

Academic Affairs
401 Golden Shore, 6th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802-4210

www.calstate.edu

Gary W. Reichard
Executive Vice Chancellor
and Chief Academic Officer
562-951-4710 / Fax 562-951-4986
E-mail greichard@calstate.edu

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TO: Provosts and Vice Presidents, Academic Affairs

FROM: Gary W. Reichard 
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

RE: Your Input Solicited: Participation in First Time Freshman Math Assessment Pilot Program Before Arrival on Campus

Your reply by Wednesday, March 25, 2009, is requested.
Please respond to Jeff Gold at jgold@calstate.edu

Accurately placing first-time freshmen into an appropriate math course is a challenge at many CSU campuses. As part of the systemwide *Transforming Course Design* initiative, Humboldt State University (HSU) developed an auxiliary mathematics assessment program that provides incoming freshmen with additional information about their math readiness for the CSU and affords students opportunities to improve their math placement before arriving on campus.

As part of the program, in early spring 2008, HSU Admissions mailed a letter to incoming freshmen informing them of an opportunity to improve their mathematics placement status by taking an assessment test using the ALEKS web-based intelligent mathematics software. Students were sent a free license granting them access to an initial online assessment that covered mathematical topics ranging from pre-algebra to calculus. Students who performed poorly were encouraged to purchase the ALEKS tutorial (approximate cost \$35) to self-remediate in precisely the content areas where they needed help.

During Humboldt's summer orientation sessions and during the first week of the fall 2009 semester, HSU staff proctored a second ALEKS assessment test in campus computer labs. Of the roughly one hundred fifty students who took this assessment, approximately 25% succeeded in raising their mathematics placement status.

In an effort to support the scaling of this model to interested CSU campuses, the Chancellor's Office is sponsoring a systemwide pilot. The bulleted lists below provide an outline of tasks associated with participation in the pilot:

CSU Campuses
Bakersfield
Channel Islands
Chico
Dominguez Hills
East Bay

Fresno
Fullerton
Humboldt
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Maritime Academy

Monterey Bay
Northridge
Pomona
Sacramento
San Bernardino
San Diego

San Francisco
San José
San Luis Obispo
San Marcos
Sonoma
Stanislaus

Chancellor's Office Responsibilities:

- Provide project management support.
- Create project advisory committee consisting of developmental math coordinator, math faculty, and outreach/admission staff.
- Negotiate systemwide license with ALEKS Corporation to centrally fund ALEKS placement tests for incoming freshmen.
- Develop project website to foster campus collaboration and idea sharing.
- Track assessment results in ALEKS and share with campus project leaders.

Participating CSU Campus Responsibilities:

- **Send an E-mail to Jeff Gold (jgold@calstate.edu) by Wednesday, March 25 indicating your interest in participating in the pilot.**
- Appoint a project leader and establish a campus implementation team consisting of some or all of the following positions: developmental math coordinator, representative math faculty, testing coordinator, outreach director, enrollment director, orientation coordinator, Early Assessment Program coordinator, and Academic Senator.
- **Participate in an orientation meeting on Thursday, March 26th from 2-3 pm.**
 - Dial-in Number: (866) 213-2185
 - Access Code: 8002243
- Alert incoming freshmen ASAP about the alternative assessment opportunity. Strongly recommend (or require) that incoming freshmen take the initial ALEKS assessment. Encourage students to purchase the ALEKS intelligent tutorial self-study program to improve their math proficiency before arriving on campus.
- Track student assessment results in ALEKS, and send periodic e-mail updates to support students through their self-study program.
- Install ALEKS plug-ins in campus computer lab(s). Arrange to have campus testing personnel administer ALEKS assessment tests at orientation sessions and/or during the first two weeks of the fall 2009 semester/quarter.
- Tally results and place students into math courses accordingly.
- Track student success in fall 2009 math courses and correlate to ALEKS assessments and hours of self-study.

Next Steps:

- 1) **Review** the pilot program description and attached FAQ document with faculty and staff at your campus. Please contact Jeff Gold (jgold@calstate.edu) with any questions.
- 2) **Decide** whether or not your campus would like to participate in this pilot. If interested, please select a project leader and have him/her e-mail Jeff Gold of your commitment to participate by Wednesday, March 25th.

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much will it cost our campus to participate in this pilot?

There are no direct costs to campuses who wish to participate in the pilot, but campus teams will need to be involved in the planning and implementation of the program. The Chancellor's Office will purchase the pre-assessment and post-assessment ALEKS exams, and students who wish to use the ALEKS intelligent tutorial program to improve their math status will pay approximately \$35.

2. What provisions will be made for students who can't afford to pay for ALEKS?

The Chancellor's Office will provide free licenses to students who demonstrate financial hardship.

3. What results did Humboldt State University (HSU) achieve with this program?

In spring 2008, 141 newly admitted HSU students attempted to raise their mathematics placement status with ALEKS.

- 66 students tried to place out of developmental courses or reduce the number of developmental semesters required
- 75 students tried to place into calculus

After taking the proctored ALEKS exam on campus, 9 students (13.6%) placed out of or reduced the number of semesters of developmental math and 32 students (42.7%) placed into calculus. These students performed similarly in their fall 2008 math courses to students who did not participate in the program.

4. Our campus has few similarities with HSU. Why should we expect to replicate their results?

You are not likely to replicate HSU's results, but this voluntary pilot will allow you to provide incoming freshman with a cost-effective scalable way to improve their math placement status before arriving on campus.

5. Given that incoming students already take the ELM Exam, isn't this a waste of time?

The ELM Exam was designed to determine whether or not students are ready for college-level mathematics. It was not created to serve as a diagnostic/placement exam. Students who do not demonstrate readiness for college math will still be required to take the ELM Exam. But those students who participate in the pilot and take the ALEKS exam will receive immediate feedback of their mathematical strengths and weaknesses. Further, they will be given a customized list of the concepts they need to master and will be presented with web-based tutorials to help them become proficient before arriving on campus.

6. What mathematical concepts are covered on the ALEKS math assessment

The ALEKS math assessment covers mathematical concepts from pre-algebra through calculus.

7. How can we be sure of the integrity of the web-based assessment model? How do we know that students are not receiving help when they take the assessment?

The ALEKS assessment that students take at home provides a snapshot of their math readiness, but does not provide credit, nor does it allow students to improve their math placement status. Students who wish to improve their math placement must take a face-to-face ALEKS exam on campus, thereby ensuring the integrity of the assessment process.

8. The Humboldt model was voluntary. Can we require all students to participate?

Absolutely. Campuses are welcome to target some or all of their incoming freshman class in ways that best meet their needs.