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Writing Placement and Proficiency Assessment Practices in Two Rural Two-Year Colleges

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WRITING PLACEMENT AND PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES
IN TWO RURAL TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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This research is a dual-case study which specifically focuses on two rural two-year colleges in separate parts of the United States: one in the central Southern region, and the other in the Northeastern region. I wanted to focus on these colleges' writing placement and proficiency practices in relation to their respective missions and how they prepare students for work in a multiliterate, globalized new-capitalist workplace. This study examined the role writing placement and proficiency assessment practices play in two rural American two-year colleges within the frameworks of *new capitalistic/new work order* constructs (Gee & Lankshear, 1995; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Johnson & Kress, 2003; Street, 2004) and multiliteracies pedagogy theory (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) in order to determine how or even if they are reinventing themselves and their missions based on placement and proficiency assessments to meet the needs of a student population that must have purchase in a global, multiliterate society which adheres to new capitalism. More specifically, I wanted to learn about how administrators and faculty at these institutions *perceive* their successes (or failures) in using placement and proficiency assessment practices to reinvent their missions to serve students and community.

The data of this study proved that administrators and faculty at both study sites are concerned with increasing students' success rates; administrators, quite predictably,

looked at assessment from the overarching, institutional perspective while faculty, also predictably, were concerned with assessment from the individual course perspective.

Our current world is fast-paced and globalized. Since the middle of the twentieth century, increasingly newer technologies have created communication systems that have changed how we work and live. Our ability to retrieve lightning-fast information through the internet is even changing the way our brains develop and how we think and remember. As a result, the incentive is high for two-year college educators to continually challenge themselves to study ways that they can meet the needs of their twenty-first century students.