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 number of sections offered in Developmental Communications has markedly diminished. Since the high of 30 sections in Fall 2006, the discipline now offers only 20 sections of developmental reading and grammar. That reflects a 33 percent decline in sections. From Spring 2006 through Spring 2012 our sections have declined by 43 percent, from 30 sections to only 17 sections. College assessment data continually indicates that virtually all ENL students need developmental reading courses; in addition, at least 85 percent are assessed as needing below-transfer-level writing courses. Unfortunately, access to basic skills improvement for Mission College students has been severely hampered by these severe cuts.

- The non-credit literacy lab has been in operation since Fall 2009. It serves students reading below the sixth grade level who are unprepared to be successful in Dev. Com. reading and grammar classes. It also supports students also taking the Dev. Com. classes who are at risk of being unsuccessful, as well as students in English 21 and 28 and pre-GED preparation students. However, it only operates four hours per week.

- As of Spring 2010 English 21 no longer has Dev. Com. 36A, intermediate reading and study skills, as a prerequisite. Neither is Dev. Com. 36A a co-requisite for English 21, as it was before it became a prerequisite in Spring 2009.

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

- The developmental courses in general offer students an excellent basis for success, and we believe these courses are some of the strongest in the District.
- We are a teaching community where department members share and collaborate extensively. Original materials are created and shared by instructors. Faculty participate and collaborate on the development and revision of quizzes, midterms, and finals.
- Full-time faculty members support and mentor adjuncts to an unusual degree.
- Faculty members all meet state minimum qualifications for basic skills instruction; specifically, all have extensive training, experience and expertise in reading pedagogy, adult literacy, and language arts in general. We offer the best-qualified campus resource for discussions on basic skills and reading improvement across the curriculum.
- Faculty participate in Achieving the Dream, the Essential Skills Committee, and on the campus Curriculum Committee.

What do you see as the challenges?

- There is still not much campus-wide 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. With only one exception, Dev.
Com. 1) most developmental courses are recommended, not required, and many students choose not to take developmental courses 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. 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 Fall 2011, 462 students (28 percent of the 1,667 students assessed) placed into DC34, our lowest reading course appropriate for students reading at the fifth through seventh grade level. The college offered four sections of DC34. In other words, only 35 percent of the students placed into DC 34 could actually register.

- There is little tutorial assistance for basic skills students. There is no Program 100 reading tutor, nor is there a reading lab.

- 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.

- Developmental students very often demonstrate behaviors that disallow their success, i.e. they don’t do homework, are frequently absent, and fail to take responsibility for their own progress. Their success is also impaired by a number of extrinsic factors, including large class size, lack of tutorial support, and lack of advising or mentoring services for underprepared, at-risk students.

- Not enough sections of courses to serve students

- Although little formal data exists to support this assertion, developmental students often report that counselors do not encourage them to enroll in reading courses

- Although we have implemented a first-week strategy to identify and advise students who may be enrolled in an inappropriate reading course, at that point in the semester classes are full so students can’t add a more appropriate course

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

The Los Angeles Mission College Mission Statement, which introduces the Educational Master Plan, prioritizes the need for basic skills instruction:

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 and address the challenges the discipline continues to face:

**Basic skills, remedial, and pre-collegiate instruction will continue to be in high demand for incoming freshmen and returning students, particularly as the increased graduation requirements in math and English will dramatically increase demand in those areas. Spending cuts may particularly challenge Basic Skills education as funding for the Basic Skills Initiative declines.**

Placement Test data collected from 2006-2009 indicates that more than 85% of those students tested require Basic Skills courses in English, and over 75% require Basic Skills courses in Math.

These numbers have remained fairly steady for the four-year period. Commencing fall 2009, the requirements to graduate with an A.A. or A.S. degree have increased from Math 115 (Beginning Algebra) to Math 125 (Intermediate Algebra) and from English 28 (Intermediate Reading and Composition) to English 101 (College Reading and Composition I). Undoubtedly these new requirements will affect a great number of LAMC students, creating a sharp increase in demand for math and English Basic Skills courses.

These changes come at a particularly bad time since math and English tutoring have already faced extensive cuts due to the budget. Furthermore, the state’s 2009-2010 budget cut LACCD’s Basic Skills Initiative funding more than 33%. This will make providing adequate Basic Skills education a particularly challenging priority for LAMC for the foreseeable future.

The Developmental Communications discipline unit plan supports the mission of the college by recommending the following: reinstating the number of Dev. Com. course sections to 2006 levels as a critical priority; developing and offering accelerated basic skills courses in the regular semester and during a summer bridge program; institutionalizing the basic skills coordinator position; improving student support in developmental courses by hiring tutors; and implementing mandatory placement in developmental reading courses.

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

- We will continue to participate in Achieving the Dream and in 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.
- Develop a peer mentoring program under the aegis of Achieving the Dream
- We will continue to promote campus-wide awareness and commitment to providing prompt basic skills assistance to students.
- We will continue to lobby for smaller class size and additional tutoring resources.
- We will work to improve retention—i.e. recommending and promoting the implementation of additional advisement and intervention strategies.
- Train faculty to provide informal academic advisement and counseling to students in order to help them be successful in the college setting
5. 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
- **Staff**
  - Dedicated clerical assistance for faculty
  - Reading tutors for the Academic Success Center
- **FTEF**
  - At least one full-time faculty member in Dev. Com. plans to retire within one year; a replacement will be needed.
- **Technology**
  - Updated computers for staff use
  - An appropriate screen to accommodate the computer projector in LRC 215

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

Course-level SLOs have been established for all courses currently offered in the discipline. At least one course-level SLO will have been assessed for all of the courses by the June 15, 2012, deadline. Most courses have multiple assessments for the SLOs already completed.

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

The curriculum committee has not reviewed the course updates for DC 36AB that were submitted in Spring 2010. The department has no information regarding when these outlines will be scheduled for review. DC 1, 22, and 34 need to be updated.

8. What progress has been made towards the recommendations made by EPC following your 08-09 program review presentation?

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<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Establish collaborative efforts with ESL and other disciplines regarding the means to address essential skill deficiencies, and tutoring needs.</td>
<td>Dev. Com. is now part of the ESL/Dev. Com./Learning Skills department and now works closely with other faculty in these disciplines. In addition, DC faculty continue to collaborate with other disciplines and entities such the Learning Center and Noncredit through the Essential Skills Committee. DC faculty also work closely with DSPS and the Learning Center staff to coordinate and promote the provision of tutoring services and workshops appropriate for basic skills students. Collaboration would be enhanced by the institutionalization of a basic skills coordinator.</td>
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<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Investigate the concept of pairing reading with other discipline courses.</td>
<td>In Fall 2010 DC faculty participated in the First-Year Experience English Pathway, which offered PD 40 paired with DC 1 and DC 36A in order to improve new students’ preparedness for college-level coursework. While informal discussions regarding pairing other courses have taken place, the logistics of doing so (i.e. the necessity of scheduling classes so far in advance each semester and lack of time or resources to coordinate the pairings) have prohibited substantial progress in this regard. The loss of the Basic Skills Coordinator in July 2011 is</td>
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impeding progress in this area.

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<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Follow up on reviewing and establishing new assessment cut scores and possibly a</td>
<td>One of the Draft Recommendations of the Student Success Task Force would, if implemented, mandate a statewide effort to develop and utilize common centralized diagnostic assessments. Mission College basic skills faculty have participated in previous efforts in this direction and will continue to do so.</td>
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<td>new assessment tool.</td>
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<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Explore curriculum development including accelerated reading courses and non-credit skill modules.</td>
<td>Dev. Com. faculty developed and implemented a noncredit language literacy lab class in Fall 2009. Informal discussions regarding developing very basic skills courses are ongoing. Also, discussions have occurred within the ESC committee and the DC discipline regarding expanding summer bridge programs to include orientations and accelerated reading skills courses so that students will be better prepared for college coursework.</td>
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<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Further analyze the desire to require co and pre-requisites to assure student success.</td>
<td>DC faculty (and BSI researchers) continue to advocate establishing basic skills prerequisites for content-area courses in order to improve student success. The DC discipline has as a long-term goal the establishment of prerequisites for its higher-level reading courses.</td>
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