LAMC Unit Effectiveness Review: (DEV COM)

Unit Assessment Review Meetings
Guiding Questions for Department Chairs

1. Please highlight any changes since you submitted your unit assessment (e.g. enrollment trends of the units as of Fall 08).

- The overall percentage of students referred to Developmental Communications courses during the assessment process has remained steady.
- In the Fall 2008 semester Developmental Communications reduced its Standard Hours by almost 4 percent but increased FTES by 17.2 percent, WSCH/FTEF by 21.3 percent, and enrollment at census by 19.9 percent (compared to Fall 2007).
- We have implemented a new strategy for making sure that students are enrolled in the appropriate reading course.
- BSI funding has been approved for a non-credit reading lab intended to assist low-literate students.
- More DC instructors have developed web pages with course information and resources.
- In Spring 2009 the college cut seven three-unit courses and two one-unit lab courses (31 percent of our department’s offerings).
- DC36A has been added as prerequisite to English 21, rather than a corequisite. (DC1 is already a prerequisite.)
- The Learning Center director retired in January but has not been replaced.

2. What do you see as the strengths of each of your units?

- Developmental Communications faculty work hard to support student needs both inside and outside of the classroom. Both full-time instructors are inundated during office hours and before and after office hours with students requesting additional help. Informal workshops and groups are often offered.
- The developmental courses in general offer an excellent basis for success, and we believe are some of the strongest in the District.
- Department members share and collaborate extensively. Original materials are created and shared by instructors. Faculty participate and collaborate on the development and revision of department midterms and finals.
- Full-time faculty members support and mentor adjuncts to an unusual degree.

3. What do you see as the challenges?

- There is still not much campus-wide awareness or commitment to providing basic skills assistance to students in a timely way. Few departments have skills advisories or prerequisites, so many underprepared students enroll in content areas. At this time most developmental courses are recommended, not required, and many students do not take developmental courses during their first semesters. In addition, many students choose not to take developmental courses at all even though their skills may not be adequate for success in college coursework. Research into best practices suggests that students benefit from mandatory placement into developmental courses, and such courses should be taken early in their academic careers. However, most do not take such courses because they are
not mandated by the school. (At this time only DC 1 and DC36A are mandatory, and then only if students are placed into those courses to fulfill the English 21 prerequisite.) That said, if every student who placed into developmental courses actually enrolled in those courses, our course offerings would be totally inadequate. For example, in Spring 2009, 283 students (17 percent of the 1,661 students assessed) placed into DC34, our lowest reading course appropriate for students reading at the fifth through seventh grade level. The college offered three sections of DC34, and one of those was cut. Only eight percent of the 1,661 student who were assessed in Spring 2009 were told that they did not need a reading course.

- There is no security in our reading lab. As a result, materials are frequently stolen, so there is are inadequate resources for other students.

- There are no reading tutors.

- Developmental and at-risk students benefit greatly from smaller class size, but most developmental classes have at least 35 students enrolled. Therefore, students lack the individual attention they often need.

- Retention remains an issue for a wide variety of reasons, including class size and lack of tutorial support.

4. How does your unit planning support the mission of the college?

The Los Angeles Mission College Mission Statement, which introduces the Educational Master Plan, relates directly to the need for this most basic level of assistance for our students:

The mission of Los Angeles Mission College is the success of our students. To facilitate their success, Los Angeles Mission College provides accessible, affordable, high quality learning opportunities in a culturally and intellectually supportive environment by:

- Encouraging students to become critical thinkers and lifelong learners;
- Ensuring that students successfully transfer to four-year institutions, find meaningful employment,
- Improve their basic skills, and enrich their lives through continuing community education;
- Providing services and programs that improve the life of its immediate community.

Several of the Future Assumptions contained in the EMP relate to the Developmental Communications department:

- The majority of students entering Mission College will continue to require precollegiate academic remediation, especially in math and English, in order to be successful in college-level and university-transferable courses.

- The number of students enrolling to complete lower division requirements, before transferring to a baccalaureate degree granting institution, will increase at a greater rate than general college enrollments.
• While enrollment in AA/AS Degree, certificate and vocational programs will increase, there will be increasing demand by employers for graduates who possess "employable skills," including: basic competency in reading, writing, and computation; interpersonal communication; problem solving; and creative thinking.

• Community colleges will be expected to provide more remedial and basic skills instruction for under-prepared high school graduates, reverse university transfers, and the local work force.

• The college will continue to serve a significant number of students who are economically challenged, first-generation college students, non-native English speakers and working full- or part-time.

5. What are your visions for changes, revisions and growth?

• We will continue to participate in the BSI and the Essential Skills Committee and lobby for mandatory assessment and early placement into basic skills courses. This will require huge growth and development of our department.

• We will also continue to disseminate the BSI goals and objectives to promote campus-wide awareness and commitment to providing basic skills assistance to students.

• We will develop and implement the non-credit language literacy lab by Fall 2009.

• We plan to reevaluate the assessment cut scores to improve placement accuracy.

• We plan to make DC 34 a prerequisite for DC36A.

• We will continue to lobby for smaller class size and tutoring.

• We will continue to improve retention—i.e. implementing additional advisement and intervention strategies

6. What resources are needed to support as well as to build the programs in your Department?

• Facilities—More office space for both full-time and adjunct faculty
• Facilities—A location in the LRC for the new non-credit language literacy lab
• FTEF—Two full-time tenured faculty
• Staff—Dedicated clerical assistance and tutors for the reading lab
• Technology—Updated computers for staff use and an appropriate screen to accommodate computer projector in LRC 215

7. What is the status of SLO assessments in your department?

Course-level SLOs have been established for all courses currently offered in the discipline. Four courses (DC 1, 34, 22, 36B) have SLO’s which are defined, but not assessed. SLO’s for DC 36A have been evaluated, and changes in the evaluation of students have been implemented. In addition, formal improvements have been implemented for that course. Plans are being made to assess the SLO’s for our other courses. As for discipline-level SLOs, preliminary discussions have taken place but no formal submissions have occurred.

8. What is the status of the course outlines of record and course updates in your department?

All of our course outlines are current; however, we will update the DC 34 course outline when it is made a prerequisite for DC36A. Also, faculty is creating the course outline for the non-credit language literacy lab.