LAMC Unit Effectiveness Review: (PACE)

Report for the Educational Planning Committee 1/24/11. 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 10).

PACE average class sizes continue to surpass the college average. With the current shortage of courses, enrollments are high throughout the campus. When given a choice, however, many students prefer courses in an accelerated format.

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

   Outstanding faculty remains at the core of PACE’s success: 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: PACE programs were created as transfer programs for working adults who find themselves unable to move forward in their careers without a four year degree. Evening and weekend scheduling, pairing of courses, an eight week accelerated format, and an emphasis on collaborative learning, continue to be attractive for working adult students, many of whom do not feel comfortable in exclusively online courses. 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, Woodbury University, and others. As the CSU population continues to swell, more of our students are looking to private colleges that offer course scheduling designed for working adults.

   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.

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. Counseling continues to refer working adult students to our office
and enrollment is not an issue, but we do need to improve our visibility on campus so that students who can benefit most from our program are aware of what it has to offer.

Maintaining quality faculty: This continues to be an issue. Not all faculty flourish in an accelerated classroom environment. An instructor has only 12 class meetings to deliver 16 weeks of academic content. This requires efficient use of class time and creative strategies for out of class (tba) hours. As the responsibility for staffing PACE courses has shifted from the PACE Director to Department Chairs, we have seen more retention issues. It would be helpful if adjuncts were interviewed by the department chair and the PACE Director before being assigned to PACE. Currently, there has been a tendency to offer instructors a PACE course if nothing else is available for them in the department. This strategy does not always produce a good fit.

Changing regulations: The PACE accelerated format relies on TBA hours. Originally those hours were fulfilled using approved videos from the Carnegie foundation. While this worked well for some courses, the expansion of the PACE curriculum brought courses for which there were no approved videos. Consequently, PACE instructors began using other videos, CD roms, and internet resources to fulfill the tba hours. Recent memos from the state chancellor’s office have raised concerns about the permissibility of these practices. The best remedy for this uncertainty seems to be offering all eight week PACE courses as hybrids.

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. A permanent location for the PACE office near designated PACE classrooms would benefit the program.

Course offering cuts: Reductions in class offerings mandated by academic affairs has created hardships for PACE. The PACE bridge (non-transferable math and English courses) have been almost entirely eliminated. This has made it difficult for new PACE students to get started in the program since it is difficult for them to get the prerequisites they need. It has also prevented us from offering transfer courses that are unique to one track (Economics 2, for example, was eliminated for spring 2011). The elimination of all PACE offerings in the summer of 2010 was particularly difficult for our students and seemed unfair and unwarranted to us.

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?

The current Dean of Academic Affairs has offered a number of interesting suggestions for changes in PACE offerings. One idea is to add career/technical certificates to the current transfer curriculum. LA Valley College’s accelerated degree program (VCAP) offers a Child Development Certificate (as does Moorpark College PACE). Valley has recently eliminated its Elementary Teaching Track and added a GSIT certificate. Preparation for a transfer Computer Science AA is an additional option. Another idea is a sequence of Health Science lab courses offered in an accelerated format. We have also discussed adding an Environmental Science or other “green” track. Further research and discussion of these and other possibilities is clearly warranted. Whether such programs should be added to PACE or developed by other departments to supplement their course offerings should be carefully researched and discussed.

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.

A permanent location for the PACE office and designated smart classrooms.

A professionally designed PACE website that can be routinely updated by the Director.

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?

All eight week PACE courses need updated outlines to be offered as hybrids without tba hours.
9. Progress towards EPC recommendations. **Advisory Board:** An Advisory Board task force was formed with a number of faculty, department chairs, administrators, and a student agreeing to participate. One meeting was held but only three members of the task force were able to attend. **Facilities needs:** Current PACE classroom needs are for three rooms Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 6-10 PM; two rooms Thursday 6-10 PM; and seven rooms Saturday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. **Faculty Orientation:** Scheduling problems and late hires have so far prevented us from holding a special orientation for new PACE faculty. A 30 minute flex day session would probably be sufficient. I have met individually with most new PACE hires, but we haven’t always got the contact information from departments in time to even schedule those meetings. If the proposal mentioned earlier with respect to hiring is implemented, we could ensure better communication between PACE, the departments, and new PACE faculty. **Service Area Outcomes:** Students who attend a PACE Orientation or seek information at the PACE office will: Understand PACE scheduling including: differing drop dates for PACE courses and traditional courses; the distinction between session A and session B courses; the distinction between regular PACE Saturdays and PACE Bridge Saturdays. Know who to contact for academic advisement and be aware of the need to consult with college counselors for additional help with academic planning. Understand the differences between the five PACE tracks and how each leads to different transfer opportunities. Appreciate the unique challenges and benefits of taking courses in an accelerated format.