmarks." In regard to whether or not his school's cutoff scores are too high, too low, or just right, he stated, "it's hard to judge." He does not participate in setting cut off scores, so he does not know whether there is a "standardization across the state." However, he challenged by saying "there is no standardization about what's required or remedial." He also believed the THECB is doing a "disservice to the students and the campuses if they are constantly changing these

scores." Furthermore, "we got students qualified to go into a specific course one year, and they next year they don't."

Participant two is currently working on adjusting his school's cutoff scores for each level of developmental reading and writing. He also has to adjust to the new TSIA writing scores determined by the THECB that one now putting students who were not able to place into his course as well as college level courses. He expressed his frustration with students' educational experiences being "based on an arbitrary score on the TSIA." He believed the college readiness cut scores developed by the THECB and the developmental level cutoff scores were both "too low, and they make it difficult to teach a classroom filled with a diverse set of skills."

Participant three suggested cut off scores play a major role on student success. He gave a personal scenario of one of his students than said, "we need to revisit our cut scores in light of moving from three levels of developmental math to two levels." He exclaimed there is a thin line between placing into the lowest level of developmental math and testing into adult basic education. Furthermore, cut scores "put them in a course they are unprepared for or are not really able to handle, can really play a large impact."

Participant four explained that cutoff scores are "strictly followed, there's no leeway in that." Because the TSIA cutoff scores set by the institution changed recently, Participant four does not know what to think. However, she believes "in some respects, it made it easier for students to pass, but in other cases, it made it harder."

Participant five posited "there ought to be another way that we could probe and try to figure out where students are." He went on to discuss cut scores, "they're supposed

to be designed to say, okay, here's where the student has gaps, missing some content." Furthermore, "they are supposed to place students where they are mathematically, but I'm not sure that testing is the answer."

Participant six wanted to remain neutral about this question. However, she did state that a cutoff score is "the determining factor of a student's ability." Yet, this determining factor "does not take into consideration students' test anxiety."

Participant seven discussed how the school adheres to the cutoff scores. She believes they play "a big role on long term student success because they determine where students are placed and whether or not they can stick it out." Furthermore, "one point makes all the difference, one point can put them into either level one or level two." She believes the cutoff scores are not good, she wants to "increase our bubble" since the "margin of error for the test is four points."

Interview question 5. In Question 5, I asked each participant to describe the non-cognitive skills or non-cognitive skills they have observed in the students placed into their courses. Participant one could not truly answer this question. He has been teaching online developmental math for some time now, so he is somewhat removed from the classroom. His interactions are minimal through the online software students are expected to complete. He made a blanket statement that "students in our areas frequently have a lot of different employment needs, family needs, and so many opportunities in our area that compete with their time." Moreover, he did discuss how his teaching has changed since the implementation of the TSIA. He expressed that he is "trying to be a little bit more sensitive to the wide range of students, and find a method that can reach all students at all levels."

Participant two provided a distinction between traditional students and non-traditional students. “the younger generation tend to lack motivation while the older students tend to be more motivated and self-starting.” Overall, he noticed students now have “a lot more distractions and short attention spans.” To help his students get more motivated, he has become “less idealistic and more creative challenging students to get out of their comfort zones and abandon their ideas of what school is supposed to be.”

Participant three only teaches night classes. He expressed, “evening students are a different population from our morning students, and they tend to value their education more.” He highlighted that his students tend to be “more motivated in the beginning of the course then start having a lot of absences towards the middle and the end depending on other obligations.” He posited his students underestimate how much work is put into being successful.

Participant four talked about the non-cognitive skills she observes in her classroom. She believed that “students’ biggest problem is their listening skills.” She finds herself constantly having to repeat everything she says. Moreover, they do not understand college expectations versus high school expectations.

Participant five started out by saying “universities have to do a better job of helping high school students’ transition to college.” Furthermore, “in public education, the burden of learning is on the teacher, while in higher education, the burden of learning is definitely on the student.” Moreover, in terms of non-cognitive students, he has observed that students “lack study skills, time management skills, test taking skills, and higher order thinking skills.”

Participant six discussed how her students are distracted. Students are constantly on their cell phones. She expressed that her students have "low attention spans, lack motivation and self-efficacy, and metacognition." The students do not know what they know.

Participant seven described both the non-cognitive skills and the lack of non-cognitive skills displayed. She believes that because she teaches "adult students, they are very determined to keep going." However, she "can't always say that about the brand new college students". Her students lack "critical thinking skills, they need to be told what to do."

Interview question 6. In Question 6, I asked each participant whether or not they had anything else to share about the use of the TSIA as a placement instrument. Participant one liked the idea of the TSIA. "It's probably a good thing that we only offer one placement test, as flawed as it may be." He also expressed that "students are not properly warned about the TSIA, entrance procedures, the application procedures, and they don't relate to coming to school." He suggested, "looking at adjusting scores and trying to seek the perfect range."

Participant two passionately reported his opinion about the TSIA and the THECB. With regard to the TSIA, he expressed, "we can do better…I don't think there's a magic cure that's going to accurately place every single student where he or she needs to be." Furthermore, he expected "a better standard that's more consistent that we can live up to and not abandon them for the sake of saving money. Moreover, he stated,

> [T]he goal of the State of Texas is to save as much money as possible, and the easiest way to do that to get rid of programs they see as inefficient. To prevent

students from being in developmental education for a long time, they lower the standards so students can graduate quicker.

Participant three acknowledged "any kind of placement instrument like the TSIA is not going to be perfect." He believed the test needs to be evaluated on a regular basis to make sure it is measuring what it is presumed to measure. He placed a lot of emphasis on the non-cognitive factors the TSIA does not measure. He also stressed the importance of students being made aware of what it takes to be successful in college and how a placement exam can impact their college experience.

Participant four did not have much else to contribute about the TSIA, however, she did say she wonders "who effective will the TSIA be in trying to meet the State's new 60x30 plan to decrease the number of students in developmental education." She questioned the reason for the THECB to lower the TSIA and wondered if it was to help their new initiative, or will students really be more effective by entering college level English with a lower writing score?

Participant five expressed, "Texas and the United States as a whole hammers test, test, test, test. Yet, we always say testing is not an indicator of the ability of people. He questioned "what is the test really telling us?" Students are being tested over material they have never seen before, "and it's not fair."

Participant six discussed how her teaching has changed over the past four years. She mentioned that she used to be "very meticulous and calculated" but now she has become more comfortable working with students." She believes the "TSIA is for students to show their true ability." For that reason, she believes that she should not have

to “align what I’m teaching to the test.” She wants to make sure when students go on to ENGL 1301 they are prepared.

Participant seven, as the new director of developmental education, she wants to be proactive and research what the best cutoff score range should be associated with each course. She would like “to do more research on my school and what’s going on.” Moreover, she wants to “keep track of the pass rates of college level but look at the score ranges those students fell into.”

Emerging Themes

Using the interview transcriptions, I began the phenomenal data analysis process with horizontalization by looking for significant statements relevant to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). I then created textual descriptions using the significant statements to develop clusters of meaning, identify themes from the participants’ experiences. Then for imaginative variation, I described how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Four themes emerged from this study; arbitrary cutoff scores, college expectations and non-cognitive factors, content alignment, and an imperfect system. A description and a significant statement can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Emerging Themes

Theme	Description	Significant Statement
Arbitrary Cutoff Scores	No standard for a cutoff score for different levels of developmental courses.	"based on an arbitrary score on the TSIA."
College Expectations and Non-Cognitive Factors.	Knowing what it takes to be successful prior to enrolling into school.	"students are not properly warned about the TSIA, entrance procedures, the application procedures, and they don't relate to coming to school."
Content Alignment	Content assessed on the TSIA is not covered in the developmental education courses.	"the material on the TSIA does not align with our syllabus or course work."
Imperfect System	TSIA does a great job placing some students but not all students.	"the TSIA is an imperfect system and an imperfect test."

Arbitrary Cutoff Scores. The THECB set the cutoff scores for college readiness. Students who are not exempt based on their ACT, SAT, or STAAR score, and military status are required to take the TSIA. To enroll in a gateway course, students have to meet the following college ready scores: (a) Math-350; (b) Reading-351; and (c) Writing-at least a 340 objective and at least a 4 essay. Students who score below these college ready scores are placed in developmental courses or ABE interventions (THECB, 2014). Schools have the freedom to determine the interventions they offer students. Some schools offer three levels of developmental courses while others have two. The State determined that any score below a 336 for mathematics needs an ABE intervention

(THECB, 2014). Otherwise, schools can determine what score range is applied to which level of developmental (THECB, 2014).

I asked questions about cut scores to gain an understanding and make a distinction between developmental education faculty opinions about the TSIA and cut scores. As one participant said, "ultimately the cutoff score is the underlying factor of whether the TSIA is effective or not." Participant three expressed "the TSIA could place our students into the right level of courses if we adjust our cutoff scores." Participant two suggested the cutoff scores are "too low, and they make it difficult to teach a classroom filled with a diverse set of skills." Participant seven discussed how cutoff scores play "a big role on long term student success because they determine where students are placed and whether or not they can stick it out."

College expectations and non-cognitive factors. Researchers have discussed the effect of students understanding college expectations and non-cognitive factors on student success (Conley, 2007). College expectations and non-cognitive factors are another theme that emerged from this study. Similar to research in the field, the developmental education faculty believe the TSIA could be an effective placement instrument if students knew the importance of the exam. Participant one stated, "students are not properly warned about the TSIA, entrance procedures, the application procedures, and they don't relate to coming to school." Moreover, participant three stressed the importance of students "knowing what it takes to be successful in college" for accurate placement. All the participants described the non-cognitive factors their students lacked such as test taking skills, critical thinking skills, motivation, metacognition, and study

skills. Participant seven expressed that the TSIA and other standardized tests "do not accurately reflect students' knowledge if they have test anxiety."

Content alignment. Research in college readiness is replete with discussions of content alignment as a potential solution. Participant two noted, "there's a gap between the standards of the TSIA and the standards we expect from a college level, college ready student." Participant one complained that the issue is that "there is no standardization about what's required or remedial." Participant six questioned what she can do as a faculty member since "the material on the TSIA does not align with our syllabus or course work." In their classes, the participants wondered whether they should teach the content they know the students would need for to complete a college level course or teach the material the TSIA determined the student is not proficient in.

Imperfect System. The State of Texas has tried several testing interventions to identify students who need remediation. Developmental education faculty were given a voice in describing the essence of their experience with the TSIA as a placement exam. An imperfect system arose as another theme for this study. The participants overall believed that sometimes the TSIA gets placement right and other times it is a miss, as participant seven described. Participant two expressed that "the TSIA is an imperfect system and an imperfect test." Participant one described the composition of his classroom and shared "some of them really had the skills and talents above and beyond my course." Participant two also expressed that he finds it "difficult to teach different kinds of students with different needs and perspectives herded into one class". Participant five questioned "what is the test really telling us?"

Summary

To understand the essence of developmental education faculty perspective of the TSIA as a placement exam, I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the participants. There was a total of seven developmental education faculty. After transcribing the interviews, I started the horizontalization process, then created textual descriptions to find themes. Four themes emerged from the data collected; arbitrary cutoff scores, college expectations and non-cognitive factors, content alignment, and imperfect system. Overall, the developmental education faculty perceive the TSIA as an ineffective placement tool.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. The interviews from this study were used to give developmental education faculty a voice and insight into implementing or redesigning practices for students in developmental education. The final purpose was to obtain perceptions regarding patterns associated with placement of developmental education students. Findings of this study were detailed in Chapter IV and a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions, literature, and framework, as well as a discussion of implications for future research and policies and practices are enclosed in Chapter V.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

This study was designed to understand the essence of the participants' experiences. The following research questions were used to guide this study: (a) How do developmental education professors perceive the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for placing students into developmental courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing)? (b) What is the perceived pattern (e.g., students' skills level; cognitive and non-cognitive factors observed; and the quality of the education rendered) associated with placement and developmental education students' ability to succeed in a college readiness course?

With regard to developmental education faculty perspective of the TSIA as a placement exam, they overall believe it is not a good tool for placement. The participants

are still experiencing students coming to their classes lacking the academic skills and motivation to complete their courses. Many hoped that the TSIA would be different from previously used placement exams by making sure all the students in their classroom where typically on the same skills level. However, they found the TSIA to be no different. For the TSIA to be more effective, they suggested the THECB and individual institutions reevaluate cutoff scores and require students to participate in a pre-assessment or orientation to know what it takes to be successful in college prior to enrolling.

The developmental education faculty described their classroom as a diverse environment filled with students from different generations, motivation levels, and a wide range of academic abilities. The participants attribute the diverse skills levels to the poor development of cutoff scores to place students in the correct developmental course. The non-traditional students seem to be more motivated while the younger students straight out of high school lack critical thinking skills. The participants all reported their teaching strategies have changed or will change to meet the needs of all the students. Some find it difficult to teach while others have become dependent on electronic software to fill gaps.

Connection to the Literature

In this study literature was presented relating to readiness, developmental education, and placement exams. More and more students are graduating high school lacking the basic academic and non-cognitive skills to be successful in the workforce and college. Unfortunately, there is no concrete standard of college readiness across institutions, states, or alignment between high schools and post-secondary institutions (Bailey et al., 2010; Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Conley, 2010; Hodara et al., 2012; Porter &

Polikoff, 2012; Safran & Visher, 2010). Many students find themselves enrolled in at least one developmental course (NCES, 2003; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Although researchers like Boylan (1999) have reported developmental education to be beneficial, others have concluded that it negatively effects persistence and graduation rates (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, et al., 2009). On average, students are labeled as underprepared based on their performance on a placement exam.

Boylan (1999, 2009) proclaimed a successful developmental education program has a systematic assessment, advising, and placement practice. As a leader in developmental education initiatives, the State of Texas implemented the TASP and later the TSI to improve developmental education outcomes (Boylan & Saxon, 2006; Griffith & Meyer, 1999; Saxon & Slate, 2013). Under the TSI, the TSIA was implemented to address the shortcomings of other widely used placement exams. The TSIA is a diagnostic exam that has state mandated cut scores for college readiness and developmental education (THECB, 2014). Moreover, institutions have the ability to set their own cut scores for different levels of developmental education courses offered. The variability in cut off scores may affect the student body represented in developmental education across institutions.

The developmental education faculty experiences are in alignment with what is in the literature. As participant one expressed, “the students’ preparation level was not quite as well prepared as I’d hoped for.” They are experiencing a large number of students in their classes who are experiencing the material for the first time instead of as a review or refresher. The participants voiced no standardization across the board is in existence with placement and cutoff scores for the different levels of developmental education. Students

are suffering financially, emotionally, and academically due to a disconnect. The State of Texas tried to implement a solution by developing the TSIA, but the TSIA alone cannot fix the problem.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

Saxon and Morante's (2015) Comprehensive Systematic Model for Assessment and Placement and Conley's (2007, 2010) Comprehensive Model for College Readiness served as the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The Comprehensive Systematic Model for Assessment and Placement includes college application, determine the need for testing, pre-assessment: test prep and review, assessment and testing and results, counseling and advising for placement, orientation, and registration. The Comprehensive model for college readiness includes key cognitive strategies, key concept knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness. The stages within both models map the processes that lead up to assessment and placement. The TSIA is believed to be a comprehensive assessment that addresses a few stages in the models. The test was designed as the State's solution to create a systematic assessment practice to determine college readiness. Furthermore, a difference may exist in the key cognitive strategies and academic behaviors developmental education faculty observe in their classrooms.

Throughout the interviews, several aspects of the conceptual framework for this study arose. Like Saxon and Morante (2015) and Conley (2007, 2010), the participants believe the TSIA would be more effective if students were aware of what it takes to be successful in college and the importance and the weight placement exams carry. There needs to be a better route for students to make the transition from high school to college. Ways to make this transition smooth are (a) to provide students with pre-assessments; (b)

to have students participate in new student orientation; and (c) to have students connected to academic advising. Students need to be made aware of the services and resources available to them prior to their enrollment.

Recommendation for Future Research

Developmental education faculty were given a voice regarding their experiences with the TSIA as a placement exam. There were several discussions about reevaluating cutoff scores. From participating in the interviews, participant seven wants to research students' TSIA scores, where they were placed, and the grade they made in the subsequent college level course. Future researchers should attempt to understand gateway instructors' perspective of the TSIA as a placement exam. In that study, researchers should compare students who went through the developmental sequence versus students the TSIA determined were college ready.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, generalization is limited to the participants of the study. It would be interesting to extend this study across all public higher education institutions to see if all developmental education faculty have similar experiences. Although there was only one participant from a 4-year institution, his experiences were similar to the 2-year instructors.

Recommendation for Policy and Practice

As a result of this study, several suggestions for policies and practice arose. Three instructors mentioned the content on the TSIA does not align with the content taught in the courses. This experience aligns with Zientek et al. (2013) findings. In addition to that, on several occasions, the participants mentioned the lack of standardization for placement and remediation as a whole. It was suggested that

stakeholders consider aligning what is being taught in remedial courses or interventions and make sure the material assessed on the TSIA is in alignment with the curriculum being taught. Moreover, it is suggested that all developmental education faculty be required to take the TSIA to have a better understanding of what students are tested over and make sure the classroom fills the gaps.

One participant suggested that once a student takes the TSIA and is not college ready, that student should take an assessment developed by the institution to determine which course is best for the student. The TSIA appears to do a good job in determining which students are college ready, but does not do so well placing students in the correct level of developmental education. An institution instrument could supplement the TSIA and assist in better placing students.

Lastly, the participants showed a great concern about cutoff scores. Some believed these scores were set too low, changed at times unfairly to students, and were responsible for making the TSIA ineffective in placing students. It was suggested that policy makers should consider reevaluating cutoff scores at each institution. Any evaluation of these scores should be based on solid data.

Conclusion

Seven developmental education faculty were interviewed to understand the essence of use of the TSIA as a placement tool for their classes. From the interview, four themes emerged: (a) arbitrary cutoff scores, (b) college expectations and non-cognitive skills, (c) content alignment, and (d) imperfect systems. Overall, developmental education faculty collectively believe the TSIA is not an effective tool for a placement exam. They discussed the impact cutoff scores have on student long-term success, the

composition of their classrooms, the disconnect between course material and the content measured on the TSIA, and the test's ability to accurately place students in their correct developmental course letter.

Texas has been a leader in developmental education initiatives for decades. However, more and more students are coming to college underprepared for collegiate work. The TSI was created to make better developmental education outcomes. Under the TSI policy, the TSIA was implemented to identity students who are college ready, need developmental education, or need ABE interventions. The TSIA is still relatively new and seems to have the potential to be effective, however, some factors were identified by developmental education faculty as barriers for a successful assessment.

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APPENDIX A

Texas Administrative Code TSIA College Ready Standards

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Texas Administrative Code

TITLE 19	EDUCATION
PART 1	TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
CHAPTER 4	RULES APPLYING TO ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TEXAS
SUBCHAPTER C	TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE
RULE §4.57	College Ready Standards

(a) The following minimum passing standards (also known as "cut scores") for reading, mathematics, and writing on the TSI Assessment shall be used by an institution to determine a student's readiness to enroll in entry-level freshman coursework:

(1) Reading 351;

(2) Mathematics 350; and

(3) Writing:

(A) a placement score of at least 350, and an essay score of at least 5; or

(B) a placement score of at least 363, and an essay score of 4; or

(C) a placement score of less than 350, and an ABE Diagnostic level of at least 4, and an essay score of at least 5.

(b) Institutions should use the TSI Assessment diagnostic results, along with other holistic factors, in their consideration of courses and/or interventions addressing the educational and training needs of students not meeting the college readiness standards as defined in subsection (a) of this section.

(c) An institution shall not require higher college readiness standards on any or all portions of the TSI Assessment to determine a student's readiness to enroll in entry-level freshman course.

(d) TSI Assessment results are valid for five (5) years from date of testing.

Source Note: The provisions of this §4.57 adopted to be effective December 3, 2003, 28 TexReg 10753; amended to be effective August 27, 2012, 37 TexReg 6587; amended to be effective August 15, 2013, 38 TexReg 5063; amended to be effective November 21, 2013, 38 TexReg 8195; amended to be effective May 25, 2015, 40 TexReg 2754; amended to be effective May 11, 2017, 42 TexReg 2405

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APPENDIX B

Texas Administrative Code Proposed College Ready Standards

The amendments are proposed under Texas Education Code (TEC), §51.3062 which provides the Coordinating Board with the authority to establish policies and procedures relating to the TSI, and §51.307, which provides the Coordinating Board with the authority to adopt and publish rules and regulations to effectuate the provisions of Chapter 51, Subchapter F of the TEC.

The amendments affect TEC, §51.3062.

§4.57.College Ready Standards.

(a) Effective the institution's first class day of fall 2017, the [~~The~~] following minimum passing standards (also known as "cut scores") for reading, mathematics, and writing on the TSI Assessment shall be used by an institution to determine a student's readiness to enroll in entry-level freshman coursework:

(1) - (2) (No change).

(3) Writing:

(A) a placement score of at least 340 [~~350~~], and an essay score of at least 4 [~~5~~]; or

(B) a placement score of less than 340 and an ABE Diagnostic level of at least 4 and an essay score of at least 5. [~~a placement score of at least 363, and an essay score of 4; or~~]

[~~(C) a placement score of less than 350, and an ABE Diagnostic level of at least 4, and an essay score of at least 5.~~]

(b) (No change).

(c) An institution shall not require higher or lower college readiness standards on any or all portions of the TSI Assessment to determine a student's readiness to enroll in entry-level freshman coursework [~~course~~].

(d) For a student with an existing plan for academic success as required in §4.58, the institution must revise the plan as needed to align with the college readiness standards as defined in subsection (a) of this section. [~~TSI Assessment results are valid for five (5) years from date of testing.~~]

(e) TSI Assessment results are valid for five (5) years from date of testing.

The agency certifies that legal counsel has reviewed the proposal and found it to be within the state agency's legal authority to adopt.

Filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on May 15, 2017.

TRD-201701956

Bill Franz

General Counsel

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Earliest possible date of adoption: June 25, 2017

APPENDIX C

ABE Diagnostic Level Descriptors

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills
LEVEL 1 **(grade equivalency 0-1.9)**	Individual has no or minimal reading and writing skills. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument. At the upper range of this level, individual can recognize, read, and write letters and numbers but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Can write a limited number of basic sight words and familiar words and phrases; may also be able to write simple sentences or phrases, including very simple messages. Can write basic personal information. Narrative writing is disorganized and unclear, inconsistently uses simple punctuation (e.g., periods, commas, question marks), and contains frequent errors in spelling.	Individual has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills or may have only minimal skills, such as the ability to add or subtract single digit numbers.
LEVEL 2 **(grade equivalency 2 - 3.9)**	Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety, but individual shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).	Individual can count, add, and subtract three digit numbers, can perform multiplication through 12, can identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.

Notes: The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical student functioning at that level should be able to do. They are not a full description of skills for the level.

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills
LEVEL 3 **(grade equivalency 4 - 5.9)**	Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.	Individual can perform with high accuracy all four basic math operations using whole numbers up to three digits and can identify and use all basic mathematical symbols.
LEVEL 4 **(grade equivalency 6 – 8.9)**	Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context and can make some minimal inferences about familiar texts and compare and contrast information from such texts but not consistently. The individual can write simple narrative descriptions and short essays on familiar topics and has consistent use of basic punctuation but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.	Individual can perform all four basic math operations with whole numbers and fractions; can determine correct math operations for solving narrative math problems and can convert fractions to decimals and decimals to fractions; and can perform basic operations on fractions.

Notes: The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical student functioning at that level should be able to do. They are not a full description of skills for the level.

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills
LEVEL 5 **DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION** **(grade equivalency 9 -10.9)**	Individual can comprehend expository writing and identify spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; can comprehend a variety of materials such as periodicals and nontechnical journals on common topics; can comprehend library reference materials and compose multi-paragraph essays; can listen to oral instructions and write an accurate synthesis of them; and can identify the main idea in reading selections and use a variety of context issues to determine meaning. Writing is organized and cohesive with few mechanical errors; can write using a complex sentence structure; and can write personal notes and letters that accurately reflect thoughts.	Individual can perform all basic math functions with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions; can interpret and solve simple algebraic equations, tables, and graphs and can develop own tables and graphs; and can use math in business transactions.
LEVEL 6 **DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION** **(grade equivalency 11 - 12)**	Individual can comprehend, explain, and analyze information from a variety of literacy works, including primary source materials and professional journals, and can use context cues and higher order processes to interpret meaning of written material. Writing is cohesive with clearly expressed ideas supported by relevant detail, and individual can use varied and complex sentence structures with few mechanical errors.	Individual can make mathematical estimates of time and space and can apply principles of geometry to measure angles, lines, and surfaces and can also apply trigonometric functions.

Notes: The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical student functioning at that level should be able to do. They are not a full description of skills for the level.

APPENDIX D

Interview protocol

Research Questions

(a) How do developmental education professors perceive the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for placing students into developmental courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, and writing)?

(b) What is the perceived pattern (e.g., students' skills level; cognitive and non-cognitive factors observed; and the quality of the education rendered) associated with placement and developmental education students' ability to succeed in a college readiness course?

1. *As a result of the new TSIA, how, if at all, has the skill level of students in your course(s) changed?*
   - Describe the skill level of your students prior to fall 2013.
   - Describe the skill level of your students after fall 2013.

2. *How effective is the TSIA as a placement instrument for developmental education/college readiness courses (mathematics, reading, or writing)?*
   - In your opinion, how accurate is the TSIA as a placement exam into developmental education/college readiness courses?
   - In terms of placement, what other factors should be considered beyond the TSIA or in conjunction with the TSIA?

3. *How does use of the TSIA affect student long term success?*

4. *What role does cut off scores play on placement here?*
   - Do you believe your institution's cut off scores are too high, too low, or just right? Explain.
   - To what extent do the cut scores set by the institution affect the accuracy of the TSIA as a placement exam?
   - What role does the TSIA cut off scores play on student success?

5. *What non-cognitive skills or lack of non-cognitive skills have you observed in students placed into developmental education/college readiness courses?*
   - How has your teaching changed since the TSIA implementation?

6. *Is there anything else you would like to share about the use of TSIA as a placement instrument?*

APPENDIX E

Institutional Review Board Approval and Site Approvals

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
903 Bowers Blvd, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
Phone: 936.294.4875
Fax: 936.294.3622
irb@shsu.edu
www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/

Sam Houston STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

DATE:	August 7, 2017
TO:	Felicia McAdams [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. George Moore]
FROM:	Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	*Developmental Education Faculty Perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment as a Placement Exam [T/D]*
PROTOCOL #:	2017-07-35454
SUBMISSION TYPE:	INITIAL REVIEW
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	August 7, 2017
EXEMPT REVIEW CATEGORY	2—research involving the use of survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; **and** (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Thank you for your submission of Initial Review materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

*** What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?**

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research. In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,
Donna Desforges
IRB Chair, PHSC

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

Lamar State College – Port Arthur
Member **The Texas State University System™**

July 11, 2017

Protection of Human Subjects Committee,

Felicia McAdams has been approved to interview developmental education faculty at Lamar State College Port Arthur for the proposed study, Developmental Education Faculty Perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment as a Placement Exam.

Upon approval of Sam Houston State University Protection of Human Subjects Committee, the following activities are permitted:

- The solicitation of developmental education faculty to participate in the study
- Audio recorded interviews with developmental education faculty

In the event there are questions regarding the permissions granted in this letter, please contact me via my information listed below.

Regards,

Betty Reynard

Betty Reynard, President
Betty.reynard@lamarpa.edu

Office of the President
P.O. Box 310
Port Arthur, Texas 77641-0310
409-984-6100 Office
409-782-5201 Cell
1-800-477-5872

Memorandum

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board
Lamar University

Date: July 6, 2017
To: Felicia McAdams
From: Office of Research & Sponsored Programs Administration
Re: Request to Interview Lamar University Faculty Members

The Office of Research & Sponsored Programs Administration has given you permission to interview Lamar University faculty members. Please note, it is strictly voluntary that Lamar faculty participate in the study and it does not conflict with any of their interests.

We wish you all the best with your research.

Kumer Pial Das, PhD
Interim Associate Provost for Research
P O Box 10119
Beaumont, TX 77710
409-880-7947
Fax 409-880-7672
http://www.lamar.edu/research/research-sponsored-programs/index.html

APPENDIX F

Study Information Cover Letter

Sam Houston STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

Study Information Cover Letter

My name is Felicia McAdams, and I am doctoral candidate of the Educational Leadership Department at Sam Houston State University. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a research study of developmental education faculty perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) as a placement exam. I am conducting this research under the direction of Dr. George Moore. I hope that data from this research will give developmental education faculty a voice and promote potential changes to current placement policies. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a developmental education faculty member that has taught developmental/college readiness courses prior to the implementation of the TSIA and after fall 2013.

The research is relatively straightforward, and I do not expect the research to pose any risk to any of the volunteer participants. If you are interested in participating in this research, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview and complete a participant profile sheet. Any data obtained from you will only be used for the purpose of understanding the essences of developmental education faculty experiences with the placement of students into their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. Under no circumstances will you or any other participants who participated in this research be identified. In addition, your data will remain confidential. The interviews will be digitally audio recorded and encrypted. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on my personal laptop. You have the ability to review your recording upon request. Recordings will be permanently deleted three years after the conclusion of the study. The interview transcripts and participant profile sheets will be stored in a locked filed cabinet in my home office. These files will be shredded and disposed of three years after the conclusion of the study as well. This research will require about one hour of your time. Participants will not be paid or otherwise compensated for their participation in this project.

Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me using the contact information below. If you are interested, the results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the project.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me, Felicia McAdams, or Dr. George Moore. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as research participants, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below.

A copy of this permission form is available for your records.

Felicia McAdams Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (713) 584-9438 E-mail: fcm003@shsu.edu	Dr. George Moore Educational Leadership Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 828-0599 E-mail:gwm002@shsu.edu	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (936) 294-4875 Email: irb@shsu.edu

☐ I understand the above and would like to participate.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the current study.

AUDIO RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT

As part of this project, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project for transcription purposes only. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the audio recording, your name will not be identified. You have the ability to review your recording upon request. Recordings will be permanently deleted three years after the conclusion of the study. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

☐ I consent to participate in the audio recording activities.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the audio recording activities.

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent

Sam Houston State University
Consent for Participation in Research

Developmental Education Faculty Perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment as a Placement Exam

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about developmental education faculty perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) as a placement exam conducted by Felicia McAdams, Sam Houston State University, Lamar University, and Lamar State College Port Arthur. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are an employee of Lamar University or Lamar State College Port Arthur may be eligible to participate. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University nor your employment and relations with Lamar University or Lamar State College Port Arthur. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to understand the essence of the developmental education faculty experiences with students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to be in this research, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Sign the consent form
- Choose preference on cover letter
- Complete the participant profile sheet

If you agree to sign the consent form, you agree to be available for an interview. The researcher will contact you for a time and place convenient to you to conduct the interview. The interviews will last less than one hour.

Approximately 5-10 participants may be involved in this research.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

No potential risks or discomforts anticipated for the participants.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

The benefit of this research is to gain a greater understanding of the essence of developmental education faculty experiences with students in their classrooms as a result of the TSIA. There are no direct benefits to the participants.

What other options are there?

The interviews will be the only data considered for this research, there are no other options available.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a participant in this study are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except: if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the SHSU Protection of Human Subjects monitors the research or consent process); or - if required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Audiotape recordings of the interview will be used for educational purposes, and your identity will be protected and disguised.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain anonymous and confidential. Any identifying information will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law.

The interviews will be audio taped for transcription purposes. The participants have the right to review/edit the tapes. Only the researchers will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after 3 years.

Personal identities of the participants will be concealed. All personal information, research data, and related records will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer and backed up on her password protected external hard drive to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.
Individual responses to interview questionnaires will be destroyed, after 3 years, following analyses of the data.

What if I am injured as a result of my participation?

In the event of injury related to this research study, you should contact your physician or the University Health Center. However, you or your third party payer, if any, will be responsible for payment of this treatment. There is no compensation and/or payment for medical treatment from Sam Houston State University for any injury you have from

participating in this research, except as may be required of the University by law. If you believe you have been injured, you may contact the researcher, Felicia McAdams at 713-584-9438.

What are the costs for participating in this research?
There are no additional research costs for which the participant will be responsible.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
The participant will not be paid or offered any other gifts for his/her participant in this research. The participant will not be reimbursed for any expenses incurred during his/her participation in this research.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
You can withdraw or be removed from the study at any time. You can withdraw from this study at any time without consequences of any kind. You can also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The researcher conducting this study is Felicia McAdams. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at 713-584-9438. You may also contact Dr. George Moore at 936-294-4981.

What are my rights as a research subject?
If you believe you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or e-mail ORSP at sharla_miles@shsu.edu.

You may choose not to participate or to stop your participation in this research at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University, Lamar University, or Lamar State College Port Arthur.
You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Agreement to Participate
I have read the above information and received a copy for my records. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction. I willingly consent to participate in this research. I understand that if I should have any questions

about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Felicia McAdams at 713-584-9438 or by email at fcm003@shsu.edu.

Your name (printed):_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature for consent of audio tape: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher conducting the study: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H

Participant Profile Sheet

Directions: Please answer the following questions. Data will be used to find a theme amongst participants. This information will be strictly held in confidence. Thank you for your time.

1. Gender:

2. Ethnicity/Race:

3. Which type of institution due you consider your primary place of employment, 2-year or 4-year? **(circle one)**

4. Adjunct or Full-time instructor? **(circle one)**

5. What subject(s) do you teach **(circle all that apply)?** Mathematics Reading Writing

6. Were you a developmental education/college ready instructor prior to Fall 2013?

Yes _____ No _____

7. How many years were you a developmental education/college readiness instructor prior to fall 2013?

8. How many years were you a developmental education/college readiness instructor since the implementation of the TSIA (fall 2013 and after)?

9. Are you familiar with the TSIA? Yes _____ No _____

10. Which level of developmental education/college readiness courses do you teach?

11. Do you know the TSIA cut score range for the course(s) you teach? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what is the range?

12. Do you or have you played a role in setting the cut score range for developmental education/college readiness courses? Yes _____ No _____

APPENDIX I

Copyright Approval

From: MoralesSE@thecb.state.tx.us <MoralesSE@thecb.state.tx.us>
Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2017 8:49 AM
To: McAdams, Felicia
Subject: Contact regarding Issue 17-04456

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VITA

Felicia Chunta McAdams

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education (December 2017) in Developmental Education Administration at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX. Dissertation title: "Developmental education faculty perspective of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment as a placement exam."

Master of Education (December 2011) in Counseling and Development, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas. Thesis title: "The ABCs of college life: alcohol, body image, and conformity."

Bachelor of Science (May 2009) in Psychology, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas. Thesis title: "The effects of reward and time on academic performance."

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct, Department of Allied Health, Lamar State College Port Arthur, August 2017-present.

Director of Advising and Retention, Department of Student Services, Lamar State College Port Arthur, November 2016 – present.

Adjunct, Department of Math and Science, Lamar State College Port Arthur, August 2016 –present.

Director of Academic Advising, Department of Student Services, Lamar State College Port Arthur, January 2016 – October 2016.

Adjunct, Psychology, Lamar University, August 2014-December 2015..

Academic Advisor/TSI Analyst, Undergraduate Advising Center, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, June 2013 – December 2015.

Adjunct, Center for Academic Success, Lamar University, August 2012 – December 2015.

Graduate Intern, Student Tutoring Advising and Retention Services, Lamar University, July 2009 – August 2009.

Peer Counselor Intern, Student Tutoring Advising and Retention Services, Lamar University, June 2007 – July 2007.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Outstanding Service Award, Faculty Senate, Lamar State College Port Arthur, May 2017.

Ten Years of Service, Texas State University System, Lamar State College Port Arthur, April 2016.

Distinguished Staff Award 2014, Texas State University System, Lamar University, November 2015.

Five Years of Service, Texas State University System, Lamar University, April 2011.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

American Educational Research Association
National Academic Advising Association
National Association for Developmental Education
National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development
Southeast Texas Counseling Association
Southwest Educational Research Association
Texas Association for Assessment in Counseling & Education
Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
Texas College Counseling Association
Texas Counseling Association
Texas Mental Health Counselors Association