

B. Executive Summary

Department: Learning Center-General Tutoring and Services

Date: May 27, 2008

Description of Current Program:

Despite budget challenges, the Learning Center continues to be a comprehensive resource for students, providing peer tutoring, learning assistance, and self-instructional materials. The Learning Center is a multi-disciplinary operation, interfacing with a variety of programs on campus, such as Developmental Communications, Disabled Students Programs and Services, nursing, CalWORKS and the newly formed Non-credit Program. In addition to providing services to the general student population, the Learning Center also strives to meet special needs of specific students. For example, the Learning Center faculty creates and delivers specialized workshops in collaboration with other disciplines and departments to address specific study skills that include time management, note taking, test preparation and test taking techniques. Furthermore, students enrolled in Developmental Communications use Learning Center self-instructional materials for credit work in Developmental Communication 22 classes. Also, using GAIN and CalWORKS funds, the Learning Center established the Lab for Academic and Instructional Resources (LAIR). The LAIR houses 50 desktop computers which provide educational and word processing software, course-specific software, printing, and access to the Internet. The Learning Center also houses DVDs and videotapes for the ITV and cinema programs and provides a quiet environment for students to view audio-visual materials.

However, many changes have taken place since the last program review. For example, the Learning Center formerly had three full-time faculty members. Today the Learning Center has only one full-time certificated position, the director of the program. Neither the General Tutor Coordinator position nor the SI Coordinator have been replaced. At the same time, there has been a drastic decrease in positive attendance within the SI program, as well as an increase in student behavior problems in the Learning Center.

Without supervision, the Learning Center's ability to support the SI program has been minimal. To meet the demands of students and faculty who wished to participate in the SI program, the Learning Center director redirected partial funding designated for SI to the General Tutoring program. The Learning Center faculty then designed the Course-Specific Learning and Study Skills Tutoring (CLASS) program, which uses tenets of both traditional tutoring and the SI model. Because of the reorganization of programs, General Tutoring numbers increased while Supplemental Instruction numbers decreased drastically. Nevertheless, SI-like services continue to be offered through the Learning Center.

Next, since the Learning Center Tutor Coordinator position no longer exists, the campus-wide tutor budget is no longer coordinated or managed by a single individual; rather, the Learning Center, the Writing Center, Math Lab, Earth Science Lab, and Life Science Lab manage their own budgets and maintain separate records. However, the various tutoring lab coordinators/directors collaborate and standardize best practices by meeting once a month for Tutoring Program Committee meetings. The Tutoring Committee was formalized in 2001 from the Tutor Program Task Force, which was formed during the period when LAVC was receiving Partnership for Excellence (PFE) funding.

Also, tutor training has changed somewhat. New tutors must take tutor training classes to fulfill requirements of employment in the District and requirements mandated by Title V and the Education Code. The Learning Center faculty offers Learning Skills 28 to all lab tutors who are not trained in the Writing Center or Math Lab, both of which provide their own tutor training classes. Tutor training promotes core knowledge of various tutoring techniques as well as record keeping and compliance issues.

Five-Year Trends:

1. Orientation and assessment of incoming students suggests that the need for basic skills continues to rise. As a result, the Learning Center faculty is reassessing offerings in basic skills courses to meet student needs.
2. Since the California State University system has discontinued their support and acceptance of un/underprepared students, an increase of students will come to LAVC in need of academic support.
3. In addition, the continuing flow of immigrants needing to improve their language skills reaffirms the need for the Learning Center to expand its materials, basic skills courses, and workshops to support these students.
4. Because LAVC has a diverse population, the Learning Center needs to continue supporting students from a wide range of learning styles, socio-economic strata, and ethnic backgrounds; therefore, the use of ever-changing computer-assisted instructional materials, Supplemental Instruction, basic skills workshops, and general tutoring will offer students traditional and nontraditional approaches to learning.

Needs Analysis

1. Utilizing the new early alert system, what can be done with the information to decrease attrition rates and improve success and retention rates?
2. How can we assist/support the college curriculum to increase transfer rates?
3. What can be done to initiate an “open” computer lab for all students?

4. What can we do to improve services/assistance in the LAIR?
5. How can we improve the printing system in the LAIR?
6. How can we increase and improve audio-visual materials and equipment?
7. How can we increase Learning Skills offerings?

Recommendations

1. Hire a full time ISA Learning Skills/Supplemental Instruction Specialist who will design and implement new curriculum for Learning Skills classes and train, supervise, and support SI leaders and corresponding faculty.
2. Hire a full time and part time Instructional Assistant, Information Technology to manage and maintain the printing service, computer hardware and software, and supervise student workers and students in the LAIR.
3. Hire an office clerk to support General Tutoring, CLASS and Supplemental Instruction records, payroll, and day-to-day operations.
4. Implement SLOs assessment measures.
5. Increase partnership with Developmental Communications to address needs of reading and critical thinking skills students.
6. Find a more reliable printing system for the LAIR.
7. Use information from the early alert system to contact at-risk students and recommend tutoring.
8. Request additional funding for student workers/tutors, audio-visual materials and equipment, and additional learning/teaching materials.