

THE POLITICS OF TESTING

Facilitator: William Lutz, *Camden College of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University*

William Lutz asserted in his opening comments that "testing drips with politics—there are no non-political aspects of a testing program." He made it clear that if we perceive ourselves as a group committed to the implementation of adequate assessment programs in response to the needs of our students, then we may as well don armor because, in his view, we are in for a war.

Good testing programs require a sizeable financial investment for test design, piloting, implementation, and administration. In addition, if the tests are used to identify students in need of remediation, then it is the responsibility of the institution to fund courses for these students. Unfortunately, many institutions are not willing to sponsor the needed curricula, and students are either placed in courses that do not meet their needs or denied a college education. Thus, it seems that in many instances, the controversy surrounding competency testing is an extension of the argument over open admissions policy.

Lutz also pointed out that since testing is here to stay, we must learn all that we can about it and must have input into the testing programs at our institutions. He recommended that we talk about competency testing with the business community, that we seek the support of local politicians, and that we forge a strong articulation with teachers in secondary schools. And, above all, we must remain responsive to the needs of our students. We must understand how tests can be used either to help our students or to hold them back.

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