



KENTUCKY
Council
on postsecondary education

1024 Capital Center Dr. Suite 320
Frankfort, KY 40601-8204

Phone: 502.573.1555

Fax: 502.573.1535

www.cpe.state.ky.us

Thomas D. Layzell
President

April 1, 2005

Edward Kifer
510 McCubbing Drive
Lexington, KY 40503

Dear Skip:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Council's Statewide Placement Policy. Given my respect for your expertise in this area, I regret your immediate negative reaction and take it very seriously. I will try to address some of your concerns.

This policy was developed by faculty representatives designated by the chief academic officer of each of Kentucky's public colleges and universities. The core of the policy is not the ACT threshold scores themselves but the skills that are now specified (and agreed on by representatives of all our public postsecondary institutions) indicating readiness for college-level work. The K-12 sector has worked with learning standards for quite some time, and we are grateful for the opportunity that Kentucky's participation in the American Diploma Project gave our postsecondary faculty to clarify what, precisely, they expect incoming freshmen to know and be able to do. (As an aside, these entry-level expectations also will enable our developmental faculty to clarify appropriate remedial course outcomes.)

Our reliance on the ACT came about for several reasons. First, Kentucky's colleges and universities, like those in most southern states, already use the ACT in their admissions and placement deliberations. Is it the only component of these deliberations? Of course not. High school grade point averages, recommendations, application essays, and interviews are among the elements on which admissions decisions are based. ACT scores already serve as a trigger mechanism for most institutions, where a student scoring below a given level is offered additional placement assessment to determine the best learning option. Our institutions have simply agreed on a uniform level.

The Council's policy is not designed to calibrate levels of remediation, nor is it an admissions policy. Our institutions use multiple means for making decisions of both sorts. The purpose of this policy is to define a standard of "readiness for college" to preclude the type of second-guessing to which too many first-time college goers are subject. Our faculty agreed on a set of gateway skills, compared them to the ACT's *Standards for Transition*, and established a score level at or above which a student will be guaranteed placement in credit-bearing coursework. Entering students with lower scores can always have a second chance. The policy is all carrot and no stick. Our faculty's pragmatic judgment is confirmed by research conducted by the ACT across the nation. Students earning a score of 18 in English and 22 in mathematics have a 75 percent likelihood of earning a grade of C or higher and a 50 percent likelihood of earning a B or higher in their first year of college English or algebra.