



# AB 705 Experience

May, 2021

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## Introduction

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This study was designed to gain a better understanding of the experience for students, faculty, and counselors with the placement process at Palomar College following the implementation of AB 705. The study gave focus to how well students understood their placement, the perceived accuracy of those placements, and the biggest concerns and suggestions regarding the placement process. This report is part of a larger research project on the implementation of AB 705, and draws on more focused and detailed reports comprising (a) AB 705 Experience: Student Registration Survey, (b) AB 705 Experience: Student Class Experience Survey, and (c) AB 705 Experience: Faculty Experience Survey.<sup>1</sup> This report includes a description of the data, the results, and a brief summary. Appendix A contains the text of the survey questions, and Appendix B provides a ranked list of counselors' concerns about the placement process.

## Data

The participants in the study were students, faculty, and counselors. Data was collected through three online surveys and a nominal-groups session conducted in 2020. The students targeted for the study were first-time students, as they had recently gone through the new placement process implemented to conform to AB 705. The faculty in the study were teaching English, ESL, or math courses in the placement sequence.

**Student Registration Survey.** The Student Registration Survey was conducted during the registration period for the Fall 2020 term at Palomar College. After students registered for classes, first-time students received an email request with a link to the online survey. Students were randomly assigned to complete either the English or math section of the survey. A total of 592 students completed the anonymous survey, with 301 responding to the English section and 291 responding to the math section.

**Student Classroom Experience Survey.** The data for the Student Classroom Experience Survey come from an online survey of first-time Palomar students enrolled in English or math, conducted during the Fall 2020 term. These students received an email invitation to complete

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<sup>1</sup> These reports are found on the Palomar College [Institutional Research & Planning](#) website.

the survey, followed by up to three reminders. A total of 368 surveys were completed, with 187 students responding to the English questionnaire and 181 responding to the math questionnaire.

**Faculty Experience Survey.** The data come from an online survey of Palomar College faculty teaching courses in the placement sequences for English, ESL, and math. It was conducted during the Fall 2020 semester. An email request with a link to the online survey was sent to these faculty, followed by two reminders. A total of 86 faculty members completed the survey.

**Counselor Nominal Group Session.** A nominal group session was conducted with Palomar College counselors at a Counseling Department meeting in the Fall 2020 semester. This session involved counselors identifying and ranking what they viewed as the biggest concerns regarding the placement system since the implementation of AB 705.

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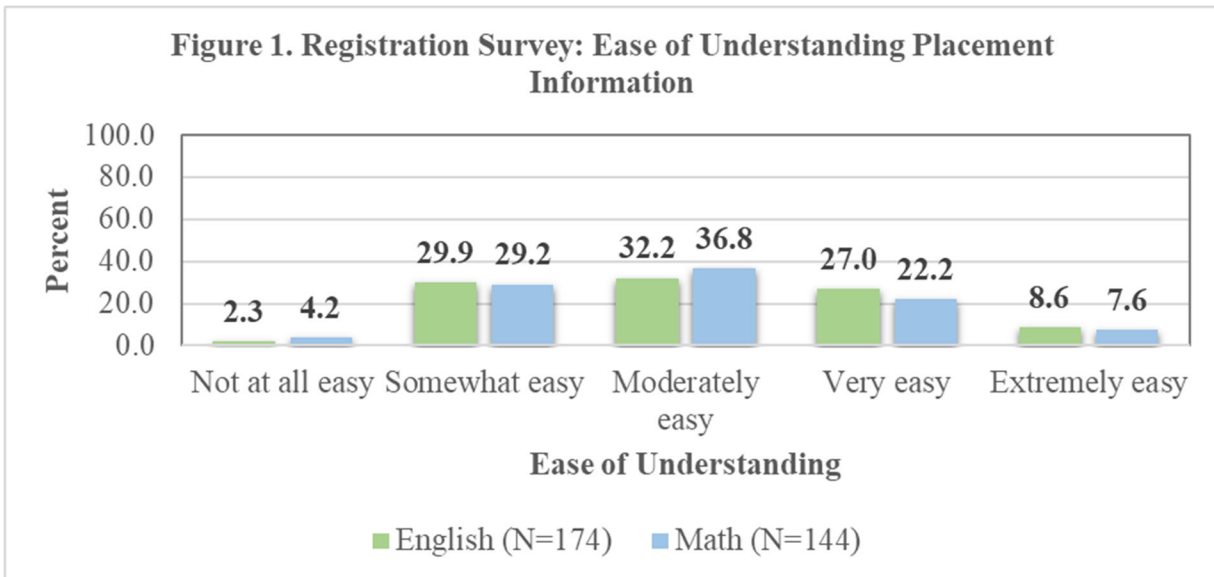
## Results

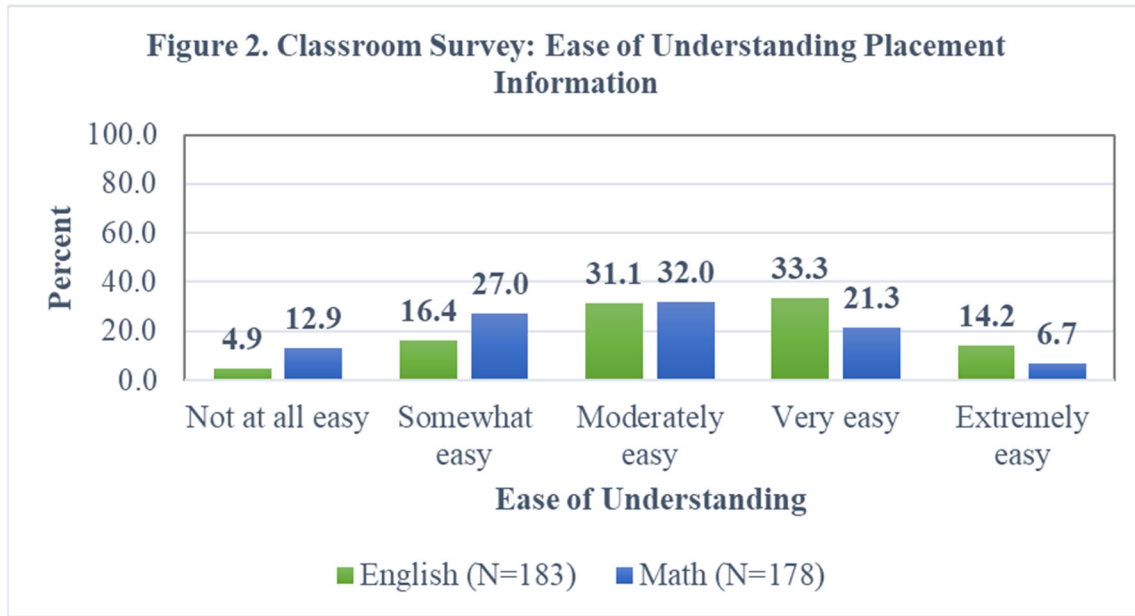
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### Clarity of Placement Information

The Student Registration Survey asked respondents if they had received placement information. Students who reported that they received a placement were asked how easy it was to understand the placement information. Figure 1 shows that about a third of the respondents found the placement very or extremely easy to understand, and another third found it *moderately easy* to understand.

The Student Classroom Experience Survey also addressed how easy the placement information was to understand. This population of students, who had enrolled and had been in their course for a few weeks, also had a modal response of *moderately easy*, as illustrated in Figure 2.



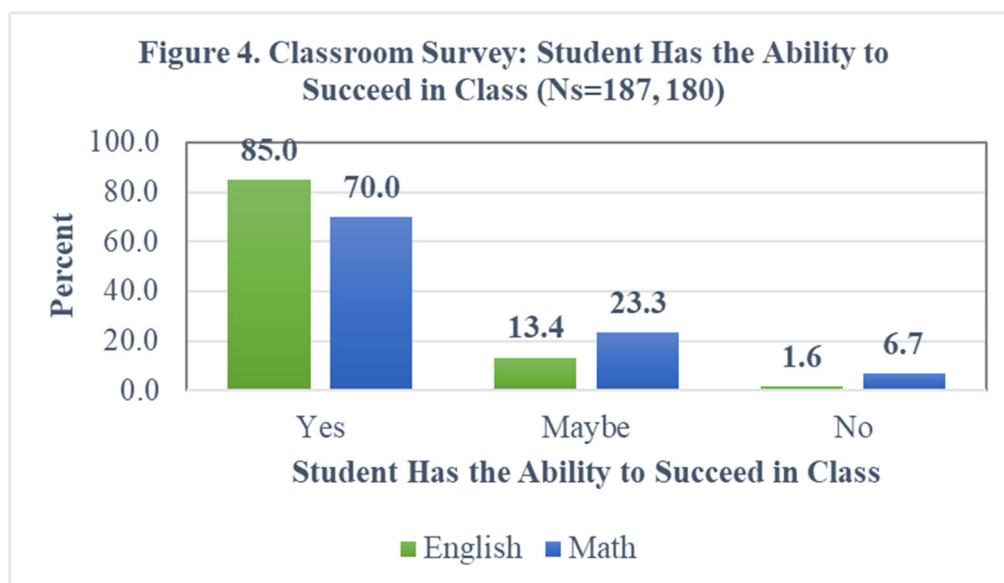
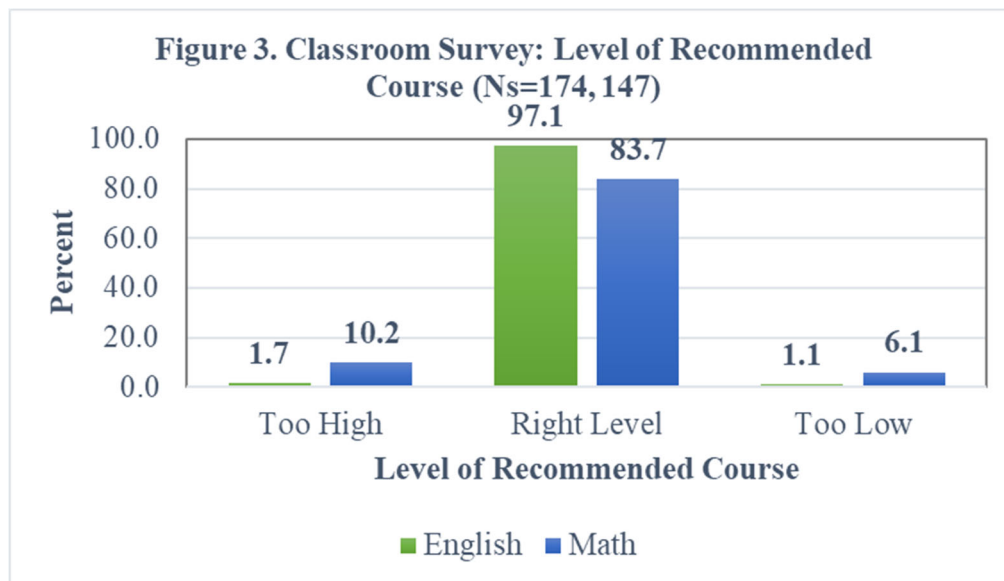


Difficulty in understanding the placement information may contribute to students not knowing what class to take. On the Student Registration survey, respondents were asked if they knew what English or math class to take. Table 1 reveals some uncertainty regarding what English or math class the student should take.

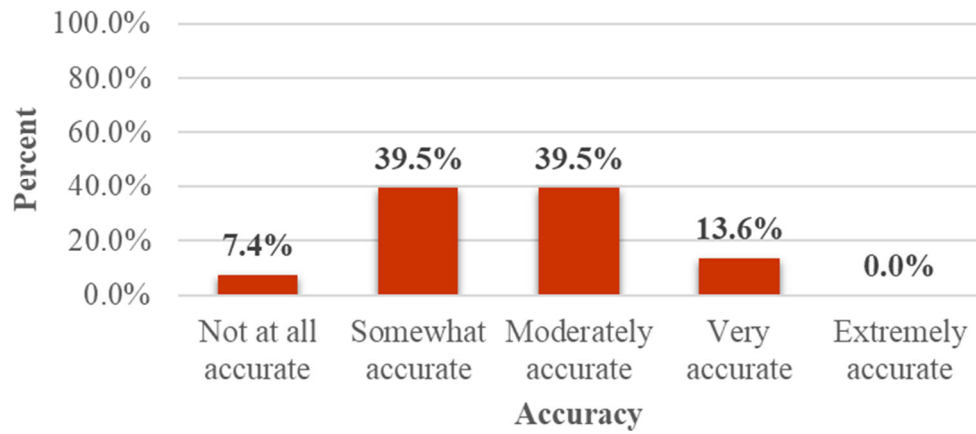
<b>Table 1. Registration Survey: Student Knew What Class to Take</b>								
	Yes		No		Not Sure		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Knew What English Class to Take	203	67.4%	61	20.3%	37	12.3%	301	100.0%
Knew What Math Class to Take	157	54.1%	105	36.2%	28	9.7%	290	100.0%

## Placement Accuracy

Students enrolled in English and math perceived their placements to be accurate. Overwhelmingly, students believed the recommendation was the right level. This is shown in Figure 3. Students also believed that they had the ability to succeed in the English or math class they were enrolled in, as illustrated in Figure 4. Faculty had a very different perspective. Figure 5 shows that they perceived the placements to be only somewhat or moderately accurate.



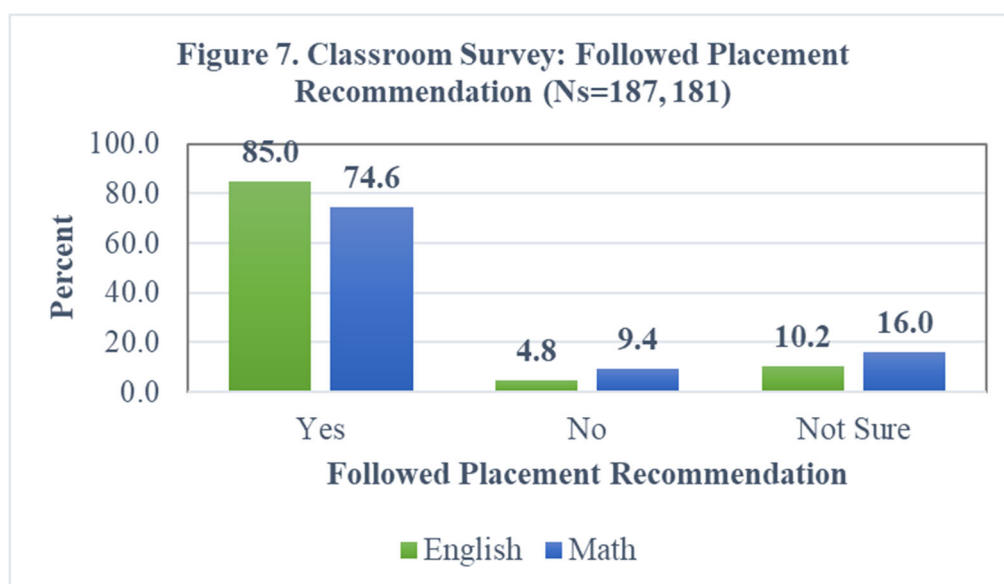
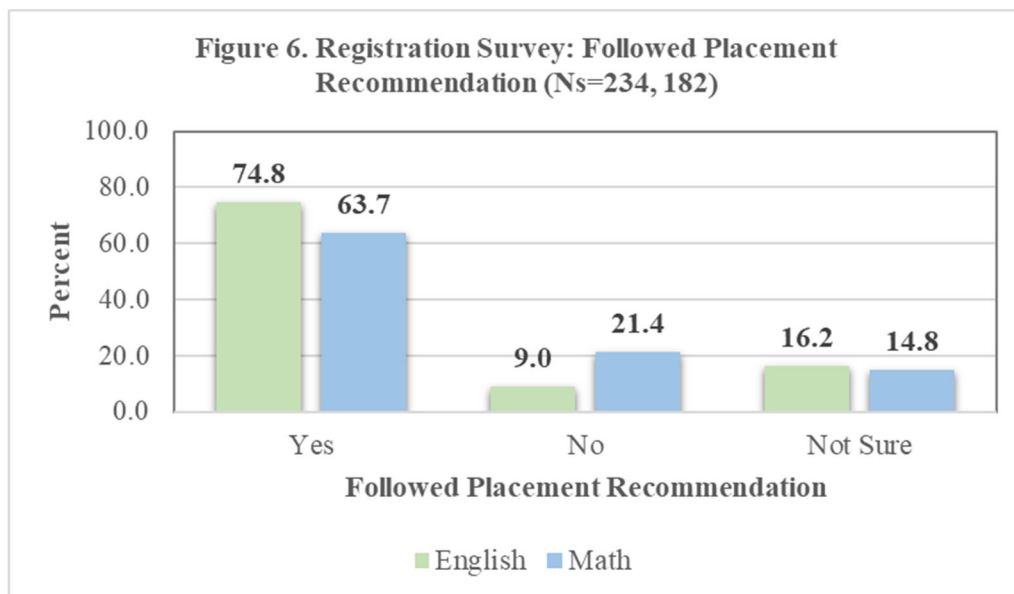
**Figure 5. Faculty Survey: Faculty Ratings of the Accuracy of the Current Placement Process (N=81)**





## Adherence to Placement Recommendations

On the Student Registration Survey, those who indicated that they had registered for an English or math course were asked if they followed the recommendation they had received when they applied. Most students (74.8% of those enrolled in English and 63.7% of the students enrolled in math) reported that they followed their placement recommendation, as illustrated in Figure 6. A similar pattern is revealed in Figure 7, which contains data from the Classroom Survey conducted during the semester.



## Concerns about the Placement Process

Counselors participated in a nominal group session in which they were asked: *What are your biggest concerns regarding our placement system since the implementation of AB 705?* These concerns were compiled in one exhaustive set from which each counselor ranked their top three concerns. Points were associated with the rankings, and these points were aggregated to form a ranked list of concerns.

Table 2 presents the five top-ranked concerns. “Students not getting help they need in support classes” was the top concern expressed by counselors. Three of these top five concerns relate to students not getting sufficient information or support from the college. Appendix B contains the complete ranked list of counselor concerns.

<b>Table 2. Counselor Nominal Group Session: Biggest Concerns</b>	
1	Students not getting help they need in support classes.
2	Students taking classes they don’t need for major.
3	Technology barriers in determining how to enroll.
4	Students don’t have enough information about placement in course.
5	Underprepared students are discouraged and drop out.

## Suggestions for Making the Placement Process Easier

Students were asked both on the registration survey and the classroom survey about any suggestions they had to improve the placement process. The suggestions were most likely to be focused on (a) getting more detailed information, (b) getting greater clarity, (c) having information pushed out to them through email, and (d) meeting with counselors.

### Student Suggestion:

"making it more explicit and straightforward, i found that it felt like i had to look hard for it and wasn't sure i found the right thing when i did at first"

### Student Suggestion:

"explain what the numbers mean next to the class and what english class has the support class with it. that would be great thanks :]"

### Student Suggestion:

"If there were an email or notification with more information on how to find your math class, how to register and a overview of what to expect"

Faculty were also asked for suggestions regarding what Palomar College could do to support students now that the new placement system is in place. Their responses, consistent with counselor and student input, often related to communication. Additionally, faculty frequently identified tutoring as an important way of supporting students.

**Faculty Suggestion:**

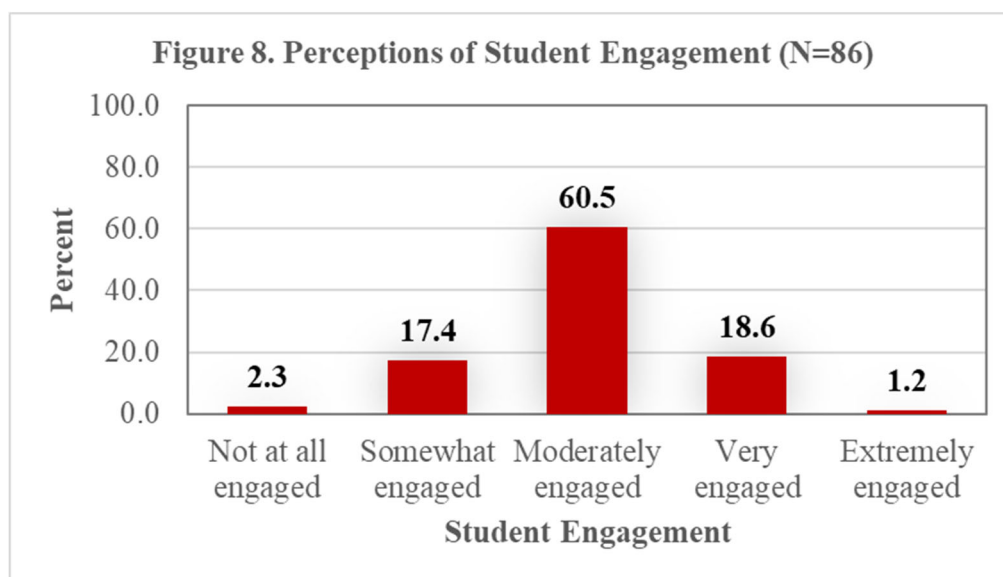
*"Email the students directly about tutoring and other services."*

**Faculty Suggestion:**

*"Hire and pay more tutors and Writing Center people. Assign designated tutors for specific classes."*

## Student Engagement

Faculty were asked about the engagement level of students in their classes. Figure 8 shows that faculty perceived students to be moderately engaged. One in five, however, viewed students as very or extremely engaged.



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## Summary

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This study examined the experiences of students, faculty, and counselors as they related to the implementation of AB 705. The study focused on the clarity of placement information and the accuracy of the placements.

The results reveal that placement recommendations were not clearly understood by a significant proportion of Palomar students. On average, students perceived the placement information to be moderately easy to understand, and requested greater clarity in the placement information.

Students who enrolled in English or math classes did find the placements to be accurate, and felt that they had the ability to succeed in those classes. The faculty teaching those classes, however, viewed the placements as only somewhat to moderately accurate.

Students not getting help they need in support classes, and students taking classes they didn't need were top among the concerns expressed by counselors. Students' suggestions for improving the placement process included (a) getting more information, (b) greater clarity, and (c) having the information actively pushed out to them. Faculty suggestions often related to communication and tutoring as means to support Palomar College students.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

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### Student Registration Survey

#### Background

B1. Before this summer, have you taken any courses at Palomar College?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  
- ☐ Don't know

B2. Have you taken any courses at any other college?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  
- ☐ Don't know

B3. How many classes are you enrolled in for the fall semester?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  
- ☐ Don't know

#### Clarity

C1. When you completed your application to Palomar did you receive information about what [English/math] class to take?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

[ASK IF C1 = Yes]

C2. How easy to understand was the information you received about what [English/math] class you should take?

- ☐ Not at all easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Moderately easy
- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Extremely easy
  
- ☐ Don't know

C3. After you applied, did you know what [English/math] class to take?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

C4. Were you recommended to take a support class with your [English/math] class?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

C5. How could we make the process of knowing what [English/math] class to take easier?

## Enrollment

E1. Did you enroll in [English/math] for the summer term?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

E2. Did you enroll in [English/math] for the fall term?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[ASK IF E1 = No & E2 = No] [Randomize Responses]

E3. Why did you not enroll in [English/math]? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ I wasn't sure what class to enroll in.
- ☐ I don't have room for it in my schedule.
- ☐ The course I wanted wasn't offered at a time or day I could take it.
- ☐ The class I wanted to take was full.
- ☐ I don't need to take an [English/math] class.
- ☐ I am not sure I am ready to take class that was recommended.
- ☐ I was more interested in other classes.
- ☐ I didn't want to take that many units.
- ☐ I didn't want to take an [English/math] class online.
- ☐ Other. Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

[ASK IF E1 = Yes OR E2 = Yes]

E4. Did you enroll in an [English/math] class that followed the recommendation you received when you applied?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

[ASK IF E4 = No]

E5. Why did you not follow the recommendation you received when you applied?

- ☐ I wasn't sure what class to enroll in.
- ☐ The course I wanted wasn't offered at a time or day I wanted to take it.
- ☐ The class I wanted to take was full.
- ☐ I am not sure I am ready to take the class that was recommended.
- ☐ I didn't want to take that many units.
- ☐ I didn't want to take [English/math] online.
- ☐ Other. \_\_\_\_\_

[ASK IF E1 = No & E2 = No]

E6. Do you plan to take [English/math] at Palomar College in the spring?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know



[ASK IF E6 = No]

E7. Why are you not planning to take [English/math] at Palomar College in the spring?

- ☐ I am not sure what class to enroll in.
- ☐ I am not sure I am ready to take the class that was recommended.
- ☐ I don't want to take that many units.
- ☐ Other. \_\_\_\_\_

[ASK IF E6 = Yes]

E8. In the spring, do you plan to enroll in an [English/math] class that follows the recommendation you received when you applied to Palomar College?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

## Comments

Comments. Do you have any comments on the topics covered in this survey?

## Student Class Experience Survey

### Course Recommendation

R1. How easy to understand was the information you received about what [SUBJECT] class you should take?

- ☐ Not at all easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Moderately easy
- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Extremely easy
  
- ☐ Don't know

R2. Did you enroll in an [SUBJECT] class that followed the recommendation you received when you applied?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

[ASK IF R2 = No]

R3. Why did you not follow the recommendation you received when you applied?

- ☐ I wasn't sure what class to enroll in.
- ☐ The course I wanted wasn't offered at a time or day I wanted to take it.
- ☐ The class I wanted to take was full.
- ☐ I am not sure I am ready to take class that was recommended.
- ☐ I didn't want to take that many units.
- ☐ I didn't want to take English online.
- ☐ A counselor recommended a different class.
- ☐ I did not receive a recommendation.
- ☐ Other. Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## Placement Accuracy

A1. How challenging would you say the course material is in your [SUBJECT] class?

- ☐ Not challenging enough
- ☐ Appropriately challenging
- ☐ Too challenging
  
- ☐ Don't know

A2. Do you think that the level of the [SUBJECT] class recommended to you was the right level for you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [GOTO EA3]
  
- ☐ Don't know

[ASK IF A2 = No]

A3. Was the recommended [SUBJECT] class ...

- ☐ Too high
- ☐ Too low
  
- ☐ Don't know

## Capability of Success

C1. Do you think you have the ability to be successful in this class?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

C2. How likely would you say you are to succeed in your [SUBJECT] class?

- ☐ Not at all likely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Moderately likely
- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Extremely likely
  
- ☐ Don't know

C3. How confident are you that you can learn the material in your [SUBJECT] class?

- ☐ Not at all confident
- ☐ Somewhat confident
- ☐ Moderately confident
- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ Extremely confident
  
- ☐ Don't know

## **Class Fit**

F1. To what extent do you think you belong in this class?

- ☐ Not at all belong
- ☐ Somewhat belong
- ☐ Moderately belong
- ☐ Mostly belong
- ☐ Completely belong
  
- ☐ Don't know

F2. How motivated are you to do well in this class?

- ☐ Not at all motivated
- ☐ Somewhat motivated
- ☐ Moderately motivated
- ☐ Very motivated
- ☐ Extremely motivated
  
- ☐ Don't know

## On the Right Path

P1. Do you have a clear idea of what [SUBJECT] course or courses you need to reach your academic goals?

- ☐ Not at all clear
- ☐ Moderately clear
- ☐ Completely clear
  
- ☐ Don't know

P2. To what extent do you think that this class fits in with what you are trying to achieve at Palomar?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Completely
  
- ☐ Don't know

P3. To what extent do you think that this class has you on the right path to reach your academic goals?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Completely
  
- ☐ Don't know

S1. What would make the process of knowing what [SUBJECT] class to take easier?

## Comments

Comments. Do you have any other comments on the topics covered in this survey?

## Faculty Experience Survey

Q1. What department do you teach in here at Palomar College?

- ☐ English
- ☐ ESL
- ☐ Math

Q2. Are you ...

- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time

### Placement Accuracy

Q3. How accurate do you think the placement is that students are receiving through our current placement process?

- ☐ Not at all accurate
- ☐ Somewhat accurate
- ☐ Moderately accurate
- ☐ Very accurate
- ☐ Extremely accurate
  
- ☐ Don't know

Q4. What proportion of the students in your classes are likely to find the class *not challenging enough*?

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ ...
- ☐ 100%
  
- ☐ Don't know

Q5. What proportion of the students in your classes are likely to find the class *too challenging*?

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ ...
- ☐ 100%
  
- ☐ Don't know

### **Class Fit and Student Level Variability**

Q6. How much variability would you say there is in [SUBJECT] skill level among the students in your [SUBJECT] classes when the semester starts?

- ☐ Not enough
- ☐ An appropriate amount
- ☐ Too much
  
- ☐ Don't know

### **Student Engagement**

Q7. How engaged would you say your students are in your classes?

- ☐ Not at all engaged
- ☐ Somewhat engaged
- ☐ Moderately engaged
- ☐ Very engaged
- ☐ Extremely engaged
  
- ☐ Don't know



Q8. What proportion of the students in your class are very engaged in the class?

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ ...
- ☐ 100%
  
- ☐ Don't know

## Professional Development and Support

Q9. Have you participated in any professional development relating to AB 705?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
  
- ☐ Don't know

[ASK IF Q9 = Yes]

Q9a. How useful has the professional development been in helping you deal with changes resulting from AB 705?

- ☐ Not at all useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Moderately useful
- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Extremely useful
  
- ☐ Don't know

Q10. How useful for you and your colleagues do you think training would be on issues related to teaching now that AB 705 has been implemented?

- ☐ Not at all useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Moderately useful
- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Extremely useful
  
- ☐ Don't know

Q11. How likely would you be to attend a training on issues related to AB 705?

- ☐ Not at all likely
  - ☐ Somewhat likely
  - ☐ Moderately likely
  - ☐ Very likely
  - ☐ Extremely likely
- 
- ☐ Don't know

[ASK IF Q11 = Moderately likely to Extremely likely]

Q11a. What type of training would you be most likely to attend?

Q12. What is the most important thing we can we do to support students now that our new placement system is in place?

## Comments

Q13. Do you have any other comments on the topics covered in this survey?

## Appendix B: Counselor Nominal Group Session – Biggest Concerns

Appendix B. Counselor Nominal Group Session: Biggest Concerns	
Points	Concern
12	Students not getting help they need in support classes.
8	Students taking classes they don't need for major.
8	Technology barriers in determining how to enroll.
7	Students don't have enough information about placement in course.
6	Underprepared students are discouraged and drop out.
4	Need to use data to inform direction of college.
4	Students feel like they don't belong because basic skills/lower level courses don't exist.
3	Anxiety for students who feel unprepared for course.
3	Student discouraged was wrong for those who don't need college-level math.
3	The way support courses are being delivered and measured.
2	Giving students more units than they need.
2	Ongoing evaluation of outcomes for AB 705.
2	Placements for returning students.
2	Students not being prepared for next level.
2	Support services (e.g., tutoring) for all students.
1	Enrollment process didn't work.
1	Impact of support courses for DI students.
1	Not enough support courses.
1	Students placed on probation (poor grades)/lose financial aid for not passing.
1	Support and consideration for DSPS students.
0	Campaign was weak and in error (messaging).
0	Considering voice of students in implementation and impact.
0	Data being used to implement future programs.
0	Enrollments not informed by major.
0	ESL students falling through cracks.
0	Faculty deficit-mindset of students.
0	Impact on reading classes.
0	Need to consider the time between high school and college not considered.
0	Not enough students passing classes.
0	Pathway choices on survey should match actual pathways.
0	PeopleSoft ed plans do not have most current placements.
0	Programming issues with getting students into courses.
0	Rapid and extreme pendulum swing causing stress.
0	Support classes have been combined.
0	Who benefited from M/E First campaign.