

EVALUATING A TESTING PROGRAM

Facilitator: James Davis, *Monroe Community College*

In his opening comments, James Davis focused on the purposes of testing programs. He reminded the group that any evaluation must be based on the original objectives of the program. He then discussed the testing program evaluation studies being conducted at Monroe Community College.

On the basis of data collected from Monroe's writing competency tests and placement decisions, Davis raised the question of whether elaborate placement/testing procedures are actually necessary. What, he asked, is the justification for designing placement tests and an elaborate structure for remedial instruction if students who are placed in remedial courses do not seem to benefit from these courses? Davis described the Monroe study testing the hypothesis that students who are designated as "remedial" students by the placement test would do just as well in regular freshman composition courses as in remedial courses.

The results of the experiment suggested that taking remedial English rather than Freshman Composition was actually counterproductive to students—students in the regular course did as well or better (in terms of grades and attrition rates) than did students in the remedial course. Davis believes that these findings indicate a failure of remedial instruction even though the reasons for such failure are not easily identified.

The participants questioned the validity of Davis' conclusion. Some asked about the experimental design. Others were unsure that the data justified the conclusion regarding remedial English. Davis recognized problems inherent in any statistical analysis with so many variables, and he cautioned the participants to sharpen their critical stance in regard to evaluating testing programs.

Estelle Thaler, *Recorder*
Queens College