The purpose of this study has been to discover what procedures are currently in use among the land-grant colleges in sectioning their students in freshman English and to propose a program of placement which will be selective of those placement practices which have proved most effective and practicable.

The data for the study were obtained by means of a questionnaire sent to the 51 land-grant schools. Forty-one colleges replied, a return of 80 per cent.

The results of the inquiry disclose that 81 per cent of the land-grant colleges give a placement examination to their entering students. Approximately half of them use the examination for placement purposes only. The others utilize the examination results in other ways as well, including guidance and counseling and the analysis of English difficulties. About half the schools section students solely on the basis of the proficiency examination. Forty-five per cent take into consideration such other factors as early class writing and performance, the college aptitude test score, or the high school record. Seventy-three per cent of the colleges use an objective test, and 67 per cent of these use one which is standardized, the American Council on Education Cooperative English Test being the choice of the majority. Most schools give the entrance test during the week preceding registration, the time required for administration being most generally from one-half to one hour, although quite a number of schools examine their students for as long as three or four hours.

Fifty per cent of the schools consider from 20 to 29 per cent of their entering students to be deficient in English, although the range throughout all the schools giving a placement examination is from zero to 40 per cent. The range in percentage of students considered highly proficient is from zero to 25 per cent of the class, with from one to five per cent being the most prevailing percentage. Only one school denies entrance for failure to pass the proficiency examination.
The most common type of remedial program, one used by 79 per cent of the colleges, is to require sub-standard students to enroll in a one-quarter or one-semester course in remedial English. Other procedures include the following: placing low students in regular freshman English classes which require more hours than are prescribed for the normal group; placing the lowest students in slow sections; and establishing clinics to which the low students are referred for help in their particular problems.

Forty-one per cent of the colleges require their students to pass the placement examination before being allowed to enter the standard freshman composition course.

Fifty-one per cent of the schools grant no credit for the remedial English course; 21 per cent grant full credit; 14 per cent allow partial credit; and 14 per cent, conditional credit.

In providing for those students who are greatly above the average in their English attainments, the colleges have pursued a wide variety of procedures. Only five make no special provision for their high students. Seven schools group their better students into high sections of freshman English. A majority of schools use some form of exemption, but there are many variations of this procedure.

In regard to the homogeneous grouping of students in the standard composition course, the study revealed that 58 per cent of the schools make no distinction among students in this normal group, but simply give the same work to all. Eighteen per cent divide the normal group into fast and slow sections, and 18 per cent into fast, average, and slow sections. Only two schools divide into more than three groups.

**Recommendations**

The findings of the study justify the following recommendations:

1. The land-grant colleges should accept the fact of wide variation in the language attainments of those who seek admission to these institutions, should realize that changes for the better will come about slowly, and should endeavor to provide the program which will best help these students to express themselves with clarity and effectiveness.

2. A proficiency test of an objective and standardized type should be given to all entering freshmen.

3. The placement test should be used not only for sectioning but also for guidance and counseling and for aiding the instructors in analyzing both individual and group difficulties in English.

4. Passing the placement examination should be prerequisite to entering the first term of freshman English.

5. Preliminary placement should be done on the results of the standardized test, and, after a week or so of classes, those students who demonstrate that they are out of place should be shifted into sections more suitable to their level.
ENGLISH PLACEMENT PROCEDURES
IN LAND-GRANT COLLEGES
by
MARGARET JANE IRELAND

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Due acknowledgment is made to those members of the land-grant college English faculties who participated in this study and whose cooperation was vital to its accomplishment.
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CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND CONSIDERATIONS

Aspects of Placement Procedures

The placement of college freshmen in English composition sections adjusted to the level of their achievement and ability is a practice among American colleges and universities which has been growing steadily for the past two decades at least. As early as 1929 Taylor,¹ who made a nation-wide survey of conditions then current in freshman English, found such a trend to be in evidence. He writes, "There is a strongly growing tendency to assign students to such divisions of freshman English as will be most suited to their training and capacity." In reviewing the changes of major import that were taking place at that time, he records two that are pertinent to this study—the increasing popularity of placement tests and the widespread and growing tendency to section students according to ability.²


²Ibid., p. 30.
The necessity for the accommodation of college
English instruction to widespread levels of achievement
in English proficiency is a fact to which the institutions
of higher learning have become resigned. Whether this
great range in literary ability among entering freshmen is
a result of a tendency of the colleges to become less se-
lective of their academic candidates, or whether it is a
consequence of the nature of secondary school instruction,
or whether it has to do with the age in which we live, or
whether it is due to a combination of all of them, the
fact remains that a large number of entering freshmen are
deficient in their ability to use language effectively.

Roberts, in discussing on the part of the colleges
an awareness of the situation and an attempt to cope,
remarks:

The fact seems to be that institutions of
higher education are, in increasing numbers,
trying out new methods in an attempt to
improve the college student's use of English.
There is a growing realization that standards
of good English are being or have been
lowered or ignored all along the line, and
that colleges must, to maintain their stand-
ards, adopt programs designed to remedy defi-
ciencies, or eliminate the deficient student
before he is graduated as a supposedly edu-
cated person.

---

3 Charles W. Roberts, "The Problem of English Compo-
sition in American Colleges and Universities," The Uni-
versity of Illinois Bulletin, vol. 38, no. 48, Part 2,
July 22, 1941, p. 93.
Writing in the same vein, Hudson\textsuperscript{4} comments:

For at least one hundred of its one hundred forty years of existence, the University of North Carolina has been engaged in a struggle common to all institutions of higher learning--the accommodation of college standards and techniques to the student products of secondary school standards and techniques.

Thus it appears that over a period of time two facts have emerged in regard to freshman composition in the American colleges: first, that there is wide variation in the language attainments of entering college freshmen and that far too large a proportion of these students are below standard; and, second, that for some time colleges and universities have been casting about in an effort to find methods and techniques which will best serve to maintain the standards of good English.

Statement of the Problem

Each autumn during "Freshman Week" the English faculties of the institutions of higher education in America are confronted by an ever-increasing number of candidates for college entrance, representing America in cross section. They come from homes of poverty and of wealth, of ignorance and of enlightenment, of vulgarity and of

culture. Their intellectual powers range from the dull to the very bright; their scholastic achievement from a smattering of half-learned facts to a well-grounded preparatory education; their powers of written expression from the semi-illiterate to the highly literate. How the English departments are to take in hand these students of varied achievement, ability, and background and supply each one with the power of able communication is, in essence, the problem of this study.

By analysis this basic problem resolves itself into a series of lesser problems which may be stated as questions:

1. What is the necessity for placement procedures?
2. To what extent are the English departments of the land-grant schools attempting to classify their freshmen into uniform ability groups?
3. How many of these schools administer placement tests to their entering freshmen?
4. For what purposes is the placement test used?
5. How many schools section their students on the basis of the placement test alone?
6. If other factors besides the test enter into placement practices, what is their nature?
7. What types of examination are used?
8. Which types are most common?
9. How many schools prepare their own placement tests?
10. How many use standardized tests?
11. What are the names of the standardized tests used and which are most popular?

12. How much time is required to administer the examination?

13. When are the examinations given?

14. What percentage of students fail to exhibit a sufficient degree of English proficiency to be admitted to the regular freshman English course?

15. What provision is made for these sub-standard students?

16. What disposition is made of students who have already attained proficiency in composition?

17. What academic credit is given these students who vary from the normal group?

18. How many students fall into the class designated as "exceptionally proficient"?

19. Are the regular freshmen English classes divided into ability groupings?

20. How many of the schools using standardized tests for placement administer an alternate form at the end of the freshman year?

21. To what extent is composition required of all freshmen?

22. In general, in what direction do English placement procedures seem to be moving?

23. Can any recommendation be made for an ideal placement program?

Procedures Used in Making the Study

In order to determine the placement procedures currently practiced by the land-grant colleges, a questionnaire, designed to cover the foregoing aspects of the
problem, was formulated. The twelve questions contained therein were, for the most part, objective. A copy of the questionnaire, together with a letter explaining the nature of the inquiry and requesting cooperation in the study, was sent to the proper official in each of the fifty-one land-grant schools. In some cases the letter and questionnaire were directed to the person in charge of freshman composition; in others, to the head of the English department; and in still others, to the dean of the school of liberal arts. Wherever possible the writer attempted to make contact directly with the person most closely associated with the situation and thus avoid having the material reach that person by a circuitous route. The names and the positions of the officers were obtained from the college and university catalogs.

The chief source of the data for this study comes from the forty-one questionnaire forms which were returned. Supplementary facts concerning the study were also supplied by those college catalogs which gave an explanation of English composition requirements and policies. Periodicals dealing with English teaching and reports and bulletins published by the institutions were also used.
The Scope of the Investigation

The data, conclusions, and recommendations of this study apply only to the Federal land-grant colleges, there being one in each of the forty-eight states with the exception of Massachusetts which has two; in addition there is one in Alaska and one in Hawaii, a total of fifty-one. Of these fifty-one schools applied to for information, forty-one, or eighty per cent, replied. There were very few omissions on the returned forms and many of those replying were at pains to be far more explicit than was required. No complaint can be made concerning the percentage of return or the willingness of those who participated in the investigation to give full and complete answers.

Limitations of the Study

The questionnaire as a vehicle for gathering data has distinct shortcomings. Very often the percentage of return is so low as to make the study valueless. Often, too, the much occupied professor who is the source of authority has neither the time nor the inclination to give more than a cursory and briefly considered answer to the questions contained in the impersonal mimeographed sheet, the whole procedure being a thankless demand upon his time. Also the questionnaire gives little scope for deviations from the standard pattern.
Although the percentage of replies was adequate and a gratifying interest was manifested by those who filled in the forms, as demonstrated by the length and detail of the responses, nevertheless the limitations of the questionnaire as a data-collecting instrument were evident in this respect: the questions, which were designed to cover general methods of procedure, in many cases did not fit the particular methods of various schools, as revealed by extended comments and explanations. Such data are extremely difficult to evaluate and classify. Too, one question was poorly phrased, namely, "What percentage of students fail the examination?" As a result, three schools failed to answer the question, being evidently at a loss to know what information was required. Comments such as the following reveal the mental state of the correspondent: "I cannot understand the wording of this question. A student cannot fail, i.e., be denied college credit, unless he is registered for a course," or "Not scored on this basis. Percentiles are computed," or "We do not call it 'failing.'"

Some schools, too, indicated that their present procedure was in either an experimental or a transitional stage, and some confessed that under the extreme pressure of increased enrollments resultant from the "G. I. Bill of Rights," they have been forced to abandon temporarily
their usual procedures in the placement of freshmen.
Chapter II

Background Studies in English Placement Procedures

The Necessity for Placement

A review of studies in freshman English placement reveals first of all a deep concern on the part of educators in regard to the necessity for placement at all. Why is it that the entering freshmen exhibit such a wide range in language proficiency? Why are so many of these students poorly prepared in English? Why has the practice of sectioning according to ability steadily become more apparent during the last two decades? Why is it that the language situation in general appears to grow steadily worse? Those who have investigated conditions in freshman English have felt that a diagnosis of the basic causes is necessary in order to recommend treatment.

Hudson, one of the earlier writers, expressed belief that those colleges who lowered their standards of admission in order to bolster enrollments were at fault.

His comment is as follows:

As early as 1837 the University officially complained of low standards of college preparation and of the competitive practices of other institutions in lowering standards of admission to bolster enrollments.
How grave that problem is may be suggested by the fact that this year, judged by the results of a significant objective test, 36 per cent of our freshmen fell below the median of the eleventh grade high school pupils in the United States at large; 13.8 per cent below the median of the tenth graders; and 4.5 per cent below that of ninth graders.5

Most of the earlier writers, however, are inclined to place the blame almost entirely upon the secondary schools. Among those investigators who indicate their belief that the difficulty lies with the failure of the high schools to teach English effectively is Maddox,6 who in 1938 made a study of conditions in freshman English. He arrived at three conclusions: that there is a prevalent dissatisfaction with the state of unpreparedness in which the freshman is commonly found and a belief, in some colleges, that this state is yearly growing worse; that there is a disposition to ascribe this condition to the superficiality sic of the training afforded by most of the secondary schools; and that there is general agreement that little can be done toward the attainment of the higher values of freshman composition until the freshman


is first put into possession of the elementary tools of thought and expression.

Fountain\(^7\) analyzes the implications of the secondary school situation essentially as follows. We have, by attempting to educate the entire adolescent population, inevitably lowered our secondary school standards to those of the average rather than the superior student. We are drawing the majority of students from homes where the parents have had little schooling and so see no necessity for the "basic" subjects. In order to appeal to the masses and keep them moving along the prescribed route, we have experimented with all kinds of educational shortcuts, none of which can take the place of detailed study. We have made high school subjects terminal rather than preparatory, thus penalizing the student who may enter college. And, finally, the colleges and the high schools have allowed themselves to drift apart.

Later investigators, however, were disposed to exonerate the high schools, being more willing to accept the universal fact of individual differences and reluctant to demand of the secondary schools that which the college

\(^7\) Fountain, Alvin M., "The Problem of the Poorly Prepared Student," *College English*, vol. 1, no. 4, January, 1940, p. 309.
English faculties themselves were unable to produce in their first-year students—a uniform standard of English achievement. These men attacked the problem by examining college instructional methods and, finding these questionable in efficiency, suggested a reorganization of the freshman English courses to meet and overcome the English deficiencies of their freshmen.

Aiken and Carleton, who made a study in 1941 of conditions at the University of Vermont after other departments had complained of slovenly English written by upperclassmen, were inclined to be critical of the college program. They write: "Whether the faculty were right or wrong in their attitude, it was pretty clear that one of two things was happening. Either we were not giving the freshmen proper instruction or they were not staying 'learned' after they left us." They were at first inclined to blame the high schools, but upon investigation found that they had no basis for such an assumption, as an examination of graphs of grades for freshmen of previous years indicated that these students were a trifle above average. Thus they were forced to conclude that they had

---

been using the wrong approach and the wrong method.

Pooley is also disposed to defend the high schools.

To quote:

Freshman English is most universally re-
quired of all students who matriculate regard-
less of their ultimate course or degree. Thus
the smart mathematician or the budding agricul-
tural genius, who has been the despair of the
English teachers for four years, enters fresh-
man English on a par with the winner of the
essay prize . . . I believe that we college
instructors have been guilty of assuming that
the high schools can send forth a uniform
product; that there is a set level of achieve-
ment in English which every pupil should reach
who aspires to college entrance.9

One of the most recent writers takes the broad view
that the changing nature of the times and its inevitable
influence upon the language is the source of difficulty
in English instruction. In the following excerpt he gives
expression to this belief:

During the last thirty years the purposes
and direction of the English studies have
steadily become more confused, the teaching of
English steadily less effective. In the class-
room, from primary school through university and
hence also in the "outside world," the uses of
language have become blurred, the function of
literature forgotten. The speeches of Hitler,
the advertisers' purple prose, and the pro-
nouncements of wise and thoughtful men fall upon
ears unable to tell one from the other . . .
Furthermore, the professional groups have in-
creased the confusion by inventing specialized

9 Pooley, Robert C., "Achieving Continuity in High
School and College English," College English, vol. 6,
no. 3, December, 1944, p. 151.
studies, such as "Vocational English" or "Scientific Writing," and as a consequence communication has become so cluttered with specialized jargon that a mechanic can scarcely understand a political economist. Thus it is not strange that many teachers of English have wondered if their work were not in vain and their profession useless.\footnote{Sensabaugh, G. F., "English Studies and the Crisis in Education," College English, vol. 5, no. 1, February, 1944, p. 30.}

In retrospect it appears that those who have been concerned with the improvement of freshman English have, over a period of years, entertained several theories as to the starting point from which the problem may be attacked. The earlier investigators were inclined to demand a uniform product from the high schools and to exhibit impatience when it was not forthcoming. The later men have been more aware of the differences in aptitudes and talents among students and more willing to adapt the college English techniques and procedures to accommodate the changing nature of the times, the language, and the student personnel.

Freshman Proficiency Examinations

The increasing use of the placement test by colleges and universities as an instrument by which to gauge the language level of entering freshmen, to diagnose
difficulties, and to section students in groups suitable to their background and attainments is revealed by an examination of various studies dating from 1929. Taylor, who began a survey in 1927 of schools with enrollments of 500 or over, basing his conclusions on 232 replies, records the "increasing popularity of placement tests" among the changes of major import that seemed to be taking place.

Peterson and Childs, who made a survey in 1939 of institutions with an enrollment of 2000 or more students, found that of the 58 schools replying 42 used a placement test. A study of English procedures in representative colleges made in 1941 by Howard and Roberts reveals that out of the 166 institutions reporting 117 schools responded to the questionnaire regarding freshman proficiency examinations.

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12 Peterson, Sigurd H. and Childs, Herbert E., A Study of Freshman Composition at the Larger Colleges and Universities, Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon, 1939, p. 8. (Mimeographed)

Practices vary in regard to the type of examination used. The studies indicate that approximately half the schools have been accustomed to using standardized tests, those used most commonly being the American Council on Education Cooperative English Test, the Iowa tests, the Purdue Test, and the Shepherd Test. Other schools prepare their own tests. Two studies mention some tendency to use a sample of student theme writing as a check against the standardized test scores, and one records using the results of a psychological test in conjunction with those of the placement examination.

Concerning the type of examination given, Peterson and Childs found the following to be true:

Fifteen use a theme with the test; twenty-three do not. Two or three seem to use a theme alone. Occasionally the test is combined with the psychological test; one institution sections its students on the basis of the psychological test alone. One reports sectioning students after two weeks in unsorted classes.

Of the placement tests mentioned, eighteen are prepared locally. Four institutions use the Iowa test, four the Cooperative English Test (one with the Iowa Silent Reading Test), three the Shepherd test (from Oklahoma University), two the Shumaker test (from the University of Oregon), two the Purdue Placement Test, one the Cross English Test. Two mention varying the test from year to year.\(^{14}\)

The Howard and Roberts survey reveals the following

\(^{14}\) Peterson and Childs, loc. cit.
conclusions about the nature of the placement tests:

About half the schools reporting prepare their own proficiency tests, which usually follow the pattern of the following popular standardized tests:

Cooperative English Test of the American Council on Education
Purdue Placement Test in English
Iowa Silent Reading Test
Iowa Placement Test--English Training
Nelson-Denny Reading Test
Barrett-Ryan English Test
Barrett-Ryan-Schrammel English tests
Inglis Vocabulary Test
Shepherd English Test
Tressler English Minimum Essentials Test

In several of the schools the results of the examination are tested indirectly by an analysis of prose composed by the student.15

Howard and Roberts found that the time required to give the examination varied from one hour to four hours, with the majority in favor of the one-hour session. They write:

Forty schools have an hour examination. Seventeen give an examination of an hour and a half. Twenty-eight give two-hour examinations, and twenty-three give three-hour examinations. One school examines its student for four hours.16

Their study also reveals information concerning the time of administration, a majority of schools give the test during "Freshman Week." They record their findings as follows:

15 Howard and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 81-82.
16 Ibid., p. 32
Almost all give the examination during "Freshman Week," preceding registration. Several gave tests during class meetings the first week of school. One school gives a test at the end of the third week, after all the students have had intensive drill in fundamentals.¹⁷

In summary, the writer finds that the following generalizations can be made in regard to the use of the proficiency examination by American colleges and universities:

1. There has been increasing use of placement tests on the part of the institutions.

2. The schools have been about equally divided in their preference for standardized tests and those prepared by the local English staffs.

3. There has been some tendency, though not emphasized by any authority, to use a sample of student prose as a check against the results of the placement test.

4. The placement examinations have been most generally given during the week preceding registration.

5. The length of time required to administer the examination is most generally one hour, but varies throughout from one hour to four.

6. The standardized tests which have been most generally in use are: the Cooperative English Test, the Iowa tests, the Purdue Test, and the Shepherd Test.

Extent of Placement Programs

After a perusal of the studies dealing with ability grouping in the freshman year, the writer is able to conclude that the practice of sectioning freshmen into

¹⁷ Ibid.
homogeneous groups of various kinds has been adopted more and more generally by the colleges and universities during the past twenty years or so.

The 1929 Taylor\textsuperscript{18} survey records that 26 per cent of schools responding to the questionnaire gave both advanced and sub-freshman English; 11 per cent advanced freshman English only; 15 per cent classified in other ways; and 35 per cent did not classify.

Peterson and Childs\textsuperscript{19} in 1939 found that out of 59 schools responding to the questionnaire regarding the disposal of low students, only 16 placed them in ordinary sections, and some of these made special provision for them such as placing them in classes requiring a greater number of class hours, by tutoring, or by individual conferencing.

In 1940 Fountain,\textsuperscript{20} who made a study of more than 100 engineering schools, found that only 17 indicated no attempt to solve the difficulties of the deficient students


\textsuperscript{19}Peterson, Sigurd H. and Childs, Herbert E., A Study of Freshman English at the Larger Colleges and Universities, Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon, 1939, p. 9. (Mimeographed.)

except in regular sections and that a majority of those institutions had restricted enrollments which would serve to weed out the poor students. In his conclusion he writes: "A vast majority of schools not actually offering such work still make provision for weak students by sectioning them into homogeneous groups for intensive, though credited study. Fully 90 per cent of the colleges studied give some sort of special treatment to their poorer students."

In a more recent study Bond,21 who in 1946 conducted a survey of fifty state-supported institutions in the Middle West, found that 41.5 per cent had no remedial programs. This comparatively large percentage, which seemingly contradicts the foregoing conclusions, may be accounted for by the fact that a number of teachers colleges were included in the survey, the results of which indicated that the teachers colleges in general have been slow in taking up remedial work.

The perspective view would indicate that the percentage of schools providing for range in ability among their students has been fairly high, consistently over 50 per cent. Although no definite statement can be made as to the

amount of increase in placement practices, since some of the studies are regional or selective in other ways, the general trend seems to be toward increased provision for range in ability rather than a diminishing of such practice.

Types of Remedial Programs

To provide for those students who are below standard in their English achievement, the background studies reveal four general methods of procedure: (1) the straight sub-freshman remedial course, (2) homogeneous grouping of all freshmen English students, (3) extra work carried in conjunction with the regular freshman course, and (4) clinics and writing laboratories. There are many variations and combinations of these four programs, but in general they may be said to be most commonly practiced.

The straight sub-freshman remedial course with no credit, partial credit, deferred credit, or full credit is the plan used by at least one-fourth of the schools according to available studies. Fountain says:

About one-fourth the total number of engineering schools and colleges come forward, and, without apology, offer straight non-credit, sub-freshman English. Among these are: state universities in Alabama, Arizona, California, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Utah, and Wisconsin.22

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22Fountain, op. cit., p. 316.
He further states that a number of schools give remedial courses which grant only partial credit, for instance, one credit for a three-hour course, the theory behind such an arrangement being that some credit is better than no credit for the morale, while the three-hour schedule fits into the program of both teacher and student without disturbing anything, yet the general effect is to require the student to do an extra term of work since two-hour electives are not generally given. In a sense, then, the low course does not count toward fulfilling the English requirement for a degree.23

Most of these courses run for one quarter or one semester and require the attendance of a three-hour course. Many of the institutions give the courses over again for those who fail the first term but usually find, however, that these students have done so poorly in their other courses as to be obliged to drop out of school.24

The sub-freshman remedial course has not been found to be a perfect panacea for freshman English ailments. Few colleges are willing to endorse them unreservedly, most giving their opinions that they have been reasonably effective. Howard and Roberts report on the success of the

23Ibid., p. 312.
24Ibid., p. 316.
remedial courses as follows:

Of the 495 colleges, 211 offer remedial English composition courses . . . Nine remedial courses are called highly successful; seventeen moderately successful; four not successful; and five too new and experimental for fair evaluation.25

Many schools, seeing that forced remedial courses cause bad morale, make the work optional, thus placing the responsibility upon the student to improve his work. Cornell uses such a system.26

The second plan—the practice of homogeneous grouping of the entire freshman class—has found favor with a large percentage of schools. Among these are Iowa State, Arkansas, Missouri Mines, and a number of other engineering colleges. Wherever such an arrangement is made, the lower sections have a heavy mortality.27

The third plan by which the colleges have sought to meet the needs of the poorer student is to require some form of extra work without extra credit, carried concurrently with the regular course or carried with only partial credit for the time actually applied. In regard to


26 Fountain, op. cit., p. 313.

27 Ibid., p. 312.
this practice Fountain writes:

Among the most comprehensive of these systems is the University of Maine. Here the poorer students are required to schedule and to attend special remedial classes, even if they have to drop other work in order to do so. Upperclass or graduate English students aid in giving them the drill necessary.28

A final method of aiding the poorer students, used extensively enough to merit comment, is that of the clinic or writing laboratory. By "clinic" is meant an office or room maintained by the English faculty which is open on a purely voluntary basis to any student in the university. The instructor in charge gives individual help to those who come by analyzing their writing difficulties, providing the drill or advice necessary for the remedy of deficiencies, and aiding in specific problems such as term papers and reports. Taylor,29 in his 1929 study, found the clinic to be one of the "changes of major import that seem to be taking place." Howard and Roberts report that:

The catalogs of three schools make mention of English writing clinics, and one catalog lists a "Clinical Seminar in English Grammar and Sentence Structure." The clinic, as usually set up, is simply an office in which a student's writing difficulties are diagnosed and prescribed for.30

28Ibid., p. 313.

29Taylor, op. cit., p. 31.

30Howard and Roberts, op. cit., p. 89.
Fountain makes the following comment about the writing laboratory maintained by the University of Tennessee:

Tennessee, feeling the need of special provision for poor students but frightened away from non-credit courses by unhappy experiences of other schools, now maintains a committee charged with the responsibility of keeping up standards of expression. The English department maintains a writing laboratory for those in need of additional drill. The department also receives for extra study those students who habitually use poor English in other courses.31

In regard to the number of students who are considered to be below college level in their English attainments, no authority was found who had arrived at a standard percentage for assignment to sub-sections. There is too much variance in standards of proficiency among the schools themselves. In some institutions the regular first term freshman course is practically on a pre-college level. Too, those schools who are highly selective of their candidates for admission find it necessary to provide remedial work for only a few. Other schools give remedial work to as many as one-third of the freshman class. Economic limitations and administrative considerations are also significant factors. Howard and Roberts32

31 Fountain, op. cit., p. 311.

32 Howard and Roberts, op. cit., p. 85.
report the following widely divergent percentages: "The proportion of students assigned to sub-sections ranges from 5 per cent to 89 per cent, but in the 33 schools reporting, the average is 21 per cent."

Fountain\textsuperscript{33} found that entering students who were required to take these preliminary courses reached proportions as high as one-third of the entire class. The average was about 20 per cent, though in several institutions economic and administrative conditions forced a limit of about 10 per cent. A few schools with more highly restrictive entrance requirements gave the work to as low as five per cent.

The amount of credit granted toward graduation varies among the colleges from no credit, through various systems of partial credit, to full credit. The findings of investigators concerning the percentage of colleges granting no credit for pre-college English are at considerable variance. In 1939 Peterson and Childs\textsuperscript{34} found that 18 out of 59 (or about 32 per cent) of the returned questionnaires indicated no credit granted for sub-freshman English. The Fountain\textsuperscript{35} study (1940) discloses that about 25 per cent

\textsuperscript{33}Fountain, op. cit., p. 316.

\textsuperscript{34}Peterson and Childs, op. cit., p. 9.

\textsuperscript{35}Fountain, op. cit., 315.
of the schools responding offered straight non-credit sub-
freshman courses. A much larger percentage--60 out of 95 
schools or about 63 per cent--was reported by Howard and 
Roberts\(^36\) in 1941. Bond,\(^37\) whose survey of Mid-western 
colleges was made in 1946, returns to a percentage more 
nevally approximating those reported by the previous stud-
ies, finding that 31.75 per cent of the colleges granted 
no credit.

The same studies record the following facts in regard 
to granting full credit for remedial English: Peterson 
and Childs\(^38\) found nine institutions out of 59 (or 15 per 
cent) granting full credit; Howard and Roberts\(^39\) report 16 
out of 95 (or 17 per cent), and Bond\(^40\) gives 26.75 per 
cent.

Various systems of granting partial credit are em-
ployed by the colleges. Some grant no credit until gradu-
ation; many schools require extra work without extra 
credit; some grant one credit for a course requiring three

\(^{36}\)Howard and Roberts, op. cit., p. 86.

\(^{37}\)Bond, loc. cit.

\(^{38}\)Peterson and Childs, loc. cit.

\(^{39}\)Howard and Roberts, loc. cit.

\(^{40}\)Bond, loc. cit.
hours class attendance; others ask the deficient students to do extra work before granting them diplomas.41

The means by which the colleges and universities have sought to aid those students who are poor in English may be summarized as follows:

1. Four types of remedial programs have been in common use--straight sub-college-level remedial classes, homogeneous grouping of all freshmen, extra work beyond the normal requirement, and clinics and writing laboratories.

2. The schools have found these remedial programs, for the most part, "moderately successful."

3. The percentage of students assigned to remedial work has ranged from 5 per cent to 89 per cent, with 20 or 21 per cent being the most usual.

4. The schools show much more tendency to grant no credit or reduced credit than to grant full credit for this preliminary work.

Programs for Highly Proficient Students

There have been two schools of thought in regard to exemption of students from required freshman composition, one school recommending exemption of a large proportion of students--about 40 to 50 per cent of the class--from the freshman course and the other advocating the value of

41 Fountain, op. cit., pp. 311-315.
composition for all. Among those who hold to the policy of exemption for a large percentage of students have been the University of California and the University of New Hampshire.\(^\text{42}\) After following the orthodox plan for thirty years, in 1941 the University of New Hampshire adopted the plan of excusing the upper half of the freshman class and assigning the lower half to tutorial groups.\(^\text{43}\)

On the other hand the University of Vermont, after an investigation of student writing practices throughout all the departments of the institution, came out with an entirely different answer to the problem. Aiken and Carleton of the University of Vermont English department remark:

> From the same premises as the University of New Hampshire, the English department of the University of Vermont has arrived at quite different conclusions. The steps in that experiment may be of interest now that the University of New Hampshire has explained its plan.\(^\text{44}\)


\(^{43}\)The writer has been interested to note that, according to the data on the questionnaire returned by New Hampshire for this study, that institution has abandoned the policy of exempting a large percentage of freshmen and, instead, now exempts no students at all but places them in regular freshman English.

In conclusion they advocate more freshman work instead of less, only tentative reliance upon the placement test, vigorous teaching of modern syntax, and insistence on a great deal of reading and writing of expository prose. 45

In an earlier study, Taylor expressed surprise at the small number of institutions granting exemption from freshman English. To quote:

No preamble is really needed for the record of exemptions indicated on the questionnaire. The data are brief and simple. On the whole it is a surprising fact that among so large and representative a body of institutions, only nine per cent of them offer a chance for exemption. It would seem as if the Freshman course was assumed to be an integral element in the American system of collegiate education. 46

Exceptional students are provided for in a number of ways. Some schools place them in high sections; some excuse them from one or two terms of freshman English; others excuse them from all composition; some place them in advanced composition courses or literature courses or give them special individual work. Combinations of these methods are quite usual.

Some institutions grant exemption to approximately


half their entering freshmen; others excuse only a fraction of one per cent. Most of the schools grant exemption entirely on the results of the proficiency examination, and some base exemption on both the examination and work done in the first few weeks of class.

Peterson and Childs found the following to be true in regard to programs for exceptional students:

Seventeen institutions provide for exceptional students by placing them in "high sections" of exceptional students only. Seven excuse them from all freshman composition. Ten excuse them from the first term only; two from the second term only; one from the first and second terms, and one from the second and third terms. Eight place students in advanced composition; six place them in literature. (Some of these last two possibilities are combinations with the preceding; e.g., a student may be placed in a high section whose chief function is to teach advanced composition, or he may be placed in literature and at the same time be excused from one or more terms of composition.) One institution gives the students special individual work.47

Concerning the percentage of exemption and the basis upon which students are exempted, Roberts makes the following comment:

Since standards vary in proficiency tests and courses, it is impossible to determine a universal or standard percentage expectation for exemption or for assignment to a sub-section. In some schools in which the first semester is

47 Peterson and Childs, op. cit., p. 10.
practically a pre-college course, as many as 56 per cent of the students are granted exemption; in other schools only a fraction of one per cent are exempted. In the forty schools reporting on this point, 13 per cent was the average number of students granted exemption.

Exemption means different things in different schools. Eight schools gave credit hours toward graduation to students able to pass exemption examinations. Forty-six grant exemption but give no credit hours and expect students to enroll in an advanced course. Forty-four grant first semester exemption solely on the basis of a proficiency examination; five exempt students on the basis of an examination and the work done in the first few weeks of class. Twenty-seven schools grant exemption for the first semester but not for the second and five grant exemption for the second semester but not for the first. 48

The following facts emerge from a review of the studies dealing with the disposal of highly proficient English students:

1. There is considerable difference of opinion on the part of the colleges as to the number of students who may be excused from freshman English. Some schools excuse almost half of their freshmen. Others are unwilling to excuse more than a very few. The majority of institutions, however, require freshman English of all but about 13 per cent.

2. Exceptionally competent students are commonly provided for by exemption, by placing them in "high sections," by giving them advanced composition or literature, or by giving them special individual instruction.

48 Howard and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
Upperclass Proficiency Examinations

In order to insure the maintenance of English composition standards beyond the freshman year, a number of institutions administer an upperclass proficiency examination to their sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Howard and Roberts49 give the upperclass proficiency examination a place among the most frequently used methods of procedure on the part of college English staffs. They found that the catalogs of 50 colleges announced required upperclass proficiency examinations in English composition. Seventeen gave the examination to sophomores, twenty-three to juniors, four to seniors, and four offered it each semester for all who had not yet passed.

Of the twenty-nine schools replying to the questionnaire, two considered the examination highly successful in curbing the use of poor English; fifteen reported moderate success; ten replied that the examination program was such a recent innovation that no report could be made; and two schools failed to answer this point.

Some schools made their own examinations. Many used forms of the American Council on Education Cooperative English Test. One school simply assigned a six-hundred-word composition. The examinations varied in length from

49 Howard and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 85-86.
one to three hours and ordinarily tested spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Nine schools tested reading comprehension. Ordinarily students who failed were obliged to take the examination again. In seven schools they were required to repeat the freshman course, and in sixteen they were placed in a special remedial course.

Three English Placement Programs with Unusual Features

The programs in English placement developed at the universities of New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Illinois merit a somewhat more detailed discussion in that they involve features that are not common to the general pattern of college placement procedures. Moreover, it may be helpful to present these programs in their entirety in order to show how the various aspects of each plan are integrated into a whole.

The English faculty of the University of New Hampshire, after following the orthodox plan for thirty years, briefly tried giving the composition course to sophomores. However, they came out with the same result—a large number of upperclassman wrote and spoke badly. The eventual outcome was to excuse the upper half of the freshman class from composition. The lower half was divided into groups, each assigned to a freshman staff instructor for tutorial
instruction in the elements of English grammar and composition. The groups ran about sixteen to the group, and the students were drilled individually in what was most needed. As soon as a student was felt to be competent he was released to take other courses. The upper group was allowed to take a new course called "Reading for Thought," or to elect a survey course in English literature. It was announced that if the students failed to keep up to standard, they would be returned to the "tutors." Under the new plan the freshman staff instructors found their work more difficult, but they felt that they were applying instruction where it was needed most. Accompanying the program was a writing laboratory which all students were free to attend.50

In the colleges of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics at the University of Minnesota, the plan of deferring part of the freshman English course has been in effect since 1933. A course in remedial English for upperclassmen called "Exposition 51" was instituted and offered first as an elective. However, it proved so effective that it was later incorporated into the curriculum.

as a required subject. Three hours of English were subtracted from those previously required of freshmen.

The advantages of such a plan, according to Thurston, are that the older students have developed an educational background which gives them material to draw upon in their composition work; they receive immediate help in term papers and reports, which are much more likely to be required of upperclassmen than of freshmen; the deferred course gives them a needed brush-up, since most students are inclined to fall into careless writing habits after they have finished their basic composition course; the course also serves to relieve instructors in other departments of the necessity of much checking of English in reports and term papers, a task which they had been obliged to assume before the deferred course was instituted.

In this program the entering freshman is given a placement test and assigned to Rhetoric I (of sub-college level), Rhetoric II, or Rhetoric III. Any freshman who receives two A's or an A and a B in Rhetoric II and III is exempted from Exposition 51 (the upperclass remedial course). About one-fourth are excused from taking the

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course. Students who are placed in Rhetoric I are thus required to take three quarters of English in their freshman year. However, Rhetoric I includes sub-freshman work and therefore these students take but two freshman courses that are strictly on a college level.

The program at the University of Illinois is somewhat similar to that of the University of Minnesota in that an upperclass remedial English course constitutes a feature of the program. Entering freshmen are given a placement test to determine if they are qualified to enter the required Rhetoric course (Rhetoric 1). Those who fail are not allowed to register in this course but must qualify for it either by passing a three-hour non-credit elective course (Rhetoric 0) or by repeating and passing the placement examination. After three failures to pass the examination the student is dropped from the university.

Potthoff, in discussing the steps taken by the University of Illinois to improve English conditions throughout the institution, makes this statement:

Studies of the writing of university upperclassmen showed that many students who receive a grade of D in Rhetoric 2, the second semester of the required course, write satisfactorily later; that is, improvement takes place. And, on the other hand, some students who receive a grade of C in the course may later write unsatisfactorily; that is, retrogression occurs. In general, the data showed that, although grades of A or B in Rhetoric 2 almost invariably forecast satisfactory writing later, grades of
C or D are not sufficiently reliable indexes of what students' subsequent upperclass proficiency in English will be.52

In view of the foregoing statement, a satisfactory proficiency in the use of written English is now a requirement for all undergraduate degrees awarded by the Urbana divisions of the university; and in order to assure such proficiency, all undergraduates who pass the Rhetoric 2 course with a grade of C or D are required to take an English qualifying examination before graduating. Students who pass the examination are regarded as having met the graduation requirement; those who fail must take an extra one-semester course in rhetoric (Rhetoric 5). Those who fail Rhetoric 5 must repeat either this course or the qualifying examination, a passing grade in either case being prerequisite to graduation.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY

In order to make a study of this type, it was first necessary to formulate a questionnaire which would as completely and as objectively as possible cover the main phases of English placement but which would, at the same time, allow for deviations from common procedures. The questions included in the questionnaire were developed from a perusal of those pages in college catalogs dealing with English requirements, from periodicals and bulletins discussing English placement procedures, and from conferences with those who could speak with authority concerning English instruction in the American colleges and universities. This chapter presents, largely in table form, the data received from the 41 questionnaires which were returned.

Extent to Which the Colleges Use the Placement Examination

As a first step it was necessary to establish the number of schools using a placement examination. Accordingly, the first question asked was, "Are all freshmen required to take an English placement examination?" Table I gives the results of the answers to this question and indicates the extent to which land-grant colleges make
use of an English proficiency examination.

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Colleges Using a Placement Examination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that a goodly percentage of schools are using some type of placement examination, which bears out the implications of the background studies—that the practice of administering the proficiency examination to entering freshmen is becoming more and more general.

Since eight schools replied that they did not give a placement examination and since the subsequent questions in the questionnaire were based upon a positive reply to this first question, these eight schools will be disregarded in the percentage computations of the following tables, and the 33 institutions replying positively will constitute the basis for reckoning percentages.

Uses of the Placement Examination

The preliminary survey of placement procedures made by the writer before formulating the questionnaire showed that some inquiry as to the uses to which the results of
the placement examination were put would be obligatory. Two questions designed to obtain the necessary information were therefore included. The first was stated as follows: "Is the examination used for sectioning only?" Table II records the data received, showing the number of schools making use of placement examination scores for sectioning purposes exclusively.

Table II

Number of Schools Using the Placement Examination for Sectioning Purposes Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would seem that the schools are about evenly divided on this point, but a slight tendency to make use of placement test scores for other purposes than that of ability grouping alone is shown.

The second question was designed to follow up the information obtained in the first, and was stated thus: "If not (used for sectioning only), for what other purpose?" Although the preceding table shows that 18 schools out of the 33 employ the placement test scores for purposes in addition to placement, the correspondent for one school failed to give explicit information concerning these
"other purposes." Consequently, the percentages in the following table are computed on the basis of the 17 schools who made definite answers.

Table III
Uses Other Than Sectioning of Placement Examination Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses of Examination Results</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passing the test a degree requirement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and counseling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of English difficulties</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of academic success</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports to high schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is apparent from the above data that the placement test scores are useful in a number of ways but that they are referred to most commonly for help in counseling students and to aid the composition instructors in analyzing English deficiencies.

Factors in Sectioning

Two of the questions asked in the questionnaire were designed with this end in view: to determine the methods by which the land-grant colleges segregate their freshmen
into the various groups. The first question made inquiry as to whether sectioning is done on the basis of the placement test alone. The replies indicate that in 18 schools (55 per cent) the placement score is the sole basis upon which sectioning is done. In fifteen schools (45 per cent) other factors besides the placement score are taken into consideration. It may be said, then, that slightly more than half the schools are willing to place entire reliance upon the placement score as an indication of the student's probable performance.

The second question in this group requested information as to what other factors besides that of the placement score were considered before assigning students to various classes. The information obtained from the 15 schools indicating that other factors did enter is recorded in Table IV as follows:
Table IV

Factors Other Than Proficiency Examination Scores Which Enter into the Sectioning of Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Factors</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early class writing and performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General schedule limitations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College aptitude test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College aptitude test and a written theme</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school record, achievement test, and early class performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College aptitude test, high school record, and early class performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicate that the most prevailing factor in determining into which group the student shall finally be placed, aside from his performance on the placement examination, is his early theme writing. The college aptitude test score may be said to be the factor next in importance. Some few schools seem to exercise more than usual care in placement, using several devices to check upon the results of the placement examination.
Types of Examination Used

There are several possibilities as to the type of examination which may be used for placement purposes. Examinations which are entirely objective in form, entirely essay, or a combination of the two have been used. Some institutions have been accustomed to using a test prepared by the local English staff; whereas others make use of one of the standardized tests. Sometimes a combination of locally prepared and standardized test is used. Another possibility is the combination of the psychological test and the English test. It was necessary to determine to what extent the land-grant schools are using these various kinds of measuring devices. Answers on this point were returned by all 33 schools and the facts are recorded in Table V.
Table V

Types of Placement Tests Used by Land-grant Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Placement Tests</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholly objective</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholly essay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of objectives and essay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared locally</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of standardized and locally prepared test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of psychology test and English test</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A study of Table V shows that tests which are wholly objective in form are used far more extensively than tests which are wholly essay and that approximately one-fourth of the schools require a sample of student prose in conjunction with the objective test. Sixty-seven per cent of the colleges use standardized tests, whereas only 21 per cent prepare their own placement examinations. In the four schools using a combination of standardized test and locally prepared test, topics for an essay to be written at the same time the objective test is taken constitute that part of the test designated as "locally prepared."
About one-fourth of the schools combine a psychological test with the English test.

Table VI lists the names of the standardized tests used by the 26 schools employing that type of examination and indicates which are used most extensively.

Table VI

Standardized Tests Used by the Land-grant Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Tests</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Council on Education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative English Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrett-Ryan-Schrammel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAFI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky English Test</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue Placement Test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis Test on Mechanics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That the American Council on Education Cooperative English Test is in high favor with the land-grant colleges is disclosed by the above data. The Purdue Placement Test is next in favor, being used by 15 per cent of the colleges. The Barrett-Ryan-Schrammel English Test and the USAFI Test rank next, being administered by eight per cent of the schools, and the Kentucky English Test and the Davis Test on Mechanics rank last, each being used by only one...
school. All schools employing a psychological test used the American Council on Education College Aptitude Test.

Aspects in the Administration of Placement Examinations

During the formulation of the questionnaire it became apparent that information as to the length of time required to administer the placement examination and as to the time of year at which it was given would be helpful. The following table gives the results of this question: "How much time is required to administer the examination?"

Table VII

Time Required to Administer the Placement Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Required for Administration</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 to 59 minutes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 89 minutes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 to 119 minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 to 149 minutes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 to 179 minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 to 240 minutes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the time required to give the placement examination varies from one-half hour to four hours. Since a form of the Cooperative English Test, previously shown to have the most extensive use among the
colleges, requires 40 minutes to administer, it is understandable that the largest percentage (28 per cent) in the above table should fall between 30 and 59 minutes. Worthy of comment is the fact that 21 per cent of the schools examine their students from three to four hours.

Data concerning the other aspect of administration, i.e., the time of year at which the examination is given, are presented in Table VIII.

Table VIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Year</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given during &quot;Freshman Week&quot;</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given in high schools throughout the state as well as during &quot;Freshman Week&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given at the beginning of each quarter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given at any time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would appear that by far the most usual time of administration is during the week preceding matriculation in the fall. A number of schools have found it advantageous to give the examination in high schools throughout the state during the spring preceding college entrance as well as during "Freshman Week." Five schools give the
examination at the beginning of each quarter or semester, and one gives it at any time.

Percentage of Students Considered Deficient

The question designed to obtain information concerning the percentage of students who are below standard in their English achievement was poorly stated in the questionnaire. It reads, "What percentage of students fail the examination?" As a result several schools took exception to the word "fail," replying, and justly so, that it is not the function of a placement examination to fail students. As a result three schools gave no information on this point. Also four schools give no remedial work, although they are among the 33 who give a placement examination. Thus the following table is concerned only with the 26 schools who do give remedial work and who answered the query in the "spirit" in which it was meant.
Table IX

Percentage of Students Considered Deficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Deficient in English</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 9 per cent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19 per cent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 29 per cent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39 per cent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus it may be seen that the proportion of students considered to be sub-standard in their English attainments ranges from one per cent to 40 per cent, with 50 per cent of the schools regarding from 20 to 29 per cent of their students as below standard. Howard and Roberts found a much greater range in their study—from five per cent to 89 per cent—but their average is comparable to the findings in this study—21 per cent. The Fountain study records results very similar to those of this study—a range of five per cent to about 33 per cent with an average of 20 per cent.
Percentage of Students Considered Highly Proficient

Table X gives the data concerning the percentage of entering freshmen whose attainments in language ability are judged to be exceptional. Since three schools failed to answer, one makes no provision for exceptional students, and the reply of one school was unintelligible, the percentages are based upon 28 responses.

Table X
Percentage of Students Considered Highly Proficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exceptional Students</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5 per cent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 per cent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 per cent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 per cent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25 per cent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the land-grant colleges, the proportion of students considered to be highly proficient in their use of English is shown to range from less than one per cent to twenty-five per cent. Seventy-five per cent of the schools regard from one to ten per cent of their students as exceptional.
Remedial Procedures

To determine what methods are used to aid students who are poor in English, it was first necessary to establish the percentage of colleges denying entrance to those who fall below standard. Table XI shows the results of this inquiry.

Table XI

Percentage of Schools Denying Entrance to Students Who Are Below Standard in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data are simple and obvious. Only one school out of the 33 denies entrance because of failure to meet standards on the entrance test. Ninety-seven per cent do not deny entrance.

In order to avoid confusion in evaluating the remedial procedures, it was essential to find out how many schools divide the academic year into semesters and how many into quarters. The replies show that of the 33 schools using placement tests, 20, or 61 per cent, use the semester division, and 13, or 39 per cent, use the quarter division.
The following questions were asked concerning the type of remedial program now in use by the land-grant colleges: "Are low students required to take a remedial course for one quarter? For one semester? For two quarters? For one year? Are failing students placed in sections with more hours? Tutored by graduate assistants? Is some other arrangement made?"

Since four schools of the 33 giving an entrance test have no remedial programs, the total number of colleges involved in Table XII is 29.

Two comments which appeared on questionnaires from schools making no provisions for their poorer students are of interest. One explained that they had used a different system before the war, a plan which involved a tutorial system and an honors course for freshmen, but that under the present pressure of increased enrollment they are now obliged to give all freshmen the same course. The other merely stated that plans for a remedial course are under way.
Table XII
Types of Remedial Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Number of Schools Using Program</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools Using Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required one-quarter or one-semester remedial course</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required two-term remedial course</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required one-year remedial course</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low students placed in regular sections with more hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All freshmen divided into homogeneous groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low students tutored by graduate assistants</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest placed in slow sections</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinics in reading, writing, and speech parallel the regular course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One school of these 23 offers a one-quarter remedial course to those who wish to avail themselves of it, but it is not required. However, since passing the entrance examination is prerequisite to entering the regular course, most of the low students do enroll. Another allows those students who show proficiency at the end of six weeks to transfer to a regular freshman English class.
An evaluation of the facts of the above table shows that the most common type of remedial program, one which is used by 79 per cent of the participating schools, is that of placing the student in a remedial course for one quarter or one semester. Since none of the schools offers remedial courses that run for a longer period, the English faculties evidently feel that this preliminary work should be accomplished within such a period. Two schools, or seven per cent, place low students in sections requiring a greater number of hours than the standard course. None of the schools makes use of graduate assistants as tutors for deficient students. Two colleges place all their freshmen in homogeneous groups. One of these sections the students in groups of 25 from high to low. The other puts them into fast, average, and slow classes.

One college added the information that, in addition to the remedial course offered on the campus, the extension division has a course in remedial English which may be substituted.

In answer to the question asking if students were required to pass the placement examination before being allowed to register in freshman English, 12 of the 29 schools involved, or 41 per cent, answered "yes."

Regarding the amount of credit granted for sub-college-level English, the schools were asked this question:
"If a remedial course is given for those students who fail the entrance examination, is credit given? How much?"

After an analysis of the data received, the writer found that the facts could be most clearly presented by classifying the systems of granting credit into four groups: (1) full credit, (2) partial credit, (3) conditional credit, and (4) no credit. The answers of the 29 schools giving remedial work are tabulated in Table XIII.

Table XIII
Credit Granted for Remedial Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Credit Granted</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full credit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial credit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional credit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No credit</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The facts would indicate that slightly more than half the college English faculties are of the opinion that no credit should be allowed toward a degree for work which is preparatory to that of college level. Only six schools of the 29 are willing to give full credit, and, of these, two section the entire freshman class according to ability.
Of those schools which sanction partial credit, two concede one credit for three hours' work, one grants credit on the grade point average for a grade of C or better, and one allows three credits for five hours' class attendance.

Among the schools granting conditional credit, one allows the remedial students a chance to take the regular freshman English examinations and to receive credit if they make a passing grade. Another gives credit if performance in the remedial work is high. Another gives credit to those students who receive a grade above the lowest passing grade. About 15 per cent succeed. In a fourth school, where clinics for low students parallel the regular course, whether or not the student receives credit depends upon his passing a comprehensive examination which all students must pass before graduating.

Programs for Exceptional Students

Procedures followed by the land-grant colleges in making provision for freshmen who have passed the placement test with distinction are so diversified and the aspects of the various programs are so overlapping that the writer has been unable to classify them into any kind of satisfactory tabular form. As a result of this multiplicity, the plans for high students will be presented by
means of an analytical discussion.

Five schools make no special arrangements for their exceptional students, but merely place them in the regular freshman composition course.

Four schools simply excuse their best students from the first quarter or semester of the standard course, and require them to enroll for the other quarters or semester. A variation of this plan, followed by three schools, is to excuse the best students from one term of the normal course but to place them in high sections of advance composition as a substitute. One school, using the exemption plan, excuses some students from one semester of the normal requirement and some from the full year, whereas another school excuses these students from both the first and second quarters of the normal composition course. Two schools exempt their most competent students from the whole year of freshman composition, leaving them free to elect other English courses to fulfill the basic requirement for graduation. A modification of this latter plan is to excuse them from the regulation year's work in freshman English and to substitute a course in advanced composition. Still another variation is to excuse them from the whole year of freshman English and to place them in a course combining advanced composition and literature.

In one institution students who pass the entrance
test with noticeably high marks are granted exemption, with three hours' credit, from the first semester and allowed to enter the second semester course or to take a proficiency examination in that course, in which case, if they pass, they are excused from the second semester's work as well and given full credit for both semesters.

Another plan, used by one school, is to place 10 to 15 per cent of the students in high sections and to allow two to three per cent to take three terms' work in two terms.

In two colleges, where all students must pass a comprehensive English examination before being granted a degree, entering freshmen are allowed, if they wish, to take this test. If they pass, they are excused from all freshman composition and given full credit. One of these schools adds an additional feature to this plan: all those in freshman composition who receive an A at the end of the first semester are excused from the second semester's work; those with a high B plus are also excused provided they receive the consent of the instructor.

In one institution students who pass the entrance test are divided into two groups. Students in the upper group are allowed, but not required, to take a five-hour course of combination composition and literature. Any student making an A in any quarter of the regulation
course is released from the rest of the requirement.

Seven colleges group their better students into high sections of regular freshman English. One school places its best students in a literature class. Another college makes passing the entrance test a degree requirement and excuses about 60 per cent of the freshmen from all composition. The remaining 40 per cent take a non-credit remedial course.

A plan followed by one school is to allow some students total exemption, to place some in a one-semester course, and to place some in advanced composition or literature.

In summation the facts disclose that of the 33 schools giving placement examinations only five make no provision for those who have passed with distinction. Among the schools giving special consideration to these students, there is great diversity among the programs, ranging from exemption from all required composition, through various schemes of partial exemption, sometimes with placement in advanced composition, literature, or a combination of the two, to no exemption but, rather, provision for the student to work to the limit of his capacity.
Extent of Homogeneous Grouping of Students in the Standard Composition Course

An inquiry having been made into the programs followed by the colleges in regard to the disposal of their high students and their low students, it followed that some investigation as to the sectioning of the normal group would be imperative to a thorough study of placement procedures. In consequence the questionnaire made inquiry as to whether the students placed in regular freshman English were classified into one group, two groups, three groups, or more. All 33 schools giving placement tests responded. Table XIV records the findings.

Table XIV

Grouping of Students in the Regular Freshman English Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Groups</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One group</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two groups (fast and slow)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three groups (fast, average,</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and slow)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XIV reveals that the most common practice is to give the same work by the same methods to all freshmen in the normal group. Forty-two per cent of the schools do
section the normal group according to ability. Of the two schools sectioning into more than three groups, one divides all the freshmen into groups of 25 from high to low, and the other merely states that they are classified into groups of "three or more."

Follow-up Testing

The last question on the questionnaire was included in order to discover how many institutions evaluate the amount of progress made in English during the freshman year. The question was stated, "If a standardized test is used, is it followed by the administration of an alternate form at the end of the freshman year?" Since 22 schools use a standardized test and four schools use a combination of standardized and locally prepared test for placement, the percentage computations were made on the basis of 26 schools. The information received is tabulated in Table XV.
Table XV

Number of Schools Administering an Alternate Form of the Placement Test at the End of the Freshman Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Follow-up Testing</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternate form always given</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate form occasionally given</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate form not given</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that most of the schools do not check upon the progress made by their students during the first year since only seven replied that they always followed up the placement examination by giving another form of the test.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

To discover what procedures are currently in use among the land-grant colleges in sectioning their entering students in freshman English, to review studies in English placement procedures made by previous investigators, and, in the light of the findings, to propose a program of placement which will be selective of those placement practices which have proved most effective and practicable has been the intention of this investigation.

The background studies have been reviewed and have revealed a widespread concern over the inability of not only entering freshmen but of college students in general to express themselves clearly and correctly. Some authorities have accused the colleges of lowering their standards of admission; others have blamed the high schools for inadequate teaching of English essentials; some have believed college procedures and programs to be at fault; and still others have recognized profound changes in the language and in the times.

Those who had previously inquired into English placement procedures also found a growing tendency both to give a placement test to entering students and to section them
according to ability. The schools have been about equally divided in their preference for standardized tests and those prepared by the local English staffs. The placement examinations were found to be most generally given during "Freshman Week" and required ordinarily one hour to administer, but the time varied throughout from one hour to four.

In regard to remedial procedures, the background studies disclose that four types of programs have been in common use: straight sub-college-level remedial classes; homogeneous grouping of all freshmen; placing of low students in sections with a greater number of hours than the ordinary sections; and establishment of clinics and writing laboratories. The percentage of students assigned to remedial work has ranged from five per cent to 39 per cent with 20 or 21 per cent being the most usual. It has been more customary to grant no credit or reduced credit for this preliminary work than to grant full credit.

Previous investigators found considerable difference of opinion on the part of the schools surveyed as to the number of students who might be excused from freshman English. Some schools excused as many as half their freshmen. Others were unwilling to excuse more than a very few. The majority of institutions, however, required freshman English of all but about 13 per cent.
Exceptionally competent students have commonly been provided for by exemption, by placing them in "high sections," by giving them advanced composition or literature, or by giving them individual instruction.

And, finally, the background studies gave evidence that a number of institutions administer an upperclass proficiency examination, the function of which is to maintain the quality of written expression beyond the freshman year.

This study utilizes the data recorded in the 41 replies to a questionnaire sent to the 51 land-grant colleges—a return of 80 per cent. The questionnaire was formulated to obtain information concerning the following aspects of placement: To what extent are the land-grant schools classifying their students into ability groups and how is this classification accomplished? To what extent are placement tests used? What is their nature? When are they given? How much time is required for their administration? And to what uses are they put? Furthermore, the questionnaire made inquiry as to programs for low, average, and high students, including credit granted and percentage of students so sectioned. Finally, information was requested as to plans for evaluating student progress during the freshman year.

In essence the following facts were found to be true.
Eighty-one per cent of land-grant colleges give a placement examination to their entering students. About half of them use the examination for placement purposes only. The other half utilize the examination results in other ways as well, including guidance and counseling and the analysis of English difficulties. About half the schools section students solely on the basis of the proficiency examination. Forty-five per cent take other factors into consideration, such as early class writing and performance, the college aptitude test score, or the high school record. In several schools general schedule limitations also influence sectioning.

Most colleges (73 per cent) use an objective test, and 67 per cent of these use one which is standardized, the American Council on Education Cooperative English Test being the choice of the majority. Most schools give the entrance test during the week preceding registration, the time required for administration being most generally from one-half to one hour, although quite a number of schools examine their students for as long as three or four hours.

Fifty per cent of the schools consider from 20 to 29 per cent of their entering students as deficient in English, although the range throughout all the schools, giving an entrance examination, is from 0 to 40 per cent.
The range in percentage of students considered highly proficient is from zero to 25 per cent of the class with from one to five per cent being the most prevailing percentage.

The most common type of remedial program, one used by 79 per cent of the colleges, is to require sub-standard students to enroll in a one-quarter or one-semester course in remedial English. Other procedures include the following: placing low students in regular freshman English classes which require more hours than are prescribed for the normal group; dividing the entire freshman class into homogeneous groups; placing the lowest students in slow sections; and establishing clinics to which the low students are referred for help in their particular problems.

Forty-one per cent of the colleges require their students to pass the entrance examination before being allowed to enter the standard freshman composition course.

Fifty-one per cent of the schools grant no credit for the remedial English course; 21 per cent grant full credit; 14 per cent allow partial credit; and 14 per cent conditional credit.

In providing for those students who are greatly above the average in their English attainments, the colleges have pursued a wide variety of procedures. Only five make no special provision for their high students. Seven schools group their better students into high
sections of freshman English. A majority of schools use some form of exemption, but there are many variations of this arrangement. Some merely exempt from one or more terms of freshman English, basing their decisions to exempt the student on the results of either the entrance examination or a comprehensive examination required of all upperclass students. Other forms of exemption are to substitute courses in advanced composition or literature for the regulation course, to give two terms' work in one term, or to excuse the student from the rest of the requirement if he is able to make an A in any one term.

In regard to the homogeneous grouping of students in the standard composition course, the study reveals that 58 per cent of the schools make no distinction among students in this normal group but simply give the same work to all. Eighteen per cent divide the normal group into fast and slow sections, and 18 per cent into fast, average, and slow sections. Only two schools divide into more than three groups.

Recommendations

The findings of this study seem to justify the following recommendations:
1. The land-grant colleges should accept the fact of wide variation in the language attainments of those who seek admission to these institutions, should realize that changes for the better will come about slowly, and should endeavor to provide the program which will best help these students to express themselves with clarity and effectiveness.

2. A proficiency test of an objective and standardized type should be given to all entering freshmen.

3. The placement test should be used not only for sectioning but also for guidance and counseling and for aiding the instructors in analyzing both individual and group difficulties in English.

4. Passing the placement examination should be prerequisite to entering the first term of freshman English.

5. Preliminary placement should be done on the results of the standardized test, and, after a week or so of classes, those students who demonstrate that they are out of place should be shifted into sections more suitable to their level.

6. The examination for entering freshmen should be given during "Freshman Week," but it should also be given at the beginning of each quarter or semester.

7. Land-grant colleges should not deny entrance on the basis of failure to pass the English proficiency examination.

8. A one-quarter or one-semester remedial course should be offered for low students.

9. The remedial course should carry little or no academic credit.

10. Exceptional students should be exempted from the first semester or the first and second quarters of freshman English and allowed to enter the second semester or the third quarter of the course, or, if they wish, be allowed to take the college comprehensive English examination. If
they can pass, they should be exempted from the whole course and given full credit.

11. It is preferable that students in the standard freshman English course not be divided into ability groups.

12. All students should be required to pass a comprehensive English examination before graduation, preferably at the end of the junior year. This demonstration of English proficiency should be prerequisite to the granting of a degree. An upperclass remedial course should be available for those who fail.

13. An English clinic, open on a purely voluntary basis to any student in the institution, should be maintained.
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APPENDICES
My dear Dr.________:

Under the direction and authority of Dr. R. J. Clinton of the School of Education at Oregon State College, I am preparing a survey of the English placement examinations and procedures in the land-grant colleges. You would oblige me very much by filling out the enclosed questionnaire. If you use a placement examination prepared by your own English department, will you be so kind as to send me a copy?

I shall genuinely appreciate your cooperation in this inquiry. I hope to make the results of the investigation available through publication in one of the educational periodicals.

Very truly yours,

Margaret J. Ireland
ENGLISH PLACEMENT PROCEDURES IN THE LAND GRANT COLLEGES

Institution reporting________________________________________

1. Are all freshmen required to take an English placement examination?____ (If the answer is negative, do not trouble to read further as the following questions are based upon a positive reply.)

2. Is the examination used for sectioning only?____ If not, for what other purpose?__________________________ Is sectioning done on the basis of the placement test alone?____ If not, what other factors enter?__________________________

3. What kind of examination is used? One which is wholly objective?_____ Wholly essay?_____ A combination of objective and essay?_____ Is it one prepared by the English department?_____ Or is it a standardized English test?_____ If so, its name?__________________________ Or is it a psychological test?__________________________ If so, its name?__________________________

4. How much time is required to administer the examination?__________________________

5. When is the examination given? In high schools during the spring preceding matriculation?____ During the first week of fall term?____ At some other time?____

6. What percentage of students fail the examination?____

7. Is the school year divided into terms?__________________________ Or semesters?__________________________

8. Are failing students denied entrance to the institution until they can pass the examination?____ Are failing students required to take a remedial English course for one term?____ For one semester?____ For two terms?____ For the entire year?_____ Until they can pass the examination satisfactorily?_____ Placed in a section with a greater number of hours?_____ Tutored by graduate assistants?_____ Is some other arrangement made for failing students?_____ If a remedial course is given for failing students is credit granted?____ How much?__________________________
9. Are exceptional students excused from the freshman English course for the first term? For the first semester? For the first and second terms? For the full year? Or are they placed in "high sections"? In an advanced composition course? In a literature class? Given special individual work?

10. What percentage of students fall into the class designated above as "exceptional"?

11. Are students who are placed in the regular freshman English classes classified into one group? Two groups (fast and slow)? Three groups (fast, average, and slow)?

12. If a standardized test is used, is it followed by the administration of an alternate form at the end of the freshman year?

Any comment or further explanation would be greatly appreciated. (Use back of this sheet, if necessary)