Program History and Purpose
In 1982, the State of California established the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) program throughout the California Community College system as “a unique educational program geared toward the welfare recipient who desires job-relevant education to break the dependency cycle” (AB 3103, Section 1a.) Operating as a subset of EOPS, the CARE program helps welfare-dependent single parents achieve their educational and vocational goals by offering an array of “over and above” services to bridge the gap between dwindling CalWORKs benefits and rising educational costs.

Eligibility Criteria
Essentially, CARE students are EOPS students who face the additional challenge of being single parents subsisting on public aid. To qualify for CARE services, students must meet each of the following requirements:
- Be at least 18 years old
- Enroll in 12 units or more (exceptions available for disabled students)
- Be accepted into the EOPS Program and attend EOPS orientation session
- Be a single parent with at least one child under the age of 14
- Receive CalWORKs cash aid (for themselves and/or their children)

Needs Addressed and Services Offered
A. Material Support
While Merritt’s CARE students overwhelmingly qualify for the Board of Governors fee waiver and federal financial aid, the day-to-day costs of attending college – books, transportation, supplies, child care, and meals – would pose an insurmountable barrier to most of these students were it not for CARE’s support. Given the particularly severe economic hardships CARE students face, fee waivers and financial aid are not enough to ensure regular attendance and academic success. To that end, CARE provides the following:
- Book vouchers - presently offering $200.00 per student, per semester, over and above any EOPS book service for which the student is eligible
- Tote bag or rolling backpack of school supplies each semester (including such costly required items as scientific calculators, lab coats, medical equipment and flash drives)
- Meal service in Merritt cafeteria - $5.00 per student, per day, for students maintaining cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher
- Semester parking permits for CARE students who drive
- EasyPass/AC Transit Translink card ($31.00 fee) for each CARE student enrolled in 9 or more units, providing semester-long unlimited travel on public transit
- Supplementary child care assistance ($80.00 per week, per child) to cover study time hours, which county CalWORKs typically does not offer.
- Cash grants, as funding permits, to reward those CARE students demonstrating high academic achievement and full compliance with their Mutual Responsibility Contracts
B. Counseling and Advising

In addition to helping CARE students overcome financial barriers to college attendance, the program also offers counseling tailored to the unique needs of the CARE population. As a subset of the EOPS Program, all CARE students are entitled to (and are mandated to attend) at least three scheduled meetings per semester with their respective EOPS counselors. Among the many benefits of these meetings, CARE students cite particular appreciation for the counselors’ help in clarifying their academic and vocational goals, then mapping out the educational path needed to meet those goals. Under their EOPS counselor’s guidance, CARE students make the most of their time at Merritt by knowing the courses needed to fulfill the certificate, graduation, or transfer requirements of their chosen direction. CARE supports the EOPS mission by making receipt of certain benefits (such as cash grants) contingent upon the student’s fulfillment of the 3-meeting requirement.

Supplementing the EOPS counseling program, each CARE student also meets face-to-face with the CARE Counselor at least once per semester, and in a typical semester, 78% of CARE students seek further guidance and support from the CARE Counselor on a drop-in, as-needed basis. In addition to explaining CARE’s benefits, responsibilities, the application process and other how-to’s, the CARE Counselor offers brief, solution-focused emotional support, information and referrals to students encountering roadblocks to their college success. Typical issues addressed in CARE drop-in counseling include the following:

- How to cope with grief, anxiety, traumatic life events and concentration problems while maintaining functionality as both student and parent
- Emotional issues triggered by classroom discussions/assignments
- Understanding concepts like GPA, prerequisites, when and how to drop/add classes, sources of affordable textbooks, and when/how/where to ask for academic help.
- How to communicate effectively with instructors and other campus authorities
- Conflict mediation and crisis management
- Stress management and self-care
- Referrals to community resources such as food banks, homeless shelters, domestic violence services, medical/mental health clinics, and advocacy programs

C. Skills-Building Workshops

In collaboration with Merritt’s CalWORKs Program, CARE hosts educational workshops designed to help CARE and CalWORKs students build career and life skills to address their real-world needs. Offered with a buffet lunch, these workshops address such topics as:

- applying for scholarships
- interviewing skills
- resume writing
- actualizing goals
- navigating the CalWORKs system
- financial planning

Led by presenters from collaborating agencies such as LIFETIME (Low-Income Families’ Empowerment through Education) as well as in-house experts such as Merritt counselors, CARE’s workshops are well-received and frequently result in students networking with the presenting staff and each other.
MERRITT-CARE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUPS</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 &amp; 19</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
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<th>2008-09</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILIPINO</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATINO</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIVE AMER.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER/MULTI</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: To qualify for CARE services, students must be at least 18 years old. Age group categories have been adjusted to match those provided by the State Chancellor’s Office MIS report, from which the above data was sourced.

PROGRAM GOALS

The CARE Program serves a high-risk student population facing formidable obstacles to college success: while enrolled full-time in college courses, they are raising families single-handedly, coping with extreme socioeconomic disadvantages, and are academically underprepared. Based on assessment tests, nearly 70% of CARE students enter college lacking the basic English and math skills needed for college-level work, and more than 20% are the first in their families to attend college (State Chancellor’s Office, 2008.) Merritt’s CARE students typically describe the pragmatic support of EOPS and CARE as critical to their continued education: without these programs, many say they would not even have attempted their present journey toward sustainable employment. In practical terms, no Merritt-CARE student in recent memory would have been able to obtain her required textbooks without the intervention of CARE and EOPS; without books to study from, students fail. As another example, the present cost of bus fare to Merritt College is $2.00 each way; without CARE’s
transportation assistance, many students would fail their classes due to absenteeism because $20.00 per week in bus fare is beyond their means.

Given these realities, the overriding goal of CARE is to level the playing field: to enable CARE students, despite their socioeconomic and educational disadvantages, to perform as well as their full-time counterparts in the general Merritt College population. In measurable terms, this concept may be expressed as follows:

---

**Goal A:** CARE students will perform as well academically as the general full-time Merritt population, despite the drastic differences in life circumstances between the two groups.

**Measure:** Term grade-point average (GPA)

**Data:** CARE student GPAs, Fall Semester, sample average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hand-tabulated from student records in PeopleSoft.

---

**Goal B:** CARE students will continue their enrollment term-to-term at rates comparable to their counterparts in the general Merritt full-time population.

**Measure:** Fall to Spring semester persistence rates

**Data:** Number of CARE students enrolled per semester:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall only</th>
<th>Spring only</th>
<th>Fall-Spring</th>
<th>FA-SP Persistence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>n=99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=97</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hand-tabulated from Merritt-CARE student files.

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**Goal C:** CARE students will complete their academic goals (degree, transfer, or certificate) at rates comparable to their counterparts in the general Merritt full-time population.

**Measure of Goal C:** Goal-completion rates

**Data:** Number of CARE students earning degrees, certificates, or transfer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: CARE Year-End Reports
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Given that all CARE students are EOPS students first, CARE’s Student Learning Outcomes are subsumed under EOPS. See EOPS Program Review for further information.

ACTION PLAN

Need: Ready access to CARE and comparative student data. To demonstrate the effectiveness of the CARE program, CARE staff must be able to track relevant data such as retention and persistence rates, units attempted and earned, grade point averages, and student success as defined by transfer rates and degrees/certificates awarded. While Merritt’s PeopleSoft system contains all of the above in each student record, there is presently no process in place that allows end-users to run queries about CARE students. As such, all data for this report was hand-tabulated using CARE’s in-house records, a cumbersome process that is probably not sustainable long-term. Similarly, access to comparative data for the Merritt population as a whole would be greatly appreciated.

Plan: Discuss above needs with Peralta IT Department

Need: Improved forum for student feedback about CARE services. To better understand what services are most useful to CARE students and what improvements are desired, the CARE program needs a tool to gather and quantify student feedback. At present, this information is received anecdotally. Given CARE’s recent drastic reduction in funds, rank-ordering CARE services by effectiveness is particularly crucial as it may be used to determine which services will be saved and which services discontinued in the next budget year.

Plan: Develop CARE Student Satisfaction Survey, based in part on research into best practices at sister CARE programs throughout the state. Below is a copy of a draft/proposed Student Satisfaction survey for the CARE program.

STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY
OF THE EOPS/CARE PROGRAM

Your input will help us to continually improve the quality of the support we provide you and other students.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about EOPS:

   4. Strongly Agree
   3. Agree
   2. Disagree
   1. Strongly Disagree
   0. Not Applicable

   _____ The program is helpful with my concerns.
   _____ The staff are prompt in responding to my needs.
   _____ The number of staff is adequate to meet my needs.
   _____ The staff promote student independence and responsibility.
   _____ Appointments are available when I need them.
   _____ Services that I need are provided in a timely fashion.
   _____ Telephone calls are returned promptly.

2. How satisfied are you with the services EOPS Provides?

   4. Very Satisfied
   3. Satisfied
   2. Dissatisfied
   1. Very Dissatisfied
   0. Not Applicable

   _____ Priority Registration
   _____ Book Vouchers
3. Please rate the effectiveness of the following EOPS staff:

- Counselors
- Coordinators
- Front Office Student Services Assistants
- Front Office Staff
- Other: __________________________

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your EOPS Counseling experience –

- Counseling appointments are available when I need them.

The EOPS Counselor...

- understood my Academic needs.
- listened well and summarized my issues accurately.
- met my goal for the counseling appointment.
- gave accurate instructional and student services information.
5. How much do you agree with the following statements?

The EOPS Office staff...

- _______...are friendly and polite.
- _______...are respectful.
- _______...promptly addressed my need.
- _______...responded to my need.
- _______...communicated clearly.
- _______...provided accurate information.

COMMENTS – Please be specific in your comments or suggestions. (Use additional paper, if required.) Your responses and any information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for the improvement of the EOPS program and the benefit of you and your fellow students.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

May we contact you if we have questions about your responses or need more details? If so, print your name/student ID here: ____________________________

ACTION PLAN ( CONT.)

Need: Enhanced cohesion of CARE students as a group. CARE students are powerful resources for each other, whether sharing tips on how best to navigate their CalWORKs requirements, forming study groups and babysitting co-ops, or lending expertise in specific learning areas.

Plan: Develop Merritt-CARE online community, enabling CARE students to more readily identify, communicate with, and support each other.
Need: Improved collaboration with Merritt CalWORKs program. Many (though not all) CARE students are also served by Merritt’s CalWORKs program, yet the programs currently operate independently of each other and require students to obtain separate sets of documents from their county social workers. This creates confusion for students and can prove time-consuming to students making multiple trips to county offices.

Plan: Meet with Merritt CalWORKs staff to discuss strategies for streamlining required documentation and processes.

Validation Team Report

Unit reviewed CARE Date Feb 23, 2010

Self-Study Team: Stefani de Vito
CARE Counselor, Merritt College, Judy Adams EOPS Coordinator.

Validation Team Anthony Powell, Dean of Student Services/ Cynthia Alvarado, Student (ASMC rep)/ Cie Jae Allen, Counseling faculty Merritt/ Charles Cannady, Counseling Faculty Alameda.

Summary of Findings

Part A. Accuracy and Thoroughness of Self-Study/Action Plan (program strengths, areas for improvement, data collection, projection of future trends/support). Part B. Validation Team Recommendations

The CARE program at Merritt College is supported by a part-time Counselor and the EOPS Coordinator, the Self-study was found to be accurate and thorough and the committee was impressed with the data that was gathered by the Care team. We also applaud the team efforts to serve the on-line CARE community this goal speaks directly toward a general student services initiative to enhance access to all students. The Validation team suggests continued progress toward the completion of unit outcomes in preparation for 2012. The team suggests immediate implementation of the Student Survey in response to the stated need for an effective tool to gather and quantify student feedback.