



april 2010

- 2 | THE NEED FOR FULL TIME FACULTY (AGAIN)
- 5 | READING MAY BE THE KEY TO UNLOCKING BASIC SKILLS SUCCESS
- 8 | DIVERSITY INSTITUTE ON THE RIGHT TRACK
- 10 | SETTING UP AN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT YOUR COLLEGE
- 12 | MAINTAINING THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF SHORT TERM COURSES
- 14 | WHEN ARE COUNSELING PARAPROFESSIONALS APPROPRIATE?
- 17 | THE APPOINTMENT OR SELECTION OF FACULTY TO SHORT-TERM, NON-TEACHING TASKS
- 20 | A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE BRIC PROJECT
- 23 | STRATEGIC PLAN ASSESSMENT ACTION PLANNING GROUP
- 25 | COURSEWORK RECENCY
- 26 | THE TRANSFER DEGREE: AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE
- 28 | A TALE OF INTERPRETATIONS: TRANSFER VELOCITY
- 30 | CURRICULUM AND DOMINOES: WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT STATEWIDE CURRICULUM WORK THROUGH CB 21
- 33 | MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS EQUIVALENCY STANDARDS AND CRITERIA
- 35 | PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST: THE SOLUTION TO THE CHALLENGE OF PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE
- 37 | EXEMPLARY AWARDS
- 38 | THE PARTNERSHIP FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE (SBCC)
- 40 | JULIE'S IN BOX

ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEWSLETTER

SENATEROSTRUM

THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

President: Jane Patton | Executive Director: Julie Adams | Design and Layout: Rita Sabler, Creative Director

The Rostrum is a quarterly publication of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 525, Sacramento, CA 95814.

The Rostrum is distributed to all faculty through college academic senate presidents and by individual mailing. For deadline information call (916) 445-4753 or email us at julie@asccc.org

Note: The articles published in the Rostrum do not necessarily represent the adopted positions of the Academic Senate. For adopted positions and recommendations, please visit our website at <http://www.asccc.org>

You can find this and the previous issues of this publication online at: <http://www.asccc.org>

The Need for Full Time Faculty (again)

BY JANE PATTON, PRESIDENT

These days at board and district governance/budget committee meetings, faculty all over the state are making the case for why we need full-time faculty. While in some cases, a district's 75:25 ratio may be better than a year ago (because the sections that were cut from the class schedule were those taught by adjuncts), we continue to have serious concerns over: 1) the erosion of the 50% law (Education Code §84362, requires each community college district to spend at least half of its "current expense of education" each fiscal year for salaries and benefits of classroom instructors); 2) the 75:25 ratio (75% of the classes should be taught by full-time faculty); and 3) the full-time faculty obligation number (FON).

In September 2008, past president Ian Walton's Rostrom article, Academic Excellence: Why California's Community Colleges Need the 75/25 Full Time Faculty Standard, laid out the fundamental principles behind the legislative intent to ensure that at least 75% of the courses offered be taught by full time faculty. Citing AB 1725 he said,

In 1988, the California Legislature in section 70 of AB 1725 (the fundamental California Community College reform bill) found and declared: "Because the quality, quantity and composition of full-time faculty have the most immediate and direct impact on the quality of instruction, overall reform cannot succeed without sufficient numbers of full-time faculty."

The AAUP Policy Statement on Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession said this:

The proportion of faculty who are appointed each year to tenure-line positions is declining at an alarming rate. Because faculty tenure is the only secure protection for academic freedom in teaching, research, and service, the declining percentage of tenured faculty means that academic freedom is increasingly at risk. Academic freedom is a fundamental characteristic of higher education, necessary to preserve an independent forum for free inquiry and expression, and essential to the mission of higher education to serve the common good. This report examines the costs to academic freedom incurred by the current trend toward overreliance on part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty. (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/conting-stmt.htm>)

At the November 2009 Board of Governors' (BoG) meeting, the BoG determined that because of the current fiscal circumstances and especially the unprecedented reductions in categorical funding, districts that are found to be out of compliance with the 50% law will be ". . . allowed to submit to the Board of Governors, as part of its application for exemption, evidence that all or part of the district's noncompliance was attributable to the use of general purpose funds to backfill cuts to categorical programs." The BoG agreed to allow exemptions through 2013. I took the opportunity to remind the

BoG that despite the state of the economy, their current action represents a move away from the principles established in AB 1725, Education Code, Title 5, BoG positions and recommendations of the Academic Senate.

So at the March 2010 BoG meeting, I distributed a packet of materials which provide reasons why colleges and students do better with a predominance of full-time faculty. Below is the cover letter to the BoG and a list of the resources I provided them (with contributions from Richard Mahon and Janet Fulks). Now is the time to educate trustees, administrators and your colleagues about why full-time faculty matter, so when more colleges are able to hire, they are committed to the same values. I hope these will be useful to you as you make the case locally. Know that those of us working in Sacramento will continue to argue for these well-established positions and principles, as challenging as that may be.

Dear Members of the Board of Governors:

Previously I spoke to you about the disturbing trend in California and in all of higher education in the country of relying more and more on part-time or contingent faculty. Enclosed are several articles about the need for and benefit of full-time faculty. As you will see in these resources, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and others have long recognized the long-term institutional benefits of full-time and tenured faculty.

The Academic Senate has long been committed to the goal established over 20 years ago in AB1725 to the crucial role of full-time faculty to California community colleges. We maintain this commitment not out of narrow self-interest, but because we believe this commitment is crucial to the well-being of our students. We are not alone in recognizing this crucial linkage. Many studies over the past decade have provided evidence of a strong correlation between institutional commitment to full-time faculty and student success. Simply put, colleges which fail to commit adequately to full-time faculty fail to commit to their students.

There is another reason not addressed in these articles that is crucial to the viability of California's community colleges. As you are aware, California's community colleges have been subject to an exceptional level of sanction by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (Commission). In regard to student learning outcomes (SLO), the Commission's timetable requires all California community colleges to be "proficient" with regard to SLOs by 2012. Among the characteristics for "proficiency" are the following, from the Commission's website.

- ♦ *Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees.*
- ♦ *There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results.*
- ♦ *Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning.*

These are all activities in which the role of full-time faculty is crucial. Our part-time faculty are often excellent instructors; however both student and institutional well-being are dependent on what faculty do outside of the classroom. It is informal faculty dialog with students that fuels their understanding of and passion for continuing education, and it is formal dialog among full-time faculty that leads to development, assessment, and dialog about student learning outcomes. The Commission recognizes the clear link between full-time faculty committed to both student success and institutional health and well-being. It is not clear that the leaders of many of our colleges are able to transcend the current economic crisis to recognize this obvious relationship.

It is virtually certain that the percentage of full-time faculty will increase in the very short run, because the cancelling of thousands of sections across the state has ended the contributions of many part-time faculty. It is also the case, however, that some districts, perhaps many, will use "golden handshakes" and other mechanisms to encourage the retirement of our most experienced faculty, and the Board of Governors needs to do all in its power to insist that full-time faculty are hired as resources begin to return to our colleges.

In addition to the reasoning in these articles, another concern that colleges face is the turnover in the administrative ranks and a need to “grow our own” administrators from faculty ranks, and it is possible there is a connection with the decreasing number of tenured faculty and insufficient faculty willing/able to move into administrative positions. Fewer full-time faculty means fewer opportunities to promote from within and an increased need to recruit administrators from outside California. The institutional commitment and experience gained through years of teaching within the system is a rich resource for developing the next generation of college leaders.

I hope you will find the following articles to be a resource for you now and in the future.

Jane Patton, President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

Resources

American Association of University Professors (AAUP). *AAUP Policy Statement: Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession*. Retrieved from <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/conting-stmt.htm>

Benjamin, E. (2002). How over-reliance on contingent appointments diminishes faculty involvement in student learning. *Peer Review*. American Association of University Professors. (pp. 4, 10).

Jacoby, D. (2006, February). Effects of part-time faculty employment on community college graduation rates”. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(6). (pp. 1081-1082 and 1100-1101).

Jaschik, S. (2006). Adjuncts and graduation rates. *Inside Higher Education*.

Walton, I. (2008, September). Academic excellence: Why California’s community colleges need the 75/25 full time faculty standard. *Rostrum*. Academic Senate for California Community Colleges: Author. ■

In Memoriam: Richard Rose



Richard Rose, a former Executive Committee member, passed away on March 10, 2010. He served as Representative at Large from 1996–1998. As a counseling faculty member he also chaired the State Chancellor’s Office Counseling Advisory Committee and the Senate’s Counseling and Library Faculty Issues Committee, and was a member of the Chancellor’s Office Matriculation Advisory Committee.

In his recent role as president of Modesto Junior College, Jim Sahlmann, past president of Modesto Junior College said about Rich, “He was a true advocate of community colleges and had a particular sensitivity to those who struggled to be successful in school due to some barrier (e.g., disability, financial hardship, family challenges.). Although there were some rough spots with Rich in the beginning of his presidency, I think he eventually grew into his position; it is a shame that the CCCs have lost someone who could help move our institutions forward, particularly in these challenging times within California.” ■

Reading May Be the Key to Unlocking Basic Skills Success

BY JANET FULKS, BASIC SKILLS COMMITTEE CHAIR AND AD HOC NONCREDIT COMMITTEE CHAIR

“All the elements of academic literacy—reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, use of technology, and habits of mind that foster academic success—are expected of entering freshmen across all college disciplines (ICAS).”

The current focus on basic skills has sharpened our knowledge and tools to help students succeed both academically and in the workplace. When needs in basic academic skills are tied to the ICAS¹ *Literacy Competencies for Entering Freshman*, there is a very clear picture of expectations for students. Now consider the national research and policy papers declaring a critical need to focus on reading, particularly in higher education. While numerous research projects examine transfer patterns, graduation rates or mathematics and English course success rates, it appears we are overlooking a key ingredient necessary for fundamental academic and workforce success—reading.

Research data from the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) reveal a declining expertise in reading and the National Endowment for the Arts

describes an essential link between reading, socioeconomic opportunity, and civic involvement. Data suggest that the key to unlocking the door to higher education regardless of the student goal, whether work, transfer, graduate degree, personal development or engaged citizenship, is reading. Alarming, recent NCES research presents a clear picture that the national literacy level is declining. Do we assume reading is a skill acquired early in childhood and not a skill that requires continual sophistication? Just try reading that cell phone contract! Reading is far more complex and essential as a key to unlocking success.

How can we rectify the deteriorating reading conditions among students?

1. Fully address the graduation requirement for reading at the local colleges.

The California community colleges are required to determine a reading graduation competency. Title 5 § 55063 requires local colleges to determine a reading competency for the Associates Degree.² We need

¹ The Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) was established by faculty in 1980 as a voluntary organization consisting of representatives of the Academic Senates of the three segments of public higher education in California - the community colleges, the California State University, and the University of California. The ICAS Literacy Competencies were jointly published in 2002.

² Title 5 § 55063. Minimum Requirements for the Associate Degree states that “The competency requirements for written expression and mathematics may also be met by obtaining a satisfactory grade in courses in English and mathematics taught in or on behalf of other departments and which, as determined by the local governing board, require entrance skills at a level equivalent to those necessary for Freshman Composition and Intermediate Algebra respectively. Requirements for demonstrating competency in reading shall be locally determined.”

The Condition and Effects of Reading Declines in the United States

The Current State of Affairs for Reading

"Americans reading less" and "college attendance no longer guarantees active reading habits" (National Endowment of the Arts, pp. 7-8)

Nationally, from 1992 to 2005, the average 12th grader reading scores have steadily declined. (NCES)

Reading for pleasure correlates with academic achievement and opportunity for career growth. (National Endowment of the Arts, pp. 7-8, 14, 17)

Not only is reading declining, Americans are reading less well, reading comprehension skills are eroding. (National Endowment of the Arts, pp. 12-14)

Employers rank reading, English language and writing skills as very important skills to success in any workplace endeavor. (The Conference Board)

There is a strong relationship between reading and mathematics achievement. (NCES)

The Findings and Correlation between Reading and Successful Workplace and Academic Skills

Employers rank reading and writing as major deficiencies in their new hires and concurrently rank reading comprehension as an important skill for workplace success (The Conference Board)

Reading for pleasure is strongly correlated to academic achievement, increased employment opportunities and civic engagement. (The National Endowment of the Arts, pp. 14-16)

"Twenty percent of U.S. college students completing 4-year degrees—and 30 percent of students earning 2-year degrees—have only basic quantitative literacy skills, meaning they are unable to estimate if their car has enough gasoline to get to the next gas station or calculate the total cost of ordering office supplies." (AIR)

"More than 75 percent of students at 2-year colleges and more than 50 percent of students at 4-year colleges do not score at the proficient level of literacy. This means that they lack the skills to perform complex literacy tasks, such as comparing credit card offers with different interest rates or summarizing the arguments of newspaper editorials." (AIR)

to take this mandate seriously. A recent Academic Senate survey of 86 California community colleges revealed that while some colleges have specific and explicit graduation competencies defined as reading assessment scores, a specific reading course requirement or the equivalent, a large number of colleges simply assume that a passing grade in a general education course implicitly equates to a reading competency. The national data would suggest that this is untrue and not a measure of actual reading skill level. Unless the general education course grade is built upon a reading outcome and passing the course is impossible without a college-level reading skill—this is not an adequate competency for graduation. As the data in the national research describe, many students graduate with only basic reading skills after an entire general education program.

Colleges should clearly create a process for assessing reading proficiency of students and especially in relation to graduation requirements. Reading prereq-

uisites or equivalent level reading assessments may be important considerations not just for student success but to correct this downward reading trend.

2. Individual faculty should evaluate the level of reading required in their courses.

Individual faculty need to consider how they incorporate reading in their courses and assignments. According to Title 5 § 55002, Standards and Criteria for Courses, intensity of all courses should guarantee that "the course provides instruction in critical thinking and generally treats subject matter with a scope and intensity that prepares students to study independently outside of class time and includes reading and writing assignments and homework. In particular, the assignments will be sufficiently rigorous that students successfully completing each such course, or sequence of required courses, will have acquired the skills necessary to successfully complete degree-applicable work."

3. Curriculum Committees should thoroughly review all curriculum for reading requirements.

Curriculum review should involve scrutiny of reading assignments and emphasis on college level reading. A rough measure of reading difficulty is to simply type a few sections of the text book into a Word document and, using the review function in WORD, determine the grade level of the text.

4. Examine innovative methods for reading strategies and integration into discipline courses.

Colleges should consider innovative reading integration into courses. In Chapter 10 of *Constructing a Framework for Success: A Holistic Approach to Basic Skills* (www.cccbsi.org/basic-skills-handbook), effective practices to incorporate reading into assignments for all disciplines (including a section on reading in mathematics) are available for anyone to use. Study skills courses and student services interactions should consider how to emphasize reading strategies.

In addition, programs such as Reading Apprenticeship provide training for embedding assessment practices in discipline courses (http://www.wested.org/cs/sli/print/docs/sli/ra_framework.htm). The Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC), created by the CSU as a companion to the Early Assessment Program (EAP), is designed for basic skills reading and writing courses to strengthen emphasis on college level skills (<http://www.calstate.edu/eap/englishcourse/>).

5. Provide adequate reading assessment and reading sections to address developmental reading.

Recent examination of assessment practices in the California community colleges (CCC) indicate that reading assessment tests are the least common and that developmental reading sections comprise the smallest percentage of all basic skills sections. While some strategies integrate reading and writing strategies and are highly effective, where this integration is assumed and not intentional, the emphasis on reading and reading comprehension are critical.

America's declining reading ability is a serious problem. Reading is foundational to all basic academic and workplace skills. Imagine a key that could fundamen-

tally improve student success in all other courses. That key is reading!

American Research Institute [AIR]. (2006). *New study of the literacy of college students finds some are graduating with only basic skills*. Retrieved March 17, 2010 from <http://www.air.org/news/documents/Release200601pew.htm>

Baer, J.D., Cook, A.L., & Baldi, S. (2006). *The literacy of America's college students*. American Institutes for Research. Retrieved March 17, 2010 from http://www.air.org/news/documents/The%20Literacy%20of%20Americas%20College%20Students_final%20report.pdf

Baer, J.D., Kutner, M., Sabatini, J., & White, S. (2009). *Basic reading skills and the literacy of America's least literate adults*. Retrieved March 10, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009481.pdf>

Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates [ICAS]. (2002). *Academic literacy: A statement of competencies expected of students entering California's public colleges and universities*. Retrieved March 16, 2010 from <http://icas-ca.org/academic-literacy>

National Center for Educational Statistics (2006). *Comparative indicators of education in the United States and other G-8 countries*. Retrieved March 12, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007006>

National Endowment for the Arts. (2007). *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence*. Reading Report number 47. Retrieved September 2, 2008, at <http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.PDF>. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2009). Retrieved March 2010 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_267.asp

The Conference Board, Inc (2006). *Are they really ready to work?: Employers' perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21st century U.S. workforce*. The Workforce Readiness Project. Retrieved November 20, 2008, from http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf ■

Diversity Institute on the Right Track

BY BETH SMITH, CHAIR, AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE EQUITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION COMMITTEE

The Academic Senate's Diversity Institute was a tremendous success. With more than 100 participants and breakouts on cultural competence, hiring, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) student issues, and many other topics, the message is clear that this Institute filled an important need. Attendees engaged in wonderful conversations and were determined to leave with practical ideas to implement at their colleges. One of the goals of the Institute was to specifically develop strategies for increasing the diversity of faculty leaders at our colleges and at the state level. Many thanks are due to the presenters and participants who came with questions and answers for addressing equity and diversity in our colleges.

In the final general session of the Institute, many people contributed ideas about how to accomplish the goals of the Senate to empower diverse leaders. Participants were invited to orally share constructive solutions as well as provide written suggestions. The suggestions are published here as promised during the Institute.

One of the most frequent responses to the question of how to improve the diversity of faculty leaders was a single, simple point: hire a more diverse faculty and then the pool will be greater from which to develop faculty leaders. Of course this is true, and once colleges begin hiring again, we can be cognizant of hiring the most qualified faculty to work with our diverse students. Other suggestions

to diversify the leadership of the faculty are creating mentorship programs that encourage faculty to experience leadership roles and creating board policies that encourage faculty to take leadership roles that incorporate a rotating system that may provide short term opportunities to gain leadership experience with professional support. Some people suggested that being involved at the state level is a good experience, and the Academic Senate should expand ways to involve diverse faculty. An academic senate may want to consider a resolution that addresses leadership issues and points to growing the college's own faculty leaders.

Overall, there were wonderful suggestions for improving the quality of life at the colleges through improving our understanding of ourselves and our students. Highlighted suggestions include

- ◆ Focus on the needs of students. Implement safe places for students that are beyond the classroom. Acknowledge that each of us can learn more about equity in order to do a better job for students. Choose a dynamic definition of diversity, one that continually looks at student demographics. Monitor success and any barriers to it.
- ◆ Use data to keep conversations real. Faculty want to see data about their students. There is so much more to learn about students that can be gleaned from data analysis and discussions about the data.



Choose a dynamic definition of diversity, one that continually looks at student demographics.

- ◆ Collaborate with other change agents on campus. Human resource personnel often have great ideas about professional development activities to increase cultural competence. Next time there is a diversity institute, bring your HR colleagues along.
- ◆ Empower faculty to be change agents. Often, faculty do not realize the powerful impact they can make. They can affect students in many ways, but they also affect colleagues. Diverse faculty voices in the senate can influence policy and practice simply by contributing to the conversations and debate at senate meetings.
- ◆ Skip the gimmicks. Diversity activities must go beyond “cultural foods day.” If diversity means hearing a Mariachi band or trying lumpia, then we have set our standards too low. When these cultural activities occur at your college, engage faculty in raising the bar — develop educational lessons from these experiences. Use the teachable moments in these events and connect them to understanding, recognizing bias, and building a better campus climate.
- ◆ Student club advisors can be mentored into leadership roles. Some clubs draw a wonderfully diverse group of students, and working with these students provides experiences that can be especially useful when working as a faculty leader.

- ◆ Work with the Student Senate for California Community Colleges to encourage student leaders to become community college faculty.

Many other ideas were generated at the Institute, and the evaluations of the event suggest that the Academic Senate is on the right track with its diversity institute. As an example, here are two responses from the evaluations: “cultural diversity training really is about people and not about taking an art appreciation class,” and “faculty are hungry for concrete strategies to create change at their institutions and are often isolated in their efforts.” Many respondents indicated a renewed interest in student equity plans after participating in the Institute. Equity planning eventually drives the budget, and several people commented on wanting more information about linking equity to budget. It was suggested that we should investigate the impact that the economic crisis in the state has on many student populations.

Participants at the Institute also had an opportunity to learn more about the Academic Senate caucuses under development. The delegates voted in Spring 2009 as well as the Fall 2009 to offer caucuses to faculty with common interests that align with the mission of the Senate. Faculty discussed ways to make the caucuses more successful, such as an official launch in the fall, creating a list of ways that the Senate will support the caucus, and a similar list of ways that the caucuses can help the Senate. There was strong sentiment to encourage unity among the caucuses as much as there will be separation. Five caucuses were identified: Latino, Asian, Black, Disabled Individuals, and LGBT.

Our students are diverse, and helping them achieve success requires that we reflect on our work to help them attain their goals. Am I the barrier to student success? Is my program supporting all students in as many ways as possible? Is there a colleague that I can mentor? The state and local senates have work to do to help faculty be successful so that students may be successful. The Diversity Institute was just the beginning. ■

Setting Up an Institutional Review Board at Your College

BY EDUARDO JESÚS ARISMENDI-PARDI, ED.D., SENATE PRESIDENT AND PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS, ORANGE COAST COLLEGE
MARK WADE LIEU, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMITTEE

At the Fall 2009 Plenary Session, the body adopted the following resolution concerning institutional review boards (IRB):

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges strongly encourage local senates to consider the development of local college and district Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committees as a preventive measure to litigation and for the protection of the students and community that they serve; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recommend that development of IRB Committees be a faculty driven collegial consultation process through each local senate in an effort to establish a culture of compliance regarding protection of human subjects when conducting research and writing grants.

Our article in the October 2009 Rostrum provided basic information about Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and their relation to academic and professional responsibilities. This companion article details the form and function of an IRB.

What is an IRB?

To repeat information from our previous article, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) is part of a review process to ensure ethical standards in conducting research that is derived from classroom experiences involving human subjects and when such projects and presentations become public (i.e., presentations at professional conferences, sabbatical reports distributed throughout the college).

The purpose of the IRB is to review a proposed research project to determine whether participants in the study will be placed at physical or mental risk and, if risk is involved, to certify that the following conditions have been met: (a) risks to participants are minimized; (b) participants in the study (and their guardians) are fully aware of the risks and that individuals may withdraw from the study at any time without any form of penalty; (c) risks to the participants are so outweighed by the sum of the benefits to the participants and the importance of the knowledge to be gained as to warrant a decision to allow the participants to voluntarily accept these risks; (d) rights and welfare of any such participants will be adequately protected; (e) legally effective, informed consent will be obtained by adequate and appropriate methods in accordance with the provisions delineated in Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations; and (f) conduct of the activity will be reviewed at intervals determined by the IRB, but not less than annually (Lincoln, 2005).

The Composition and Functioning of an IRB

The membership of an IRB is normally made up of at least five members, with varying backgrounds, who review research activities commonly conducted by the institution. The IRB shall be sufficiently qualified, through the experience, expertise, and diversity of the members, to promote respect for its advice and counsel in safeguarding the rights and welfare of human participants. The composition of the IRB should reflect the college's commitment to diversity. Local campuses may use a variety of procedures to identify members for an IRB. The composition of the IRB membership

should be determined in consultation with the local senate.

In general, IRBs are self-governing. No other group or individual should be able to interfere with its decision-making process or overrule its decisions. Each IRB designates a chairperson using a locally-determined process. With the approval of the full IRB, the chairperson typically (a) conducts the meetings of the IRB; (b) assigns certification authority to the members; (c) maintains a record of the proceedings of the IRB meetings, including agendas, actions of the IRB and the certification logs of the members; (d) maintains a record of all IRB members for that campus, including current curriculum vitae for each member; and (e) invites new board members.

The IRB reviews all research projects to determine compliance with Federal and State laws. Also, colleges need to work with their respective offices of Institutional Research to iron out the processes and procedures to be used in an IRB review. These processes and procedures may include approved consent forms and assurance that both faculty and students as well as the college are not at risk of federal sanction or litigation.

The Three Categories for IRB Review

There are three categories for IRB review: Exempt (Level 1), Expedited (Level 2), and Full (Level 3). These levels are based on a risk/benefit ratio to the participants. The investigator must assess the level of risk, or exposure to sensitive or harmful experiences, due to participation in the study and assign a category status to an IRB application (IRB applications can also be developed by faculty in consultation with the college/district researcher).

Exempt Review (Level 1) is performed for research projects using archived data and research projects for which there is no human participant interaction. Research projects on sensitive topics and vulnerable populations, such as children or minors, pregnant women and prisoners, do not qualify for exempt review. International studies also do not qualify for exempt review. The IRB makes the final determination about whether a proposal qualifies for exempt review.

Expedited Review (Level 2) is applicable to certain categories of research involving no more than moderate risk to human participants. Any research in which human participant interaction is anticipated falls in this category unless the risk to participants is considered more than moderate. Most projects and studies fall into this category. In addition to meeting the general eligibility criteria for Level 2, the research must also meet the certification criteria that assure (a) risks to participants for participating in the research are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits, if any, and the importance of the knowledge that may be gained; (b) participant selection must be fair; (c) informed consent is sought and documented unless a waiver of consent and/or documentation of consent have met the waiver criteria; (d) the plan to collect and monitor data assures participant safety; (e) procedures provide for the privacy of participants and for maintenance and disposal of confidential data; and (f) where necessary, additional safeguards are included to protect vulnerable participants.

Finally, research projects requiring a Full IRB Review (Level 3) entail sensitive or risky research topics or methodologies. The application for a Level 3 project must contain extensive details describing procedures designed to protect vulnerable participants.

For any application, a majority of IRB members must approve the proposal and sign the cover page of the research proposal. The investigator must obtain this certification of compliance before any data is gathered or else he/she opens the college up to liability under federal law.

Sources

Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Institutional review boards and conservatism: The challenge to and from phenomenological paradigms. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 165-181)

O'Brien, R. (2001). *An overview of the methodological approach of action research*. Retrieved February 18, 2008 from: http://www.web.net/~robrien/papers/arfinal.html#_edn11

Stringer, E.T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd Ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications ■

Maintaining the Academic Integrity of Short Term Courses

BY ZERRYL BECKER, COLLEGE OF THE DESERT, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEMBER

Is it really possible to effectively teach a three-unit writing course in four weeks? A business law course in a weekend? Reading in a six-week summer session?

With community colleges under pressure to be more efficient, more innovative, and more responsive to the needs of diverse student populations, semesters have been shortened from 18 to 16 weeks, summer sessions are offered in eight, six and four-week formats, and four-week winter intersessions are becoming common.

There is no question that these short term options provide great opportunity for students and for the college. But are they being used wisely? Is academic integrity being maintained?

Curriculum is definitely a faculty responsibility. Assignment and scheduling are usually the right of the District. But when scheduling begins to impact curriculum, it is imperative that faculty be involved. Title 5 §55002.5 establishes the minimum expected time for one unit of credit as 48 semester hours.

The *Program and Course Approval Handbook*, 3rd Edition, defines these as two of the standards local curriculum committees should use in approving degree applicable courses:

Units, based on a relationship specified by the governing board in compliance with Title 5 §55002.5, which requires that a minimum of 48 hours of lecture, laboratory, out-of-class assignments or other types of study for one unit of credit. For each hour of lecture, the course should require two hours of study and/or laboratory and/or assigned activity. (CCC, 2009, p. 29)

There is no question that these short term options provide great opportunity for students and for the college. But are they being used wisely?

Intensity and rigor, as evidenced by the outline of course topics, the course objectives, assignments, assessments, and reading materials identified in the course outline of record. Achieving the objectives of degree-applicable credit courses must require students to study independently outside of class time. There is an expectation that students will spend two hours outside of class for each one hour of lecture. (CCC, 2009, p. 30)

At a minimum, tight, compressed scheduling patterns must consider these curricular rules and good practices. It is not appropriate to offer courses in a compressed time frame that, by its design, would not permit the student to complete the amount of out-of-class homework required to meet the hours-to-units relationship mandated by Title 5.

For a one-unit lecture class offered in four weeks, this would require twelve hours of commitment each week from students—four hours for lecture and eight hours for homework. A three-unit class

would require 36 hours of commitment each week from each student—a full time job. Add in considerations of time for instructors to provide adequate feedback and pedagogical questions of learning and this clearly becomes an issue for faculty.

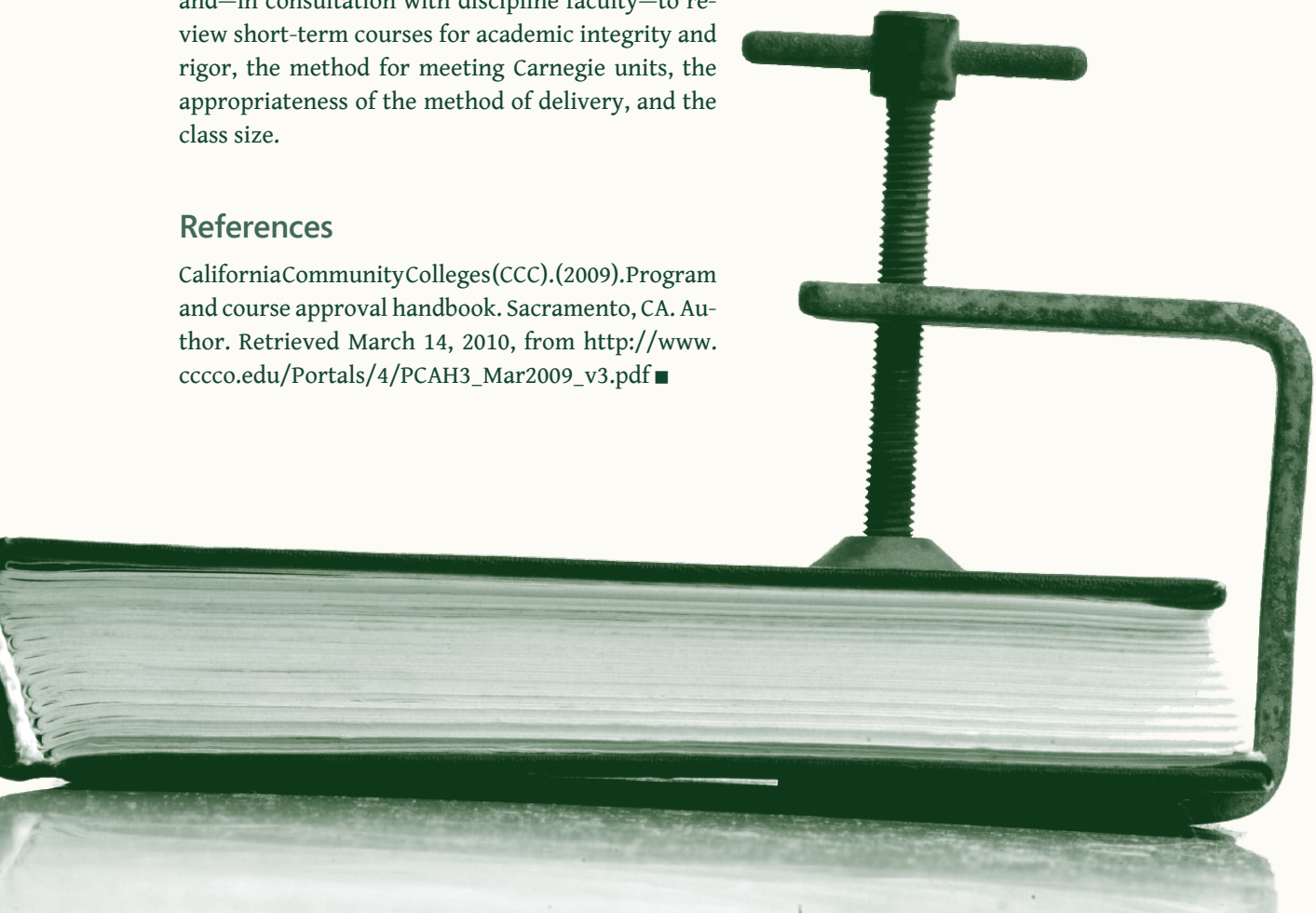
In various resolutions, the Academic Senate has urged community college faculty and administration to investigate the effect of compressed calendars on such factors as student retention, course completion, student success in lecture and lab courses, pedagogy, budget, curriculum change processes, class conflicts, the scheduling of instructional and non-instructional faculty, instructional support services, number of flex days, and student access to child care.

The Academic Senate urges curriculum committees to accept responsibility for compressed formats as a Title 5 mandate, to be diligent in making decisions regarding compressed formats, to refrain from offering any courses of three or more semester units in any alternative delivery time frames other than full-term except with the consent of the tenured discipline faculty and the curriculum committee, and—in consultation with discipline faculty—to review short-term courses for academic integrity and rigor, the method for meeting Carnegie units, the appropriateness of the method of delivery, and the class size.

References

CaliforniaCommunityColleges(CCC).(2009).Program and course approval handbook. Sacramento, CA. Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from http://www.cccco.edu/Portals/4/PCAH3_Mar2009_v3.pdf ■

“It is not appropriate to offer courses in a compressed time frame that, by its design, would not permit the student to complete the amount of out-of-class homework required to meet the hours-to-units relationship mandated by Title 5.”



When Are Counseling Paraprofessionals Appropriate? A Friendly Reminder


BY MARY BETH BARRIOS, SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY COLLEGE AND CHAR PERLAS, MISSION COLLEGE
MEMBERS, COUNSELING AND LIBRARY FACULTY ISSUES COMMITTEE

During this tumultuous economy, districts find themselves entertaining a variety of solutions as a means of tackling severe budget reductions, and colleges are faced with the impossible task of providing quality student services without adequate resources. As a result, paraprofessionals may have absorbed additional duties previously performed by a robust counseling department. This article is written as a reminder of the uses and limitations of the paraprofessional staff as outlined in the Academic Senate's adopted papers *The Role of Counseling Faculty in the California Community Colleges* (1994) and *The Standards of Practice for California Community College Counseling Programs* (1997).

Paraprofessionals, also referred to as counseling assistants and information technicians, are comparable to instructional assistants within the classrooms (ASCCC, 1994). Individuals hired within paraprofessional positions range from bachelor's degree recipients to community college students. Discrepancies found within paraprofessional hiring practices reinforce the importance of identifying the primary role of the paraprofessional within California community college counseling departments.

Similar caution should be applied in the use of computer-assisted systems. Expanded use of technology is arguably one method of reaching more students with limited resources, but the vital role face-to-





Paraprofessionals, also referred to as counseling assistants and information technicians, are comparable to instructional assistants within the classrooms (ASCCC, 1994)

face counseling plays in a student's success should not be underestimated.

According to *The Role of Counseling Faculty in the California Community Colleges* (1994), the role of paraprofessionals is limited to three main activities:

- 1. Assisting at registration by providing information and referring students to campus offices and services:** This information might include important dates and deadlines or how to read a class schedule. Paraprofessionals can also assist students in scheduling classes once the course list or student educational plan has been developed by counseling faculty.
- 2. Providing information about program requirements:** Many counseling departments prepare materials about college programs to help students plan their schedules. Paraprofessionals could disseminate this information.
- 3. Facilitating and supporting activities:** There are many useful activities that paraprofessionals could provide in Transfer Centers, Career Centers, Assessment Centers, Disabled Student Programs, and Extended Opportunity Programs. They might assist students in using reference materials or computerized career information systems. Paraprofessionals can coordinate university tours or visits by university representatives. They may also design and organize advertising for center activities or make classroom

presentations to students about the services of various campus offices and programs. In addition, they might provide placement test results, as long as their interpretation is left to faculty. Additional responsibilities could include assisting with community outreach, such as high school visits and outreach (pp. 8–9).

Community college students face many barriers that may include low socio-economic status, poor academic preparation, lack of familial support, lack of confidence or awareness of their place in the world. These are challenges that make the community college student especially at risk of failure and lower success rates. To help students combat these challenges, a counselor's expertise in student development, counseling techniques, assessments and evaluations are essential (ASCCC, 1994). The benefit of counseling and its direct link to student success is also well documented in the literature: *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (Center for Student Success), *Facilitating Community College Transfer: A Master Plan Mandate* (ICAS), *The Transfer Velocity Project: Key Findings on Student Transfer in California Community Colleges* (RP Group), *Community College Transfer Task Force: Findings and Recommendations Aimed at Strengthening the Community College Transfer Process* (Intersegmental Task Force), *California Community College Transfer: Recommended Guidelines* (California Community College Chancellor's Office and California Community College Transfer Center Directors Association), and **Crafting a Student-Centered Transfer Process in California: Lessons From Other States** (Institute of Higher Education Leadership and Policy).

Paraprofessional responsibilities should not extend beyond information dissemination. When the duties expand into goal setting, planning or decision making, the paraprofessional has overstepped his/her professional boundaries. It is recommended that paraprofessional roles and duties be assessed to ensure that paraprofessionals do not extend beyond the objective of providing students with requested information. A simple question regarding class scheduling has the propensity to lead to questions relating to decision making, goal setting and planning (ASCCC, 1994). According to *The Standards*



Both training and supervision should be conducted with counselors taking an active role in both.

of Practice for California Community College Counseling Programs (1997), “Paraprofessionals should not be expected to perform tasks that go beyond their qualifications” (p. 8).

As suggested in *The Standards of Practice for California Community College Counseling Programs* (1997), if paraprofessionals are utilized, proper training and supervision are imperative. Both training and supervision should be conducted with counselors taking an active role in both. Training methods could include individual one-on-one trainings, small group trainings, or an in-service training to the greater college community in order to differentiate the goals and responsibilities between counselors and paraprofessionals. Trainings and supervision should include clearly defined responsibilities and a counselor referral process. Identification badges, that include name and position, should be provided along with ethical and confidentiality regulations.

Title 5 directs California Community Colleges to provide “an adequate counseling staff, both in training and experience...” (§ 51975). As we face this cycle of economic difficulty and specifically the decimation of categorical funding, California community colleges are put in the challenging position of cutting costs while still providing an “adequate” level of service. In light of this, we must ensure that the methods we use to do so are not to the detriment of students and their success.

References

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). (1994). *The role of counseling faculty in the California community colleges*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Role_counseling-faculty.html.

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). (1994). *The standards of practice for California community college counseling programs*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Standards_counseling_programs.html.

California Community College Chancellor’s Office and Transfer Center Directors (CCCCO). 2006. *California community college transfer: Recommended guidelines*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved March 16, 2010, from http://www.cccco.edu/Portals/4/SS/TransferArtic/policy/rec_trans_guidelines07_06.pdf.

Center for Student Success. (2007, February). *Basic skills as a foundation for success in California community colleges*. Sacramento, CA: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from <http://www.cccbsi.org/publications>.

Institute of Higher Education. (2009). *Crafting a student-centered transfer process in California: lessons from other states*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved March 16, 2010, from http://www.csus.edu/ihelp/pdfs/r_transfer_report_08-09.pdf.

Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS). (2009). *Facilitating community college transfer: A master plan mandate*

Intersegmental Task Force. (2009). *Community college transfer task force: Findings and recommendations aimed at strengthening the community college transfer process*.

Research and Planning Group (RP). (2009). *The transfer velocity project: Key findings on student transfer in California community colleges*. Author. Retrieved March 16, 2010 from <http://www.rpgroup.org/documents/TVPBrief.pdf>. ■

The Appointment or Selection of Faculty to Short-term, Non-teaching Tasks—Why did HE get that position?

BY MICHELLE GRIMES-HILLMAN, MOUNT SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE, EDUCATION POLICIES COMMITTEE

While there are many policies and procedures that we take for granted and others that we don't really care about, knowing the who, how, what, and why of the selection of faculty for various tasks is an academic and professional matter. And a matter that local senates should play a significant role in determining.

Among the resolutions produced and debated at the Fall 2007 Plenary Session was one that described the varying methods by which faculty are assigned to non-teaching tasks and the need to establish local processes for such appointments, as well the need for development and dissemination of effective practices. This brief article is intended to address the intention of the resolution. Resolution F07 1.02 reads as follows:

Whereas, There are multiple methods by which a faculty member can be assigned to short-term, non-teaching work such as Student Learning Outcomes or accreditation coordinator, or grant director;

Whereas, A recent Academic Senate survey indicated that districts and colleges employ different methods of assigning faculty to these tasks such as appointment by the local academic senates, or by the administration, or by a competitive process; and

Whereas, The handling of these appointments has diversity, equity and fairness implications in the decision-making processes of a college or district;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges further research and disseminate information about the appointment or selection of faculty to short-term, non-teaching tasks; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recommend effective practices for assigning faculty to short-term, non-teaching work that are fair, open, transparent and compliant with Title 5 Regulation §53202.

The resolution points out that there are different methods used to select faculty for reassignment positions and the need for the appointment process to be reasonable and unbiased. Local senates should consider appointments to non-teaching tasks in the same way that faculty are appointed to committees. This process may vary by college but the Title 5 regulation is very clear: "The appointment of faculty members to serve on college or district committees, task forces, or other groups dealing with academic and professional matters, shall be made, after consultation with the chief executive officer or his or her designee, by the academic senate. ...the collective bargaining representative may seek to appoint faculty members to committees..." (Title 5 §53203).

While a single process may be effective for one college, it may not be for another. With 112 colleges and 112 cultures, there is no “best” practice—so a variety is offered here for your consideration.

Consider the different types of non-teaching appointments that may be made by colleges. Appointments under the purview of the local senate may include committee chairs (e.g., curriculum), department chairs, or coordinator of a discipline-specific program or a campus-wide program such as Teacher Prep or Study Abroad. The length of the appointment is also a point of discussion. Appointees may have an established period of time, thereby providing the opportunity for new faculty to take on the challenge of a non-teaching task. Some appointments may include compensation, while others do not. The local senates should work with the bargaining agent to ensure that compensation and job duties are clear, and that the process for each appointment is embedded in administrative procedure.

For example, it has long been the practice at one college that the senate makes the appointments for senate committee chairs and coordinators of campus-wide activities (e.g., SLO Coordinator, Basic Skills Coordinator). The bargaining agent has outlined the process for electing department chairs and includes all compensated non-teaching tasks in the faculty contract. Although deans have right of assignment, discipline-specific appointments (e.g., Director of Clinical Programs for Radiological Technology) are determined through collegial consultation with the discipline faculty and their dean.

When there is no clearly defined process in place or an established process is not followed, selections may appear to be biased. An accusation can be raised against selections made of a few “favorite” faculty or non-controversial faculty, or even faculty that are not in a position to defend academic and professional matters because of their probationary status. A local senate should want its faculty to have the support they need to do their non-teaching tasks. A process that is not transparent and documented may result in the selected faculty having difficulty in garnering support for their work by other faculty. The ultimate goal in selecting faculty for non-teaching tasks is

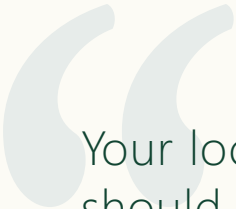
the same as with any hire—you want the best person for the job. If your process is unclear, non-existent, and/or ever-changing, how can its effectiveness be determined? Clearly documented processes protect the faculty selected for such positions and model the approach that should be taken with all hires and assignments.

It is clear that the process can appear to be biased if an established procedure is not followed but another matter of importance is the position itself. Non-teaching assignments provide unique opportunities for faculty to expand their skills by serving in largely quasi-administrative roles, gaining a flavor of the administrator’s life. After participating in a non-teaching role, the faculty member often has the opportunity to see the “bigger picture” of the college organization and has greater opportunity for networking with campus staff outside of their discipline. Therefore, it is crucial that the non-teaching tasks (the job) should be clearly defined, with appropriate expectations. The local senate may want to ask their bargaining agents to negotiate compensation or place the positions in the contract. Placing the positions in the contract or having the job duties outlined will prevent administrators and faculty alike from creating positions that are best suited to other job classifications.

Consider the following scenarios and how appropriate policies, procedures, and job duties may have prevented them.

Scenario one: A faculty member has received a lot of student complaints; the dean instead of dealing with the student complaints directly offers the faculty member the opportunity to run a particular campus-wide program to reduce his time in the classroom. When the local senate objects to the lack of process, the administrator insists the opportunity will be open to all faculty but it is not, leaving faculty frustrated and unwilling to work collegially with the appointed coordinator of this important campus-wide program.

Scenario two: The Curriculum Chair is appointed by the Vice President of Instruction because she believes that a faculty member from a particular discipline is



Your local processes should not be a mystery and should be written into an Administrative Procedure or other documentation that is agreed upon.

better suited for the position than any other faculty. The opportunity is not offered to faculty from other disciplines. The faculty from the anointed discipline feel obligated to take the position while other interested faculty are not even considered.

Scenario three: Consider that a recently hired counselor is given a plum assignment with 20% re-assigned time by the Dean. The other counselors are frustrated that they didn't have a chance to apply for this position. Resentment builds between the new counselor and more senior colleagues.

At some colleges, the job descriptions of non-teaching opportunities are sent to all faculty each year, when developed or when vacant. Faculty and management participate in the selection process. At one college, for example, the Vice President of Instruction (VPI) wrote up the job description for a Program Review Coordinator and the local senate president reviewed and approved it. The position was opened to all faculty and then the VPI and the senate president consulted collegially on the applications, interviewing the candidates, and making the selection. The VPI deferred to the senate in the selection process. Likewise, at another college all faculty are given an opportunity to apply for any open non-teaching reassignment. The senate president appoints after consultation with the mutual agree-

ment council and approval of the senate executive board. The appointments then need to be confirmed at the full senate.

At another college, the local senate has established procedures for selection of chairs/coordinator for academic senate committees. The process is standardized and all faculty may apply. At another, the senate has established procedures that include the senate executive committee interviewing all candidates followed by confirmation of the full senate. The coordinators/chairs are limited to two successive three-year terms. One positive element of this process is the opportunity for new coordinator/chairs to shadow the current faculty for one year prior to beginning their non-teaching position each fall.

At all the institutions referenced, the duties, job descriptions, and time of service are clearly defined. This is important so that faculty and administrators can have clear expectations about the non-teaching assignments.

Your local processes should not be a mystery and should be written into an Administrative Procedure or other documentation that is agreed upon. Who may be appointed and for how long are elements of the process that need to be decided locally. Limits to appointment may be negotiable, so local senates should consult with their bargaining agents. For example, the local senate may want to consider putting a time limit on the service (e.g., one year, three years) or limit the amount the reassignment (e.g., 40%, 80%). The local senate may want to discuss the philosophy behind taking faculty out of the classroom, counseling office, or library when student access to full-time faculty is limited. Local senates should also consider whether part-time faculty have the opportunity to participate in reassignment or non-teaching tasks.

Bottom line—have a process established in writing. Faculty need to have the opportunity to participate in non-teaching assignments. Faculty bring a wealth of expertise to these assignments and faculty primacy in these appointments makes for a better institution. ■

What Would You Like to Know? And How? A Conversation about the BRIC Project

BY IAN WALTON, MISSION COLLEGE, ASCCC PAST PRESIDENT, AND ROB JOHNSTONE, DEAN, PLANNING, RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, SKYLINE COLLEGE, VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH AND PLANNING (RP) GROUP

This article explores the philosophy of the Bridging Research, Information and Culture project (BRIC). BRIC grew out of the previous Basic Skills Outcomes and Fostering a Culture of Evidence and Inquiry project (BSOC) that 2009 Fall Plenary Session delegates heard described in Rob Johnstone’s general session speech, and in the breakout that featured Rob, Janet Fulks, Bob Pacheco and Ian Walton. This article is Ian’s interpretation and exposition of an extended interview/conversation between Rob and Ian.

IAN: WHERE DID BRIC COME FROM AND WHERE’S IT GOING?

Rob: Both BSOC and BRIC are RP Group projects funded by the Hewlett Foundation, and can help faculty and students in areas where they care—often passionately. Field research for BSOC confirmed that data is widely used in our colleges. But the key point for faculty is that the current focus is quite often on institutional metrics and external accountability. These “big” metrics such as graduation numbers or transfer rates are clearly important, but are relatively isolated from things faculty can do in their classes. In many cases, grass roots practitioners—be they classroom faculty or student service professionals - don’t get the help or the answers that they need to really enhance their students’ experience. The term “data” turns off many faculty by implying the superiority of narrow quantitative measures rather than the much broader use of observation, analysis and evidence that includes qualitative characteristics. Many local senate presidents report that

the initial accreditation implementation of student learning outcomes (SLOs) headed them in some directions that were less than useful.

The goal of the BRIC project is to help people discover or recapture passionate inquiry and then use it to help students. Correctly gathered and applied, data/evidence can help with that. Although it varies widely, the current state of much of the research in our system is not at a level that focuses on or is accessible to practitioners. Very few people (and you know who you are) get excited about measures such as productivity and FTES. While they are critical to helping the campus operate efficiently, they really are means to an end—not the end themselves. But somewhere along the way, we may very well have lost the student in our focus on the process metrics. There are many areas of inquiry that can help us regain that focus—and we would argue that most of them involve working directly with faculty and staff to determine the key questions and designing approaches that get the subject matter experts the information they need. While major systemic changes are a laudable goal, we would argue that what faculty need is assistance in helping design a series of smaller changes at the classroom and departmental/program level. Then the question becomes what should you try, and how do you decide which changes to keep?

IAN: SO SPECIFICALLY WHAT’S IN IT FOR FACULTY—WHY SHOULD THEY PLAY?

Rob: While we’re certainly all in this together, faculty fundamentally affect student learning in a much

more direct way than most others. Many have an innate belief that good research helps students, and many are always “researching” in their classrooms through continuous evaluation, monitoring and adjustment of activities in their classes. But they also understand that research often hasn’t really been documented at the classroom level. Research should focus on questions that faculty really need answered. For example: what happens as students go through our redesigned math sequence? How effective is writing as a preparation for general education courses? Community college instructors are passionate about teaching and are experts in their discipline. So, the question is—how can we improve conditions for faculty and students and document it for skeptics? We’ve seen many examples of individual faculty who carefully define a question and research approach, and get satisfaction out of informative, thoughtful answers that help them determine improved or new courses of action. We need to broaden this approach so that large numbers of classroom faculty and student service professionals can work together with this type of approach to gain a better understanding of their students, and so improve their many and varied outcomes. In this way student learning outcomes (SLO) become authentic and useful tools rather than mere compliance.

IAN: EXPLAIN MORE WHY THIS BRIC APPROACH IS DIFFERENT FROM THE ANNUAL GENERATION OF NUMERICAL REPORTS THAT HAS BEEN THE WAY SOME COLLEGES COMPLY WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR SLOS.

Rob: The movement to accountability through a focus on SLOs in accreditation had and probably still has great intentions; it has attempted to focus us on capturing information about students that will help us improve their achievement of their goals. The Academic Senate, through its many efforts including workshops, has tried very hard to ensure that SLO development and assessment be authentic. But, unfortunately, the need for a deeply ingrained across-the-board implementation system has led to a check box/compliance approach in some places. At the moment there’s not enough understanding of how to resolve the tension between compliance and passionate inquiry. We should be able to iden-

tify what’s worked, learn from it, and build on that. BRIC aims to involve more people and a wider variety of techniques, and to capture the enthusiasm of diverse questions and answers. There’s room for people who don’t like their current campus approach to accreditation. There are a lot more opportunities to use inquiry in thoughtful, exciting, and productive ways. We fundamentally believe that by doing so, we will not only ensure that we capture the information we need to improve the conditions for learning, but along the way we will also create a more authentic system that will satisfy accreditation mandates.

IAN: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “THOUGHTFUL CONVERSATIONS USING EVIDENCE?”

Rob: You might call it “backward research design.” You start with faculty and ask them, what are you interested in learning about your students, pedagogy, or classroom situation? What information would you need to make decisions about changes and improvements? For example: is group work successful in this specific assignment? Would prerequisites help this specific class population? Did this change in presentation produce a noticeable effect on students? While there are often a few “official” learning outcomes for a class or a program, there’s an infinitely broader collection of what might define success for an individual student, and therefore many more types of questions that you might ask and adjustments you might make. The goal of BRIC is to empower a significantly larger group of faculty to explore those questions, to obtain answers that are convincing to others, and to create a college culture that supports such inquiry.

IAN: WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IF MY COLLEGE IS SELECTED FOR THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PORTION OF THE BRIC PROJECT?

Rob: The BRIC project has three main parts. In the first, we will be working with the institutional research professionals on all 112 campuses to attempt to help streamline some of the more common tasks that all campuses face. In doing so, we hope that we will free up research capacity for the more interesting practitioner level inquiry described above. The second arm of BRIC will focus on a series of online

and in-person professional development opportunities that will also benefit a wider range of people on all 112 campuses. The third part of the grant—the Technical Assistance Program—may be where the most magic happens.

For the 12-15 colleges selected to get technical assistance from the project in the first year (2010-11), each will get three site visits over the year plus assorted follow-up from a team of two or three people. One member of each team will be a faculty member. The visiting team will come in to your environment and help you determine how to use your existing structures (e.g., student success committee or basic skills committee or specific department) to shape research questions in an ongoing manner. The key question is - what would you like to change in your course, your curricular sequence, or your department? Your practitioners will get together and ask how they would like information to drive decision making and activity, rather than simply be told the answers or even told the questions. The process will absolutely acknowledge the expertise of faculty and encourage working closely with researchers and administrators to move forward. The visiting team will facilitate discussions that help to create a thoughtful, inquiring culture and process. The motive is to move the needle on deeper and more authentic use of evidence in a way that is flexible for your structure, your culture, your students and your campus.

IAN: BUT AREN'T YOU JUST GOING TO BE ANOTHER OUTSIDE GROUP TELLING US WHAT TO DO?

Rob: That's certainly not our intention. While the funding comes from the Hewlett Foundation, the players are insiders—faculty and researchers from our own colleges helping each other. The modules and the materials used with the selected colleges will be suggestions for discussion; they will not provide a canned answer or even the perfect question.

The modules and our team will help you to explore the use of information at different levels and encourage greater participation and variety. It's all about an approach and a mindset. Our work clearly won't provide budget and implementation for any changes suggested by the research you undertake, but it should help you identify good ideas and make

a stronger case for those ideas in your institution. It will add to your toolkit to convince other people. In addition, many questions have answers that are budget independent. Successful inquiry will help you set the parameters—for example: are you looking for success, or does it have to be success at no additional cost?

IAN: MY LOCAL COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR/RESEARCHER NEEDS AN ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT. ARE YOU GOING TO DO THAT FOR ME?

Rob: Well, the world of research and administration has certainly shifted in the last decade. It's clearly no longer enough for a campus researcher to simply sit in a back office and produce reports, hoping that they're read, digested, understood, and acted upon; there needs to be an active partnership between institutional research (IR) and the practitioners on the campus. When you're riding such a wave of change, there are always going to be individuals—faculty, staff, administrators and researchers—who are at varying stages of evolution on this learning curve. Many colleges have evolved an excellent working relationship that is producing really interesting work. Of course there are some campuses where this hasn't really happened yet, for a variety of reasons. But we can encourage this change of perspective both locally and statewide. Faculty need to want to participate, and administrators need to be supportive. BRIC can help spread this mindset at professional conferences and by developing online tools and forums, as well as in the specific college visits—just as the Academic Senate moves faculty opinion through debate and presentation.

IAN: IT'S REALLY EASY TO "GET A NUMBER." WE NEED TO MOVE ON TO GETTING USEFUL, MEANINGFUL EVIDENCE IN EVERY SHAPE AND FORM THAT RESULTS IN IMPROVING THE ENTIRE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

Rob: BRIC will try to help.

Rob Johnstone is Project Director for BRIC. Ian Walton and Janet Fulks are faculty participants in the project. ■

California Community Colleges Strategic Plan Assessment Action Planning Group (APG): An Update on the Group's Recommendations

BY MARK WADE LIEU, APG CO-CHAIR AND RICHARD MAHON, CHAIR, PRE-REQUISITE TASK FORCE

At the Spring 2009 Plenary Session, the Academic Senate endorsed the Assessment APG's end-of-year report for 2008-2009. Since that time, there has been significant movement on some of the recommendations from the report.

Recommendation: Support statewide project to develop statewide prerequisites for a limited set of general education courses using content review per the Model District Policy on Pre-Requisites, including an evaluation of the impacts.

Richard Mahon, the Chair of the Academic Senate's Curriculum Committee, is chairing the Pre-Requisite Task Force, which is overseeing this work. We presented on this topic at the 2009 Fall Plenary Session of the Academic Senate. Following Session, Richard convened the task force, comprised of faculty, CIOs, CSSOs, and Chancellor's Office staff. We had a phone conference in December and then met in-person in January 2010.

Rather than organizing a series of regional pilot projects focused on specific GE areas, the task force reached consensus on moving forward with a change to Title 5 language that would make statistical analysis permissive rather than required for the establishment of English, reading, and mathematics pre-requisites for other courses. Executive Vice-Chancellor Steve Bruckman provided input on what language change would be needed, and he concurred that it did not appear to be a difficult change to write. The name of the task force will be changed since this approach is no longer predicated on "pilot" projects.

Given the wide range of perspectives on moving forward with this change, several events have already happened and others are planned.

- A discussion with the Chief Student Service Officers (CSSO) Board where the board was supportive and expressed serious concerns about implementation and transition issues.
- Working with Vice-Chancellor Bruckman and the System Advisory Committee on Curriculum (SACC)
- A Discussion with the Chief Instructional Officers (CIO) Board and a presentation at their spring conference.
- Regular work with the Academic Senate Executive Committee with a general session and two follow-up breakout sessions at the Senate's spring plenary session.
- A discussion with the Matriculation Professionals Association (MPA).
- The task force plans to organize regional colloquia - three/four - to discuss issues and also to build consensus for the change.

Recommendation: Support ongoing system efforts to increase matriculation funding and promote a desirable counselor: student ratio.

The Governor's initial 2010-2011 budget further cuts EOPS by \$10m. The system will advocate for a restoration of cuts to matriculation and other student service categorical areas, but restoration is unlikely given the current deficit.

Recommendation: Investigate what a reasonable percentage might be should counselors and librarians be included with “classroom faculty” for purposes of calculating 50 Percent Law compliance, with the possibility of using Assembly Bill 1157 as a vehicle for implementing such a change.

To encourage debate at its Fall Plenary Session, the Academic Senate proposed three resolutions regarding the 50% law. While there was indeed active debate, there was no clear consensus position, and no action was taken on the three resolutions. We had heard that there was a bill for a 52% law moving forward, but apparently the sponsor withdrew the bill when he discovered that there was not system-wide consensus for such a change. There continues to be a lot of discussion about the 50% law, especially in light of continued budget cuts and strains on local budgets. A new resolution, 6.03, will be reviewed at Area Meetings and Spring Plenary Session that acknowledges that we still haven't determined what percentage would be consistent with previously adopted resolutions and move counseling and library faculty members onto the “right” side of the 50% law.

Recommendation: Support continued exploration of CCC Assess pilot.

The CCC Assess pilot is moving forward. There have been commitments from both the Hewlett and Gates Foundations of \$250,000 each to support the pilot. Vice-Chancellor Perry is now moving forward with the convening of an advisory committee for the project in mid-March.

The goal of CCC Assess is two-fold. First, the project seeks to offer centralized online delivery of assessment testing in mathematics, English, and ESL at a substantial cost-savings to colleges. Participation would be voluntary, but there is no doubt that there is potentially a strong economic incentive for colleges to join in. As part of the pilot, groups of discipline faculty, chosen by the Academic Senate, will be convened to review assessment tests in each of the three content areas to choose the best test with which to pursue a possible statewide contract. Not surprisingly, major test vendors have expressed great interest in participating.

Second, the pilot will explore the establishment of a centralized data warehouse for assessment data, including data from other segments. It is anticipated

that these data would be available to colleges for incorporation into course placement decisions.

Recommendation: Support continued CCCAA test-development work.

Even before the APG was originally convened, the California Community College Assessment Association (CCCAA), which comprises assessment coordinators at the colleges, were discussing development of assessment tests better suited to the needs of the California community colleges than are currently available through commercial vendors. With a modest grant from the Chancellor's Office, the CCCAA embarked on first steps in such a project, focusing on the area of least satisfaction across the state with regards to available assessment testing instruments, English as a Second Language (ESL).

CCCAA completed development of specifications for such a test, including cost estimates, last year. Now it is in the final stages of approval for a contract proposal to begin actual test writing. The final approval is expected this spring, at which time the test-writing team of nine CCC ESL faculty will start working with the test-specifications.

The ambitious timeline is to be able to field test Reading Test items (at three levels: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced) with volunteer colleges in mid-late April. Field testing of Language Structure & Usage items (as well as revised Reading items) is planned for September-October. At the same time, they will also field test writing sample prompts and the scoring rubric developed by the Test-Specifications Workgroup. The hope is that the final refinements will have been completed to permit the creation of at least one, fixed-form version of the tests at all three levels by January 2011. A notable team of psychometric researchers are consulting for the project.

The next phase (which would require a new funding proposal) will be the “piloting” of the tests for use in colleges' placement processes. The fixed-form tests will be available in paper-pencil, computerized, and online formats (non-adaptive). More research and revision will follow in addition to the ongoing development of passages and items that will eventually form a vast enough bank of test items to permit creation of an adaptive test instrument (vs. individual fixed-form tests per level). ■

Coursework Recency

BY RICHARD MAHON, CHAIR, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE,
WITH HELP FROM STEPHANIE DUMONT, CHAIR, COUNSELING AND LIBRARY FACULTY ISSUES

Resolution 9.10, passed in Fall 2006, asked the Academic Senate to “investigate the issue of coursework recency” and multiple curriculum committees have looked into the issue and found no neat solution.

Recency: the Problem

As faculty are all too aware, few community college students complete their educational program within the nominal two-year window. A number of issues slow student progress: students with lack of preparation in English, mathematics, and reading skills are increasingly common; there is a lack of access to gatekeeper courses in high-demand programs like nursing; and the number of students who return to community colleges after long absences are all part of the community college landscape. Students in this last category are particularly likely to encounter problems with recency if they need to re-enter a sequence of courses in which their knowledge or skills have grown rusty.

The majority of community college courses are not designated as repeatable: once a student has received a passing grade in a non-repeatable course, they may not retake and receive credit for that course, and colleges who do permit unauthorized course repetition are not entitled to apportionment funding for that enrollment—even though some programs (nursing and many allied health programs, for example) require that a course be completed recently. Students who do retake non-repeatable courses in which they received a passing grade risk denial of credit for the second course iteration if the repetition is discovered at a four-year college. Nevertheless, there are a variety of reasons why a student may need to retake a class which they completed successfully. The likelihood, for example, that a student who passed French I with an A in 1980 will be ready for French II in 2010 is small. Similarly, a student who passed a Computer Programming course in 2000 may be woefully unprepared for the programming world of 2010.

Recency: A Partial Solution

Fortunately Title 5 §55042 recognizes some issues raised by the problem of recency. This regulation notes that “a district may also permit or require repetition of a course where the student received a satisfactory grade the last time he or she took the course but the district determines that there has been a significant lapse of time since that grade was obtained and: (1) the district has properly established a recency prerequisite for a course or program... or has otherwise defined ‘significant lapse of time’ in its policy on course repetition.”

This regulation opens doors for students provided that districts have (1) established recency prerequisites and (2) defined recency, this only addresses some of the problems that arise when students need to repeat a course. The University of California, for example, does not recognize recency as an issue, and thus a student who repeats a French course and mistakenly believes he or she has earned additional course units may find out otherwise if he or she transfers to a UC campus. For transfer students, there is also the additional important question of how the two grades assigned to the class are calculated with regard to cumulative GPA.

Recency: All Solutions are Local

As with so many issues, then, the key to successful enactment of a recency policy is clarity in the policy and effective communication to students. As in the examples given above, community colleges may develop language that allows students to repeat non-repeatable courses under clearly defined circumstances. It is crucial that colleges develop mechanisms to ensure that students understand the consequences—both within and outside of California community colleges. For many students, repeating courses taken long ago may be necessary to meeting their current educational goals. It is up to us to help them do so in an informed way. ■

The Transfer Degree: An Alternate Perspective

BY TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS (TAC)

A hot topic in California higher education today revolves around community colleges awarding associate degrees that are meaningful yet unit efficient and that meet the needs of all of our students who invariably are pursuing different educational goals. These issues have been a predominant concern to transfer and articulation faculty over the last several years and are even more pressing today in the context of tighter budgets, an increase in students and in the projected need for workers in our state that have, at minimum, obtained an associate degree. Furthermore, interrupted educational paths due to the competitiveness for university admission and/or disproportionate and excessive fee increases are putting a Bachelor's degree out of reach for many California community college students. Our legislators are also getting involved, as they are across the nation, to seek solutions to the apparent bottleneck in many systems where we see large majorities of students who begin the path to an Associate degree fail to obtain that award.

Currently, and in large part as a reaction to recent legislation (AB440-2009 and SB1440-2010), the statewide debate has centered around the imposing of local requirements on the Associate degree and their impact on transfer students. At the Fall 2009 Academic Senate Plenary Session, two resolutions on this issue were referred back to the Senate Executive Committee because the body felt there was too much confusion and misunderstanding to vote on the resolutions at that time. The Academic Senate does not support legislation determining

our degree requirements because faculty are the curriculum experts and legislation would give up our control over what is central to our student's education. However, as the counseling, articulation and transfer faculty who work daily with students on the nuances of transfer, we do understand and share the concern of students, legislators and other community college faculty, that measures must be taken to ensure that we are best meeting the needs of our transfer students in regards to earning an Associate degree.

For many of our transfer students, it is both the imposing of local graduation requirements and the 18-unit requirement in a major or area of emphasis that present barriers to an Associate degree. While these requirements may be perfectly appropriate for our terminal degree students, do they make sense for our transfer students? While university majors in engineering, mathematics, physical and biological sciences require at least 18 semester units of lower-division major preparation, majors in the arts, humanities, social and behavioral sciences typically do not. As a result, many California community colleges are designing associate degrees intended for students planning to transfer based on what faculty would like students to take in a certain discipline and not necessarily on the courses that correspond to the lower-division university requirements. For many majors in the social sciences and humanities (called low-unit majors), there simply are not 18 units worth of major preparation that can be completed on the community college campus. If a low-unit major transfer student wishes to obtain a degree, this may involve



For many of our transfer students, it is both the imposing of local graduation requirements and the 18-unit requirement in a major or area of emphasis that present barriers to an Associate degree.

taking courses not required by the transfer institution and/or courses not related to the student's intended major, which translates to additional time and expense for our students. The attainment of the Associate degree, which is a benchmark of accomplishment, then becomes secondary to the goal of transfer.

There have been concerns expressed that if we award transfer students an Associate degree based on the university requirements for upper-division transfer it will undermine our Associate degree because we are allowing the degree requirements to be externally defined. Those taking this position argue that awarding a degree to transfer students based on the external requirements to transfer means relinquishing control over our curriculum. Members of our committee respectfully disagree. There is no conflict with local control if we choose to award an Associate degree to our transfer students based on the upper-division transfer admission requirements of the university. If we proactively redefine our Associate degree for our transfer students based on these parameters, then we are not relinquishing control of our degree. Instead, we are recognizing that we are an integral

part of the university system, providing our students with the lower-division portion of their baccalaureate degree on their way to upper-division studies at the university. This inclusive approach to our role in the education of our baccalaureate bound students best meets the needs of these students. Further, it emphasizes and honors our educational partnership with the transfer institutions and correctly focuses on the important role California community colleges play in the California Master Plan for Higher Education.

Others who object to aligning our Associate degrees fully with lower-division major preparation argue that colleges have very rational reasons for crafting two-year degrees that differ from the lower-division major requirements, one of which is that faculty have worked closely with employers in their community to include skills and knowledge necessary for success in the workplace. This is a laudable argument for our career and technical students whose primary goal is not transfer. However, when a baccalaureate degree does not require those same competencies (e.g., technology, health, physical education), it makes the argument to enforce on transfer students additional coursework not mandated by our segment partners less viable.

If we want to award our transfer students an Associate degree, the way to best serve these students is to define the degree based solely on the university requirements. We must avoid designing Associate degrees intended for our transfer students with locally defined requirements, whether they are major, general education or other graduation requirements that do not completely align with requirements for upper-division transfer to our universities. Doing so only confuses and potentially harms our students' chances for a seamless, efficient transfer. Further, it undermines our inter-segmental relationship with our university partners and fails to recognize the vital role we play in the baccalaureate education of our students. ■

A Tale of Interpretations: Transfer Velocity

BY RICHARD MAHON, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It's no secret to faculty that a wide range of critics have labeled the transfer function in the California community colleges "broken," and faculty who attended the fall plenary session will recall breakouts and debate about AB 440 (reborn this year as SB 1440), the legislation that would prohibit colleges from including local course requirements should they choose to develop "for transfer" degrees as desired by the Campaign for College Opportunity.

Can research shed light on this situation? Is there any evidence that a streamlined transfer degree would "fix" the transfer function? It just so happens that a major study of transfer—the Transfer Velocity Project (or TVP)—has recently concluded. It is one of the most comprehensive studies of transfer to date. The TVP was a large-scale investigation of student transfer in California community colleges including both quantitative and qualitative components. A Research and Planning (RP) Group team composed of institutional researchers, administrators, counselors and articulation staff from community colleges across the state conducted the study. The RP Group collaborated closely with the California community college (CCC) Chancellor's Office to define and generate data on the students and colleges considered in this research.

Rather than focusing solely on "transfer rates" which are static in time, the TVP looked at students' "transfer velocity." The study considered factors impacting students' dynamic movement toward a transfer goal—investigating student behaviors and characteristics that influence their speed and path toward transfer, and college-level

factors that promote students' achievement of this transition.

One of the key findings from the TVP is that students who complete associate degrees within six years of CCC entry are found to transfer in higher numbers than those who do not complete associate degrees. A summary of the project noted that, "Attainment of an associate's degree shows a strong positive impact on students' likelihood for transfer" (*Transfer Velocity Project: Key Findings on Student Transfer in California Community Colleges*, <http://www.rpgroup.org/documents/TVPBrief.pdf>, accessed on 3/3/10).

In January of this year, RP Group Board member Craig Hayward joined Nancy Shulock from the *Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy* and Mary Gill from the *Campaign for College Opportunity* for a discussion of the project with policymakers and legislators in Sacramento. The January issue of the RP publication *Perspectives* noted that "The group was particularly interested in the finding that attaining an associate degree can double or triple a student's odds of transfer, particularly for African-American and Latino students" (<http://www.rpgroup.org/documents/January2010RPPerspectives.pdf>, accessed on 3/3/10).

How should readers interpret this claim? "...attaining an associate degree can double or triple a student's odds of transfer"! It seems clear that the *Campaign for College Opportunity* believes that streamlining the pathway to associate degree attainment by stripping out local requirements would make it easier for students to earn degrees and transfer—in spite

of the countervailing force of plummeting capacity, especially in the CSU system. Thus, it is argued, if the Academic Senate would only stop being obstructionist and support SB 1440, students would finally be successful. One might think that it is the faculty commitment to local degree requirements that *causes* students all their problems.

But is that the only possible interpretation of this Associate degree finding? Other interpretations that are less supportive of the goals of SB 1440 may be more on point. Perhaps it is *not the fact* of degree attainment that made students more likely to transfer. Rather, students who take the time to *become aware of degree requirements and plan to meet them* are the *kinds of students* who are also likely to educate themselves about the process of applying to transfer and to see that process through to a successful conclusion. Researchers would call this a “third variable” explanation. In other words there is another factor or variable (i.e., student motivation) that explains both degree attainment and transfer success.

Craig Hayward, one of the TVP authors, offers another potential explanation of the finding. The observed tendency for those who attain Associate’s degrees to transfer in higher numbers than those who might not be explained by the structure that is created by the Associate degree requirements. That is, the course-taking sequence that leads to an Associate’s degree might build the “transfer velocity” of the would-be transfer student. That is why Associate’s degree attainment appears to be much more predictive of transfer among those students who are most likely to be first generation college students and to be from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The Associate’s degree structure promotes the development of a transfer-facilitating transcript by requiring those courses that are also required for transfer. The most commonly awarded Associate’s degrees in the state fall into the category of Liberal Arts and Sciences. This category of degrees represented almost 60% of the Associate of Art degrees awarded in 2008-2009. These degrees are, by design, degrees for the transfer-oriented student (https://misweb.cccco.edu/mis/online-estat/awards_rpt.cfm).

Either of these alternative interpretations would suggest that there is no need to mandate yet another statewide transfer Associate’s degree because the current Associate degrees already promote transfer.

There is no direct evidence that local degree requirements hinder student transfer. Virtually all local degree requirements are transferable and count toward the elective credit students need to reach the 60 unit threshold for junior status. Many colleges have also developed online sections of the courses that satisfy these requirements to better meet students’ scheduling challenges. It is quite possible, then, that eliminating requirements for community college degrees is likely to have no significant effect on either Associate degree completion or successful transfer and might even have the opposite effect.

It should not surprise any reader that the same research findings can result in a wide variety of plausible interpretations. In this case, both interpretations are made by groups who want to see California’s community college students achieve greater success in Associate degree attainment and transfer. It’s unfortunate that groups like the *Campaign for College Opportunity* have chosen to try to work around the Academic Senate and to bypass the California Community College System itself by seeing its ideas enshrined in legislation.

The research team that was involved with the TVP is currently planning a follow-up study that would explore the experiences of students who both did and did not successfully transfer. This proposed study would provide additional insight into the reasons why there is a large group of students who come so very close to transferring but ultimately do not. It will also provide insight into additional factors and information beyond what is available in the statewide databases. Moreover, the RP Group is seeking to release the results of the TVP as a toolkit which will help faculty and staff at individual campuses explore and improve their own students’ transfer velocity. Keep an eye out for updates and new releases over the coming year. ■

Curriculum and Dominoes: What We Learned about Statewide Curriculum Work through CB 21

BY JANET FULKS, BASIC SKILLS COMMITTEE CHAIR AND AD HOC NONCREDIT COMMITTEE CHAIR

For those of you who have not participated in this faculty driven coursework alignment, CB 21 is simply the name of a data code that describes the level of courses prior to transfer-level courses. This data code is the 21st course basic (CB 21) code in the same way that CB 04 represents the 4th course basic code for degree applicability and CB 05 represents transferability of a course. Previously the coding was primarily assigned by someone other than faculty and often assigned by someone without knowledge of the curriculum pathway and existing course alignment. This was a problem because the data, using CB 21, were examined by researchers and legislators to determine policy and legislation. Because faculty were unaware of this code and its use to report student progress through basic skills course work, the Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC) Report looked as though there was little or no progress, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL), where many courses were coded at a single level. When the data looked bad, like students were not progressing—it invited external groups to try and FIX our student pathways via legislation or mandates.

What occurred in California was a process unique in the United States. It was faculty driven and organic, allowing local control but describing statewide core outcomes at each level. Faculty met statewide and created rubrics of only core agreed upon outcomes

associated with each level of pre-transfer English, mathematics, reading and ESL. Faculty based their work on existing national, state and professional studies as well as their own understanding of local student populations and discipline expertise. The rubrics were validated and voted upon by all 110 colleges in Spring 2009 (<http://www.cccbsi.org/cb21-information>). This represents a healthy alternative to combat external standardized curriculum. Recoding, using the CB 21 rubrics, provides the data elements to track student progress. These rubrics aligned the coursework in basic skills to provide a pathway where the outcomes of each sequential course flow naturally into the skills required to enter and succeed in the next course. For the last three months colleges have worked to correct this coding. The Academic Senate in collaboration with the Chancellor's Office Technology, Research and Information Services and Academic Affairs Divisions have done over 13 training sessions via webinar and regional meetings reaching over 700 participants.

The goal of the CB 21 training was to reorient, redirect and educate the coding process of basic skills courses. Just like dominoes, the courses created a pathway, if you knew the coding rules and coded right. But if you had an unclear picture of Title 5 and were unaware of the way CB 21 codes lined up with other CB coding such as degree-applicability (CB04), basic skills (CB08) and noncredit (CB22), the domino train did not align. Because coding is linked

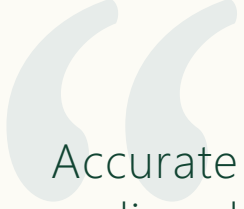
to our allocations, staffing reports, and state and federal data, this is a train you don't want to wreck. Therefore it is essential to review what we learned from the CB 21 process.

Findings

Coding issues were common: There was a great deal of historical confusion in the field regarding curriculum coding. In part, this issue pivoted around the fact that faculty and curriculum committees should have been determining this coding prior to Management Information System (MIS) submission of data, not passed off to someone else. In part, the previous data elements were unclear and college interpretations varied widely. Lack of clarity and training on specific coding issues, lack of clarity in Title 5 and shifting basic skills perspectives contributed to the confusion. Accurate curriculum coding demands the curriculum developer and reviewer understand these codes and the role of the curriculum within the department, college, and statewide curriculum.

There was little comparability among colleges: While many colleges had clear pathways through basic skills course work which showed up in relatively straightforward CB 21 coding, many colleges had not discussed basic skills pathways. Very few colleges were on the same page within their own district and assumptions as to basic skills coursework and levels were not aligned or comparable across the state. This meant the basic skills coursework was not portable for students taking courses at multiple colleges (40% of the CCC students) and navigating the pathway to college level work.


Many colleges needed to look at basic skills as a pathway: Curriculum in basic skills is often the product of individual discipline areas or programs independent of a strategy to provide an important set of foundational academic skills to students. Most often colleges had addressed basic skills within English or mathematics or counseling or ESL but not across the disciplines. Very few colleges understood the impact or the context of degree and certificate achievement related to whether a course was coded as degree applicable or basic



Accurate curriculum coding demands the curriculum developer and reviewer understand these codes and the role of the curriculum within the department, college, and statewide curriculum.

skills. When the English or mathematics departments assign a code of basic skills or degree applicability to a course in their area, it often affects the number of units and composition of degrees in many areas outside of the discipline, particularly those in career technical education (CTE).

Colleges need to consider effective practices in basic skills education and re-examine the outcomes of their curriculum: The Basic Skills Initiative has clearly highlighted effective practices in basic skills education and pathways. Colleges reported gaps, overlaps or disconnects in their basic skills course pathways. Many colleges indicated the usefulness of the rubrics in communicating key curricular outcomes to examine coursework and align expectations. ESL and English departments considered the interactivity of the curriculum with a student-centered perspective. Bridges were examined between noncredit and credit coursework. Some colleges indicated that they were developing new programs as a result of examining student populations and curricular needs. Some were using the rubrics as a starting point for discussion and planning.



Faculty are the experts and have the knowledge to enhance basic skills success and transfer pathways.

The entire re-coding process revealed some things we did know prior to statewide agreement describing the common levels in each discipline.

We learned that:

- entering students from high school and non-credit pathways aligned with California Standards (Adult Secondary Education/GED) were under-prepared, lacking transfer-level preparation.
- defining pathways and success in credit and noncredit basic skills and ESL is an equity issue, because of the concentration of underserved and diverse students in these courses. Lack of clarity and guidance through the basic skills and ESL credit and noncredit courses disproportionately impact equitable outcomes.
- describing course level outcomes within each discipline, in a faculty driven process, informed by state and national standards and validated by the Academic Senate statewide processes is doable and valuable. The process allowed curriculum alignment, while protecting local curricular authority, without standardization. This faculty-driven process can do what external agencies think they must impose, only faculty can do it better, more accurately and more organically, anchored in our local knowledge about the students we serve.
- coordinating student pathways within a college is essential. Relying upon curriculum de-

veloped in isolated disciplines does not benefit our students' ability to reach their educational goals. While curriculum committees centralize some of these discussions, the planning process and communication from a student pathway perspective is essential. This elevates student success and completion of educational goals above discipline territory and individual faculty autonomy.

There is great value in statewide discipline discussions. It provides a professional venue to examine our curricular work.

There is GREAT VALUE in having discipline discussions and coordination statewide (not just in basic skills but also in transfer). Several of these efforts have been funded, producing beneficial outcomes, only to have funding curtailed before the discussions reached fruition such as with IMPAC (Intersegmental Major Preparation Articulated Curriculum). Currently the CB 21 re-coding, Course Identification Project (C-ID), Statewide Career Pathways and the Basic Skills Initiative Professional Development Grants are examples of efforts that have had widespread impact. Faculty are the experts and have the knowledge to enhance basic skills success and transfer pathways. Unfortunately that knowledge is sequestered at individual colleges and within departments. An absence of statewide funding coupled with the unique nature of individual colleges, even within districts, unfortunately assure a lack of coordination. Success on these types of projects requires the work be directed from a statewide perspective (not an individual college, district or even consortium of colleges), faculty-driven, and funded for an adequate amount of time. The long-term effects of these statewide discipline discussions and training cost very little, yet in reality benefit many. In particular, when guided from an all-colleges, student-centered perspective this is the only way to really facilitate the educational goals of the nearly three million students the California community colleges serve. Statewide discussions are essential to correctly placing the curricular dominoes so that our students can see the connections and follow the pathway. ■

Minimum Qualifications Equivalency Standards and Criteria—A New Journey

BY WHEELER NORTH, CHAIR, STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMITTEE

In Fall 2009, a resolution was passed to look into addressing the need for “standards and suitable criteria” whereby local college faculty can more objectively and easily establish equivalencies.

10.02 F09 Equivalency Standards Guidelines

Whereas, There are significant problems with equivalency across the state; and

Whereas, Single course equivalency, eminence, equivalence to coursework, and other issues continue to be serious issues;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges produce a process of consultation with local senate and discipline organizations leading to guidelines for establishing standards and suitable criteria for equivalencies; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges present proposed guidelines for establishing standards and suitable criteria for equivalencies, including model practices, at a breakout at the Fall 2010 Plenary Session.

Interestingly, past efforts have never actually sought to examine and develop resources with this degree of detail or specificity. From 1989 to 2009 the Academic Senate has produced, updated, and added to at least seven papers that touch on the subject of equivalencies to varying degrees. Additionally the

Academic Senate has established an additional eight to ten resolutions seeking positions or urging other actions related to equivalencies. However, in each of these the focus has been to inform the reader of the requirements pertaining to equivalencies, and how to develop policies, processes and procedures, all with a broad smattering of ensuring faculty primacy in determining both the results of the above and in determining the candidate equivalencies themselves.

Equivalence to the Minimum Qualifications (updated in 2006) is the only paper to attempt defining at least some areas and means whereby equivalencies must be established. These were pretty broad in nature and included equivalence to general education (GE)

“From 1989 to 2009 the Academic Senate has produced, updated, and added to at least seven papers that touch on the subject of equivalencies to varying degrees.

patterns, subject matter mastery and emphasized the need for equivalence to be based upon defensible evidence. However, to go much deeper into the details of comparative criteria, a large volume of detail that resides along several axes is needed. For example, where there are parallels among the categories of disciplines, such as in the arts or computer sciences, what are the skills and levels of attainment that exist for each degree/qualification?

As well, the levels become problematic the higher we go. The Associate degree is the lesser problem because our colleges each have detailed information on the skills and skill levels that occur for Associate degrees. But what about the huge variety of requirements that exist from one post-graduate program to another? Thesis or no thesis, 24 units or 30 units, defense or review, the list goes on and on, yet each college must assure equivalence in each case of hiring where a required degree is not possessed.

Is this “*suitable criteria*” even possible to produce, and produce in a form that meaningfully informs but does not mandate? Certainly, one option is to list all the content items, or objectives in a course or program, and define the skill levels required in a crosswalk type rubric. Then it would be up to the candidate to provide narrative and evidence detailing their capabilities in each of these areas. One immediate question is how specific and detailed must this scrutiny be?

Then the larger question is how do we, as a state-wide group, collect this data in a way that is sharable as a resource? Another, possibly even greater question is what to do with the similar dataset for courses we all know and love (e.g., English 1A, intermediate algebra, or courses meeting any of the other required degree standards)? Since using this resource wouldn't be mandatory, would we all have to agree to it? Would a development model similar to our existing disciplines process be viable, maybe where each year we tackle another area?

And, moving on up into an even higher level, the next logical question is just what do we do to derive the data needed for graduate and post-graduate degree equivalencies? Can this even be modeled in a form

that would either improve results or make them less problematic for local equivalency committees?

Finally, who keeps this dataset in their pocket, ready to hand out to any of the now 112 colleges at a moment's notice? If it's linked to the *Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in the California Community Colleges* document, does that imply mandates? As a paper, would this grow into a universe-filling dataset (depending on the degree of specificity desired)? E-publishing would solve some of this. But then who bears the burden of maintaining this dataset? Should the Academic Senate instead just develop the tools needed for local colleges to go collect all this data on their own, thereby allowing greater specificity to their needs?

I'm asking these questions in preparation for a discussion we are going to attempt at the Spring 2010 Plenary Session in conjunction with the first discipline hearing on Thursday, April 15th. Depending on the workload created by discipline submissions we may have more or less time for this discussion, and the only two outcomes really sought are to get a rough idea of what kinds and detail of data would inform your local processes, and a general idea of how this might best unfold in a way that lets you collectively drive it.

The following link is to *Equivalence to the Minimum Qualifications*. If you are planning to attend this breakout I encourage you to review it.
http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Equivalence_2006.html

In summary, Title 5 §53430 provides that all faculty hired to teach for-apportionment community college courses must possess skills and capabilities equivalent to a variety of degrees. Having the required degree simplifies things greatly, but conversely, not allowing for equivalent options can greatly limit a program's ability to serve students. As you can see by the complexity introduced above, the challenge of evaluating each candidate is one faculty are ever obligated to assure is conducted with the highest degree of rigor. Hopefully this new journey we are embarking on together further ensures this obligation remains met. ■

Putting Students First: The Solution to the Challenge of Program Discontinuance

BY RICHARD MAHON, CHAIR, CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
WHEELER NORTH, CHAIR, STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMITTEE

Not surprisingly, given the extraordinary budgetary times we find ourselves in, the Academic Senate finds itself receiving more inquiries about program reduction and discontinuance than is typical. Faculty aren't contacting the Senate to find out how to jettison programs; rather, how can faculty defend vulnerable programs and the students they serve when programs are identified for reduction or elimination not on the basis of need, but on the basis of potential cost savings?

Help From Title 5

Title 5 is not silent on the question of program discontinuation. Title 5 §51022 requires that "Within six months of the formation of a community college district, the governing board shall adopt and carry out its policies for the establishment, modification, or *discontinuance* of courses or programs. Such policies shall incorporate statutory responsibilities regarding vocational or occupational training program review as specified in section 78016 of the Education Code" (emphasis added). Section 78016 in turn requires that "Every vocational or occupational training program offered by a community college district shall be reviewed every two years by the governing board.

A second Title 5 Regulation §55601 requires local governing boards to appoint advisory committees: "The governing board of each community college

district participating in a vocational education program shall appoint a vocational education advisory committee to develop recommendations on the program and to provide liaison between the district and potential employers." This language suggests that local boards have a responsibility to receive guidance about the ongoing need for vocational programs before making decisions regarding their reduction or elimination. An active and effective advisory committee can be a very valuable asset in defending a program from discontinuance since it provides a direct link to the specific community need each program serves.

Thus the first line of defense for targeted programs is the district's own policy and procedure. What process has the local board established to deal with program discontinuance? In recognition of how regularly this challenge arises, the state Chief Instructional Officer board and the California Community College Association for Occupational Education (CC-CAOE) assembled sample procedures from several California community colleges in December 2003, and those local policies are available for review at: www.asccc.org/Events/VocEd/2007/Program_Discontinuance_Models.doc.

A related question concerns the degree to which a college may *curtail* a program. On this point, the *Program and Course Approval Handbook* (2009) asserts that in proposing a new program, a college must indicate that it has resources to allow it to "commit to

offering all of the required courses for the program at least once every two years” (p. 6). Thus there seems to be an expectation in principle that a program is still viable if courses are offered biennially. A district could argue that it still meets the spirit of the regulation if required courses are offered only every other year. No requirement in Title 5 requires a college to offer as many sections as student demand would warrant, and current budget cuts have made it impossible for colleges to meet demand.

Help from the Accreditation Standards

There is also a discussion of program discontinuance in the 2002 Accreditation Standards that would seem to prohibit a district from eliminating programs too hastily: “When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption” (Standard II.A.6.b). This requirement is broader than the one established in Title 5. By specifically obligating a college to meet the needs of enrolled students, there is the implication that required courses must be offered in sufficient number to meet the needs of students the college has permitted to enter the program.

Perhaps most relevant and most challenging to meet in a fiscal crisis is the accreditation expectation that requires colleges to plan and budget effectively. The introduction to the accreditation standards requires that “The institution provides the means for students to learn, assesses how well learning is occurring, and strives to improve that learning through ongoing, systematic, and integrated planning.” Nothing could be more contrary to this principle than reducing or eliminating expensive or vulnerable programs as the easiest path toward cost reduction. Unfortunately, unless a college is scheduled for a site visit in the near future, the vague threat of an accreditation sanction probably pales in comparison to the budget shortfalls colleges are facing now. It is (1) the effectiveness of the planning processes and (2) working relationships local senates develop in their colleges before

a crisis arrives that are probably the best foundation for a thoughtful approach to the threat of program reduction or discontinuance.

Help from the Academic Senate

The Academic Senate has a longstanding position about program discontinuance that recommends a process that is *distinct* from program review. Program discontinuance raises issues broader than those addressed by program review and questions which are likely to require the participation of the collective bargaining representative (who should certainly be involved in any campus discussion about program discontinuation). Rather than focus on the negative aspects of program discontinuance some colleges have chosen to focus on the question of program vitality. A program vitality process focuses on how a program can improve, reexamining community needs, other college processes, and data that indicates the program is still viable. This examination should seek to ensure resources whereby the program can effectively meet the need for which it was initially developed. The Senate’s paper on the topic of program discontinuance can be found at: http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Program_discontinuance.html. Because program reduction or elimination is also related to enrollment management, readers should also review *Enrollment Management Revisited*, which can be found at: <http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Downloads/Enrollment-Mgmtmt-Spring09.pdf>.

There are few prospects that can put faculty more at odds with their constituent partners than the idea of reducing or eliminating a program. Our ideals of professionalism and supporting student success must guide the tenor and goals of campus decision-making processes. Fiscal challenges to colleges can lead to drastic consequences for every program, employee, and student at a college. In times of draconian budgetary reductions, choosing between across-the-board cuts versus eliminating one or two struggling programs can be a difficult choice. In spite of the challenge it is never appropriate to treat others unprofessionally. We must recognize that all sides of this process have very real reasons for feeling threatened as we and our colleagues wrestle with

these challenges. In the end, decisions must be made for the right reasons. A program that is discontinued because it was only staffed by part-time faculty or had high equipment costs *in spite of the fact that it was effective and met community needs* is a bad decision, even if it might have been expedient. Budget crises are generally temporary in nature, but sadly the havoc they wreak is often permanent. Putting student needs at the center of our decision-making processes is our most powerful guide in seeking the right policy and practice.

References

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). (1998). *Program discontinuance: A fac-*

ulty perspective. Sacramento, CA; Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Program_discontinuance.html.

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). *Enrollment management revisited*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from <http://www.asccc.org/Publications/Papers/Downloads/Enrollment-Mgmt-Spring09.pdf>

California Community College. (2009). *Program and course approval handbook*. Sacramento, CAL Author. Retrieved March 14, 2010, from http://www.cccco.edu/Portals/4/PCAH3_Mar2009_v3.pdf ■

Exemplary Awards

Each year the Academic Senate recognizes outstanding community college programs. This year two programs received cash awards of \$4,000 and four programs received honorable mention plaques. Presented by the Board of Governors and sponsored by the Foundation for California Community Colleges, the awards provided an excellent opportunity to showcase exceptional programs. This year's theme for 2009-2010 is *Creating a Bridge to Transfer or Career*. Below is a brief summary written by the two program winners. The summary for those winning the Award honorable mention are listed on the Academic Senate website at: <http://www.asccc.org/LocalSenates/Awards/Exemplary.htm>.

Winners

BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE

KIMBERLY VAN HORNE ED.D., DEPARTMENT CHAIR: ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bakersfield College (BC) is a rural Hispanic-serving institution with only a single transfer institution nearby, California State University, Bakersfield. The Academic Development department provides pre-collegiate coursework and academic support services for students in a central location on the main campus and on our community campuses. The Bakersfield College Academic Development department (ACDV) provides quality developmental education in a supportive environment in order for students to achieve academic, personal, and occupational successes. The ACDV program addresses students' needs through a variety of effective approaches. The program has built upon exist-

ing practices and incorporated new interventions and strategies. Implementation of these new approaches has accelerated students' acquisition of basic college skills while allowing students to pursue their academic and vocational goals.

The ACDV department at BC offers numerous programs and support services:

- The **Tutor Training Program** supports student success across the curriculum for all students and provides International Level I and II Tutor Certification through the College Reading and Learning Association.
- The **Student Success Lab** positively influences students through computer-assisted instruction; the lab offers a variety of activities on Plato, a self-paced, pre-programmed software program offering reading, writing, and math skill-building activities. The lab also provides a free proofreading service, which extends our services beyond the underprepared campus community by assisting students across the campus.
- The **First Year Experience** course is a recent addition to our program. This summer bridge course introduces students to the college community. Students also work with a counselor to complete their student education plans. The Academic Development counselor also makes classroom presentations and works individually with students to guide them in scheduling and long-term educational planning.
- **Learning Communities** have been an integral part of our program. The integration between an ACDV class and content classes is especially effective for developmental students.
- Another new addition are the free **Critical Academic Skills (CAS) workshops**, which are designed to provide small group instruction on critical skills needed for college success, such as "Comma Crimes" and "Word Processing Basics." The sessions are discrete and offer an alternative to semester-length courses by focusing on isolated skills review.

- **Technology:** The Student Success Lab, document cameras in classrooms, projectors, and laptop carts are examples of our high tech and high touch philosophy. ACDV is especially committed to implementing the principles of Universal Design for Learning to ensure that all students' learning needs are met and co-sponsors several courses with Disabled Student Programs and Services.
- ACDV focuses on student success and retention by presenting **Flex Workshops** on campus in order to infuse the dynamic principles of Developmental Education across the curriculum.

You can access the Bakersfield College Academic Development Website at <http://bcacademicdevelopmentdepartment.weebly.com> ■

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AT SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE (SBCC)

KATHY MOLLOY, BASIC SKILLS COORDINATOR

In Spring 2005, the President of Santa Barbara City College asked the local academic senate to assume responsibility for planning and implementing a Student Success Initiative. The goal of this Initiative was to address the needs of the large population of under-prepared students entering the College and to increase the academic success of all SBCC students. The senate accepted this responsibility and the following summer formed a task force to begin planning the Initiative. This task force included faculty representatives from all divisions, as well as students, deans, and directors of successful SBCC student support programs.

In the fall, the task force issued a college-wide call for proposals for the Student Success Initiative and subsequently reviewed over 60 proposals submitted by faculty, departments, and administrators before forwarding them to the senate. These proposals offered a wide range of solutions, from departmental and cross-departmental projects to broad institutional initiatives. After reviewing these proposals, the senate made its recommendation for the Initiative: provide comprehensive tutoring in a variety of formats by expanding existing successful

programs and making them even more effective and by creating new programs to address unmet student needs. The College approved funding for the Initiative in Fall 2006, and these Initiative programs became known collectively as the Partnership for Student Success (PSS). The Partnership consists of the following programs: the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Academic Achievement Zone, and the Gateway to Success Program.

The Writing Center provides tutors who are trained to work with students at every stage of the writing process and to assist these students in developing their writing skills. The Math Lab provides tutors who are trained to work with beginning through advanced math students to develop their math skills. The Academic Achievement Zone works closely with the Writing Center and the Math Lab and provides tutoring for all student athletes who assess at below college level in reading, writing, or math or who have GPAs at 2.3 or below. The Gateway Program provides in-class and outside-of-class tutoring for students in designated courses, from English as a Second Language (ESL) and basic skills through first-year content and career technical education (CTE) courses. Gateway faculty recruit students who have been successful in specific courses and train them to become Gateway tutors in those classes. Tutors in all Partnership programs must complete a required tutor training program before they begin working with students, and each program uses faculty-developed directed learning activities that enable students to further develop necessary skills by working independently and with tutors in guided activities.

The Partnership Steering Committee meets regularly to assess the progress of each program, address challenges, solicit proposals and recommend them to the senate, and conduct regular evaluations of the Partnership programs. This senate subcommittee includes former task force members, leaders of each Partnership program, and representatives from counseling, CTE, and ESL.

The Partnership for Student Success is in its fourth year at SBCC. As the evaluation data for the aca-

ademic years 2006-09 indicate, the Partnership continues to demonstrate strong success rates, especially among basic skills students.

It is clear that growing numbers of SBCC students are taking advantage of Partnership programs. Not only are our students benefiting from the support they receive, but the students who provide that support are benefiting as well. For example, in a study done by the College, tutors had much higher success rates in their own classes once they began working in the Gateway Program.

Institutional research data show that students are taking advantage of the Partnership programs in growing numbers. As an example, over 5,000 tutoring sessions took place in the Gateway Center in Spring 2009, in addition to the Gateway tutoring that took place across the campus. The Writing Center tutoring sessions have doubled in the first two years of the Partnership, and the Math Lab has expanded its hours and added a well attended Saturday Lab to accommodate the growing number of students seeking math tutoring. The Academic Achievement Zone has continued to expand its hours and services to meet the special needs of student athletes, and the number of students participating in the Zone has increased as well. Each of these programs reports higher course completion rates for participating students when compared with non-participating students in the same courses, and the success rates continue to grow as the students take increasing advantage of the support services offered by these Partnership programs.

The senate's effort to change the culture of the campus has truly paid off. As our Accreditation Team recently observed, student success is at the forefront of everything we do, and the Partnership is largely responsible for creating and sustaining this emphasis on student success. ■

Julie's In Box

The Academic Senate receives many requests from the field, and most of them come through the Senate Office into the inbox of our own Executive Director Julie Adams (hence the name of this column). As you might imagine these requests vary by topic, and the responses represent yet another resource to local senates. This column will share the questions and solutions offered by the President and the Executive Committee. Please send your thoughts or questions to Julie@asccc.org.

Dear Julie,

We have a problem at our campus, and I'm sure it happens elsewhere. Civility is a real challenge. People get so mad at one another that it impedes our work. This happens with our board, our administrators, and yes, with faculty. Does the Executive Committee have any suggestions?

Trying to Get Along

Dear TGA,

You have identified one of great challenges for all of us and a significant reason for conflict in many of our colleges. There is no simple solution, although some faculty have suggested adding a magic elixir to college air conditioning systems to improve the atmosphere at their colleges. It takes courage and determination on the part of faculty leaders and all faculty to address the challenges of incivility, and a short response here only scratches the surface of some basic ideas regarding civil engagement. Nevertheless, we have the following suggestions for you.

Human behaviors are sometimes linked to fears: fear that my program will be cut; fear that I'm being treated differently than others; fear that student/peer/administrator/board comments will be used against me; fear that incivility will go unchecked. If possible, have discussions about what people fear, and put those issues on the table. Whenever possible, try to assuage unfounded fears quickly and then move on to finding solutions to perceived and real problems.

Set ground rules for meetings that everyone agrees to. Keep them visible during meetings so that everyone can help keep the peace. Each person at the meeting, in the department or in the senate has a responsibility to be professional and to expect professional behavior from others. Use techniques at meetings that keep the focus on the issues instead of people. Rather than say "I agree (or disagree) with Lois," try saying "I agree (or disagree) that we go in that direction." The goal of meetings is not to take sides but to solve problems.

Don't be afraid to speak in a civil and gracious manner even when others are not speaking with such grace. It is hard to do so given our passion for certain issues, students, programs, and our senses of right and wrong. Vilifying colleagues rarely helps the situation. However, recognizing that one has stepped over the line in civil discourse means that there is opportunity for growth. If colleagues (students, board members, etc.) show improved behavior, let them know that you noticed.

Finally, borrowing a line from Star Trek, communication is the final frontier. Why should speaking directly with someone be the last option of choice? With more ways to communicate today, it often appears that we communicate less well with one another rather than better. Pick up the phone and call the person who seems frustrated or disgruntled and talk. Listen and try to find common ground. Then do it again. Have coffee, and let the person know why you care enough to talk to them directly. Has your senate developed a resolution or policy on professional communication?

Good luck! ■