

# The Instructional Program Review Narrative Report

1. College: *Merritt College*  
Discipline, Department or Program: *Counseling*  
Date: *February 22, 2010*  
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## 2. Narrative Description of the Discipline, Department or Program

Please provide a general statement of the primary goals and objectives of the discipline, department or program. Include any unique characteristics, degrees and certificates the program or department currently offers, concerns or trends affecting the discipline, department or program, and any significant changes or needs anticipated in the next three years.

*The primary goals and objectives of the Counseling Department at Merritt College are to equip students with the skills that are necessary to be successful while enrolled in college classes, to prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university and to prepare students to develop and use soft skills upon entering the world of employment.*

- *General orientation to college*
- *Educational planning*
- *Study skills, time management, goal setting*
- *Career assessment and exploration*
- *Develop job seeking skills*
- *Transfer planning and information*

*The program does not offer a degree or certificate, but provides support for students to be successful in all classes undertaken. Additionally, the courses that are offered teach students how to be proactive with their respective college careers, chosen majors and the skills that are developed in order to be prepared to actively enter a very competitive workforce.*

*At Merritt College, through a Title III Grant, the idea of implementing a First Year Experience Program is being investigated and plans are now being made to pilot this program during the upcoming fall semester session. A part of the program will include one or more courses that are offered through the Counseling Department.*

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### 3. Curriculum

Is the curriculum current and effective? Have course outlines been updated within the last three years? If not, what plans are in place to remedy this?

*The curriculum is current and effective. This is demonstrated by the high retention and completion rates that Counseling courses have experienced over the past few years. All course outlines have been reviewed and updated within the last two years, including the identification of SLOs and the assessment measures to go with them.*

Has your department conducted a curriculum review of the course outlines? If not, what are the plans to remedy this?

*Yes, when the SLOs and the assessment measures were developed, each of the courses was addressed individually. A formal plan to review the outlines has not been developed.*

What steps has the department taken to incorporate student learning outcomes in the curriculum? Are outcomes set for each course? If not, which courses do not have outcomes?

*All the courses that are offered by the Counseling Department have student learning outcomes with assessment measures. The last were developed within the last two years.*

Describe the efforts to develop outcomes at the program level. In which ways do these outcomes align with the institutional outcomes?

#### **Recommendations and priorities**

*Need for additional course sections to be offered each semester and during the summer session, particularly for grant-funded programs, learning communities, and other special programs where exposure to the Counseling course curriculum is crucial.*

*Expand the course offerings to provide alternative courses for students to take within the curriculum.*

*Mandate that certain courses within the curriculum are required for all first-year students*

#### 4. Instruction

Describe effective and innovative strategies used by faculty to involve students in the learning process. How has new technology been used by the department to improve student learning outcomes?

*Classes are taught in a variety of modalities. One example is the use of success teams from the On Course (copyright 2008) curriculum. Teams are made up of five to seven students. The teams serve several purposes: students help to reinforce the material covered in class; students hold one another accountable for material and for their attendance; teams review portions of material covered by running review sessions during class. Students also develop test questions to demonstrate their understanding of the material that had been presented in class, etc. Many of the students are victims of the technology divide. As a result, individual and group projects are assigned in order for students to be able to utilize technology as part of the learning process. Equipment is available on campus for those who do not have access to computers away from the college campus.*

How does the department maintain the integrity and consistency of academic standards within the discipline?

*Faculty within the discipline attend conferences and workshops to update curriculum and share the ideas with other faculty within the department. Additionally, the department has weekly meetings that allow all faculty to present new material to colleagues.*

Discuss the enrollment trends of your department. What is the student demand for the specific courses? How do you know? What do you think are the salient trends affecting enrollments?

*Enrollment in the courses offered during the past three years shows a marked increase in the number of students taking courses within the Counseling discipline. All courses either reach or exceed the maximum recommended for each class. For example, during the Spring 2010 semester, two of the classes have surpassed the maximum enrollment and the others have reached the maximum. The trends that affect enrollment are the influx of underprepared students, re-entry students (having been in the workplace, raising families and other circumstances in life) and others who represent a cross section of the students enrolled in these classes. There is also the need for students to have classroom skills such as note taking and test taking skills. It is clearly evident that many students do not have these skills, which in return negatively impacts their performance in their other classes.*

*Given the number of students below college level in English, it has been determined that there is a need to add sections of Counseling 224, College Preparedness, a non- transferrable course to our offerings. In spring of 2010, we attempted to offer two sections of Counseling 224, but courses were cancelled due to budget constraints. All efforts will be made to offer these courses again. It is planned to include them in the pilot learning communities that are being planned for the upcoming summer session and fall semester.*

Comment [SP1]: Nice!

Are courses scheduled in a manner that meets student needs and demand? How do you know?

*The courses that are offered are scheduled strategically, at different times and days, including evenings, to allow students who take these classes to have the minimum amount of time conflict. As a result, students can complete core courses required for their majors. Given the trend of classes filling, we are confident that the courses meet student need and demand.*

**Recommendations and priorities:**

*It is recommended that we add one to two sections of Counseling 224 to the department offerings each semester.*

*Develop learning communities between the Counseling, English and Math departments.*

**Student Success**

Student Retention Rate		
<i>Students who do not withdraw or drop</i>		
By Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Counseling Baseline Fall 04-07	Counseling Fall 08
Asian	83%	67% (15)
African American	65%	77% (194)
Filipino	92%	50% (2)
Hispanic/Latino	86%	74% (54)
Native American	100%	80% (5)
Other	91%	0% (0)
White	73%	62% (13)
Unknown	65%	80% (15)
<b>Counseling Average</b>	73%	75%
<b>College Average Fall 2008: 72%</b>		

Student Course Completion Rate (SCCR)		
<i>Students who receive grades A, B, C or Credit</i>		
by Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	Baseline Fall 04-07	Fall 08
Asian	79%	33% (15)
African American	48%	56% (204)
Filipino	75%	50% (2)
Hispanic/Latino	81%	63%(54)
Native American	100%	80%(5)
Other	82%	0%
White	69%	46% (13)
Unknown	55%	60% (15)
<b>Counseling Average</b>	60%	56%
<b>College Average Fall 2008: 60%</b>		

Describe student retention and program completion (degrees, certificates, persistence rates) trends in the department. What initiatives can the department take to improve retention and completion rates?

*Program retention rate and SCCR is slightly below the college average. Most courses are offered through the Counseling Department stand alone, there is no issue with regard to retention and program completion. Based on productivity reports that are generated at the end of each semester, Counseling classes surpass the average productivity that is set district-wide.*

What are the key needs of students that affect their learning? What services are needed for these students to improve their learning? Describe the department's efforts to access these services. What are your department's instructional support needs?

*For many students, this is the first time that they have taken an active role in their learning process. Most students are unaware of their respective learning style. As a result, many have encountered challenges in the classroom. Adjusting to various instructional styles has created barriers to learning. The traditional learning environment has not encouraged inter-dependence between students and therefore the idea of utilizing study groups is new to many. In addition, a significant number of our students struggle with basic survival issues such as stable housing, money for required textbooks, transportation, child care, and other concerns, not to mention legal issues that impact our students as well as their family members. Information about intangible skills and qualities for employment readiness and strategies for effective job search are often lacking.*

*Needed services include counseling, on campus referrals to appropriate services and programs such as EOPS, DSPS, Financial Aid, the Learning Center (tutorial services), a viable Career Center and other offices as appropriate are recommended for student success.*

*To access the above noted services, direct referrals are made to assist students. The convenience of this referral system is enhanced by the close relationship that has been established within the Student Services Division.*

*At times, off campus referrals may also be appropriate due to the fact that the college is equipped to offer some services such as personal counseling on a limited basis only.*

*At this point, the classes are self-sufficient and additional instructional support services are not required.*

Describe the department's effort to assess student learning at the course level. Describe the efforts to assess student learning at the program level. In which ways has the department used student learning assessment results for improvement?

*Assessment methods have been created for each course with input from the entire counseling faculty and are on file with the Office of Instruction and the SLO Coordinator. Assessment is in the observation and monitoring of student outcomes. Lesson plans have been developed in direct relation to SLOs to ensure that student progress and performance are measured in relation to the outcomes.*

### **Recommendations and priorities**

*It is highly recommended that we expand the course offerings that are offered each semester.*

*In order to realize this goal, additional counselors must be given the opportunity to be able to teach which will result in greater opportunities for students to be able to benefit from this discipline.*

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## **5. Human and Physical Resources (including equipment and facilities)**

Describe your current level of staff, including full-time and part-time faculty, classified staff, and other categories of employment.

*Currently, two of the full-time counselors are responsible for three sections of Counseling 24. One counselor (part-time) teaches one section of Counseling 57 and another part-time counselor teaches one section of Counseling 224. During the Fall 2009 semester, the department also offered three sections of Counseling 200, which were provide by two full-time counselors and one part-time counselor. In terms of instruction, these classes and the Counseling Department have no classified support.*

**Describe your current utilization of facilities and equipment.**

*The Counseling Department's primary use of facilities and equipment is the use of assigned classrooms. However, the Counseling Department badly needs at least one, if not more, LED projector to enhance instruction and learning in the classroom.*

Are the human and physical resources, including equipment and location, adequate for all of the courses offered by your department (or program)? What are your key staffing and facilities needs for the next three years? Why?

*The human resources are not adequate for the number of students that are served each semester. Some of the classes are over enrolled because of the limited number of sections that are approved to be offered. Equipment needs are minimal, but with upgraded classrooms, technology (smart classrooms) would automatically be incorporated.*

*Over the next three years, if the class offerings are expanded, additional counselors/instructors would be necessary in order to accommodate the increased number of students that we hope to serve.*

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**6. Community Outreach and Articulation**

For Vocational Programs

*The Counseling courses fall under the category of Liberal Arts.*

For transfer programs

*We are not a program, but three of our courses, COUN 24, COUN 30, and COUN 57 have been articulated with courses at the CSU system and meet a general education requirement. With regard to the UC system, two of these courses, COUN 24 and COUN 57 transfer as elective units.*

