LAMC Unit Effectiveness Review: (PACE)

Report for the Educational Planning Committee 5/4/09. Mark Pursley, PACE Director

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

   PACE average class sizes have increased since the fall 2007 data on the program review report. Our ACS for fall 2008 shows improvement (23.18 at semester's end) and our current ACS for spring 09 is 34.31. Better communication with counseling and department chairs, along with scheduling changes (especially- offering fewer sections of a course in a semester) are continuing to improve enrollment numbers. Recent changes in the college schedule, including cross listing of PACE courses with department offerings should have a significant impact on PACE enrollment.

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

   Outstanding faculty: Teaching working adults in an accelerated format poses unique challenges. In consultation with department chairs, LAMC PACE has acquired a core group of instructors who work effectively in an accelerated format and who are flexible to the special concerns of working adult students. Their skill and commitment is an important contributing cause for the high rates of student success in PACE courses.

   Committed staff: PACE Program Assistant Laura Villegas and PACE Director Mark Pursley have demonstrated their commitment to student success over many years. The PACE office provides academic advisement, problem resolution, and empathetic support for students enrolled in PACE courses and other students who wander in to our office area.

   PACE Tracks: The PACE academic tracks were created so that students with specific transfer goals receive only the classes they need to satisfy graduation and transfer requirements. This helps demystify the CSU, IGETC, preparation for major, and graduation requirements for students.

   Close connections with transfer partners: The PACE Director maintains close relationships with the primary public and private transfer institutions that PACE students consider as transfer options. The director regularly attends meetings at and invites representatives from CSUN PACE, CSUDH PACE, UCLA, Pepperdine University, University of Redlands, University of La Verne, University of Phoenix, and others. Two full time instructors from CSUN PACE (Sheryl Thompson, English, and Richard Tontz, Economics), teach part time for LAMC PACE, so our students already have some connections when they transfer to CSUN and some informed judgments about academic expectations at the transfer institution.

   Emphasis on collaborative learning: PACE instruction relies heavily on study groups or learning teams. A cohort of students will frequently maintain the same learning team over several semesters of course work in PACE. This provides a system of peer support that is another contributing cause to the high student success rates in PACE courses.

   Close connections with the honors program: Unlike many community college Honors Programs that are accessible only to daytime students, LAMC Honors recruits heavily from the PACE student population, enabling a number of returning students to receive scholarships and pursue upper division level honors research at our UC transfer institutions.
3. What do you see as the challenges?

Effective marketing: PACE currently has no funds for a professional brochure to market PACE effectively to our target demographic. Campus recruiters have rarely mentioned PACE when they make presentations at high schools or college fairs.

Maintaining quality faculty: Many of our best PACE instructors have retired or received full time teaching appointments. To replace a PACE faculty member, close cooperation with the academic departments and the academic affairs office is essential, including a time consuming selection process. In some cases, department chairs have appointed faculty who have not performed well in the PACE format. One problem instructor can cause serious harm to PACE’s word-of-mouth marketing system among the student population. (This recently occurred with Environmental Science in spring 2006 and Math 115 from spring 2005 to fall 2008).

Counseling: There is no designated PACE counselor so PACE students have sometimes seen counselors who were not well-informed about PACE. Some students reported that counselors had advised them against taking courses in PACE, based on the false assumption that accelerated courses are “harder” than traditional 16 week courses. More recently, this situation has greatly improved as the counseling department has graciously permitted the PACE director to make presentations once a year at counseling department meetings. Still, the lack of a designated PACE counselor is a challenge.

Visibility on Campus: Many students who would benefit from PACE are not aware of the program. A page in the fall schedule explaining PACE is a helpful corrective. Our main competitor, ITV, is mentioned on the LAMC.edu Homepage, PACE is not.

Classrooms: Most PACE instructors use PowerPoint to deliver lectures. PACE students would benefit if PACE courses met in smart class rooms. It would also be helpful if certain smart classrooms were designated for PACE courses on evenings and weekends.

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

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.

More effective marketing strategies, that target the working adult demographic, will improve community access to education. Working adult students who lack the time and resources to attend college three or four evenings per week need to be informed about the advantages that PACE offers.

The addition of a part time student worker would increase the service and support offered by the PACE office improving student success.

Continued communication with academic departments and counseling to ensure that PACE course offerings are meeting the career and transfer goals of our students while maximizing enrollment.
Establishing a PACE Advisory Committee to review current tracks and discuss the implementation of new tracks could serve a fruitful purpose.

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

Ongoing discussions with department chairs, counseling, and the Dean of institutional Research to ensure that the existing PACE Tracks are best suited for meeting the career and transfer goals of our students. The possible addition of new tracks, including vocational tracks, is an interesting possibility. Moorpark College had vocational PACE tracks, including one for Administration of Justice. Oxnard College PACE offers an AS in Legal Assisting and another for Child Development. We have added an AJ 1 course to the Social Science Track for fall 2009 to help gage student interest. A Medical Assistants program is another possible option.

Over the past few years we have been experimenting with hybrid courses in PACE. We have entertained the idea of creating a hybrid track, where students attend face-to-face sessions only on alternate Saturdays. So far, the results are mixed, with higher initial enrollments in hybrid courses but lower levels of student success. Finding the right instructors for this format is crucial. We will continue to explore this option.

In the past, PACE has had mixed success with offsite locations, however, we will continue to explore possibilities for holding courses at local businesses or high schools to better serve working adult students in neighboring communities.

Day PACE. Years ago, PACE had mixed success with a Wednesday daytime track. For students who work nights and weekends, a day PACE track may have some appeal.

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

A professional brochure to market the program.

A student worker for 12 hours a week to provide coverage in the office evenings and Saturdays.

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

Learning outcomes for PACE students are the same as those specified by the academic disciplines for their non-PACE students. Academic performance inevitably will be demonstrated through coursework in many disciplines and by other measures as may be developed by these disciplines. No academic departments have yet requested PACE instructors to assess SLO’s in PACE courses.

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

PACE does not routinely update course outlines. However, the PACE Director has completed course updates for history 86, Anthropology 104, and Education 203 when PACE students needed these courses and no regular faculty were available.