Executive Summary

Introduction and Overview

ACCUPLACER measures the skill levels of entering students in the areas of reading, elementary algebra, and college-level mathematics. At FSU, ACCUPLACER is administered during the Summer Orientation “First Steps” programs and throughout the academic year as needed. All students who enter the university as first-time students, including special visiting students pending acceptance as degree-seeking students, complete profile examinations. Transfer students who transfer in 30 or more credit hours, including 6 hours in mathematics, and 6 hours in English, are not required to complete the profile examination. ACCUPLACER is a computer-adaptive test that reports scores on a scale of 20 – 120. Each test yields two scores, a raw score and a percentile rank score.

Summary of Results

The ACCUPLACER tests (Profile Exams) were administered to approximately 1007 entering students during the fall 2007 semester. Score averages in reading, algebra, and college level mathematics were “69”, “63”, and “35”, respectively. Results revealed little change in the reading and algebra scores from the previous year, but yielded a 3 point decline in the college level math score average from “38” in fall 2006 to “35” in fall 2007.

Tables 1 and 2 provide information on average profile exam scores in English and mathematics for the last seven years along with comparative data on
national reference group scores. The average reading score (69) obtained by FSU entering students is 8 points below the national reference group score (77), while the average algebra score (63) obtained by FSU entering students is three (3) points above national reference group scores (60). The scores observed in both reading and math indicate the gap between entering freshmen and the national reference group is narrowing in the area of reading, and is higher in the area of mathematics. The average algebra score of 63 is 6 points higher than it was in fall 2001 and may signal higher levels of preparation in basic mathematic skills.

Although eligibility for academic support in reading and math is based on a combination of factors, with the profile examination score representing only one indicator, it does provide some idea of academic insufficiency of the cohort. Therefore, using the reading profile examination score (>78) alone to determine class placement would result in approximately 686 (68%) students being eligible for academic support in the area of reading. Using an algebra score (<50) to determine academic support eligibility in math would result in fewer than thirty percent (30%) of students being required to participate in academic support labs in the area of mathematics (See Table 3-4).

ACCUPLACER scores provide an excellent baseline assessment of students as they enter college. For the current year, average scores remained relatively stable with a modest decrease in CLM scores.

**Recommendations**

In considering the impact of college readiness/academic preparedness on student retention and progression through the college experience, the university
may want to consider using ACCUPLACER as an indicator of academic support needs for all entering students including transfer students. Additionally, considering the ACCUPLACER statistical results which demonstrate the need for additional academic skill development, ACCUPLACER may be used as an aid in helping to determine the kind of academic support efforts needed for specific groups. Further investigation into additional uses of the instrument is thus recommended. The following tables provide a graphic presentation of the data:

Table 1: Average Reading Scores Obtained by Entering FSU Students – 7-Year Trend

Note: National reference data were obtained from scores of 5000 entering college students in 1999.

Table 2: Average Math Scores Obtained by Entering FSU Students – 7-Year Trend

Table 3: Percent of Students Eligible for Academic Support in Reading (Based on ACCUPLACER Scores Only)
Table 4: Percent of Students Eligible for Academic Support in Math
(Based on ACCUPLACER Scores Only)

Note: The score criteria for placement in math support changed from <44 to <50 in 2007.

Table 4: Percent of Students Eligible for Academic Support in Reading
(Based on ACCUPLACER Scores Only)

Note: The score criteria for placement in reading support changed from <70 to <78 in Fall 2007.