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**To:** CSU Provosts/Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs

**From:** David S. Spence *David S.*

**Subject:** **Secondary Placement Score for the Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) Placement Test**

As reported in earlier memos to campus presidents (July 5, 2001 and January 18, 2002), the Entry Level Mathematics Placement test has been modified. There have now been two systemwide administrations of the modified test. The earlier memo provided information about revised content specifications and the reporting of subscores that can be used for more effective advising and placement of students.

The ELM Development Committee recommended a scaled score of 50 to demonstrate required competency in mathematics for the modified ELM. The ELM Development Committee and representatives of the CSU Mathematics Council met on December 14-15, 2001 to review results of the September 2001 standard setting activity and statistical analyses performed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The total score determines whether the student has demonstrated satisfactorily required competencies in mathematics expected of entering freshmen. Subscore ranges will be reported for the content areas of numbers and data, algebra, and geometry. Although subscore ranges are not statistically significant because of the limited number of questions in each content area, subscore ranges are intended to help students identify areas of weakness and to assist campuses in placing students into remediation activities or programs that will best prepare them for general education courses in mathematics and quantitative reasoning.

Many campuses have analyzed remedial mathematics and GE curricula, student needs, and results of the March test administration. They have developed tentative placement recommendations that serve the needs of the campus and its students. Some campuses requested further guidance in determining a secondary score that might identify students who need two semesters of remediation rather than one semester. The ELM Development

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Committee has recommended, and I have accepted, the recommendation that a score of 42 be considered as an advisory, secondary placement score during the 2002-03 academic year. Campuses are encouraged to continue reviewing student skills in light of the campus remediation program and the skills needed for the GE-Breadth course the student will be taking. This will allow more appropriate placement that will serve the needs of students and the campus curricula.

In setting cut scores, there are always questions about the ability of specific scores to discriminate between those students who are fully prepared and those who require one or two semesters of remediation. For technical reasons, the ELM Development Committee is particularly concerned about the secondary placement score of 42 in separating those students who require one semester of mathematics remediation from those who require two semesters.

Therefore, campuses are encouraged to collect data on the success of students in remedial and General Education-Breadth quantitative reasoning courses. Of specific interest is the use of the modified ELM test, the primary cut score of 50, and the secondary placement score of 42 in appropriately placing students and adequately preparing them to succeed in their subsequent quantitative coursework. This information can provide further guidance to the ELM Development Committee as it continues to review this issue.

Please feel free to contact Mr. Allison Jones, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Student Academic Support, or Dr. Nancy Sprotte, Associate Director, Enrollment Management Services, if you have any questions about the changes in ELM. Mr. Jones may be reached by e-mail at <ajones@calstate.edu> or by telephone at (562) 951-4744, and Dr. Sprotte may be reached by e-mail at <nsprotte@calstate.edu> or by telephone at (562) 951-4726.

DSS/ncs

cc: CSU Presidents  
CSU Vice Presidents for Student Affairs  
CSU Math Department Chairs  
ELM Development Committee  
Mr. Allison G. Jones