

The Instructional Program Review Narrative Report

1. College: Merritt College

Discipline: Department or Program: Learning Center/ Learning Resources

Date: March 1, 2010

Members of the Instructional Program Review Team:

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2. Narrative Description of the Discipline, Department or Program:

Please provide a general statement of 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.

a. General Statement of Primary goals and objectives of the Learning Center

The mission of the Merritt College Learning Center is to serve as a campus hub for learners and to assist students in becoming more efficient, effective, and independent learners. The primary focus is to provide supplemental academic support and to help students reinforce the mastery of concepts in college courses across the curriculum.

b. 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.

To assist students in achieving their maximum potential, the Learning Center staff collaborates with faculty, staff, and administrators in addressing the learning needs, academic performance, and retention of students. Supplemental academic support services include:

- Free drop-in tutoring and mentoring
- Open entry/open exit supplemental instructional courses in Learning Resources and English
- Writing Across the Curriculum (WRAC) services to help students understand the writing process
- Mathematics lab academic and supplemental services to support developmental, vocational, collegiate, and transfer level courses
- General tutoring in biology, chemistry, physics, CIS, and other disciplines (as budget allows)

- Open computer labs and computer aided instruction
- Study skills and success workshops and classroom presentations, often in partnership with Counseling and College Success faculty
- Study skills strategies provided in the form of tip sheets, and online resources
- Study groups led by faculty and tutors
- Training in discipline specific content strategies, learning theory, study strategies, communication strategies, learning styles, diversity, and customer service

As a result of the services provided by the Learning Center students will be able to increase skill levels in one or more of the following areas:

- To become more independent learners
- To increase self-confidence
- To decrease stress level
- To improve in-class performance
- To improve grades
- To become more aware of how they learn best
- To increase knowledge of the subject
- To complete homework assignments
- To achieve learning potential
- To better define and solve problems
- To become more comfortable in using technology
- To use collaborative learning to achieve course objectives
- To prepare for their goal (transfer to another college/university, complete vocational and technical programs, and to obtain employment, etc.)

The most significant change expected for the Learning Center within the next three years is the move to newly renovated facilities. Prior to 1995, Merritt's Tutorial Services was located in Building Q, and the Writing Center and Computer Lab for students were located in separate areas of the lower level of Building L. In 1995, Tutorial Services, the Writing Center, and the Computer Lab merged and moved to its current location in Building D to form what is now the college's Learning Center. This merger provided centralized delivery of academic support services to students and significantly.

The Learning Center and Library Facilities Planning Team was established in July 2008 to facilitate planning for a renovated Learning Center that will be located on the lower level of the Building L (Library) along with specific Library upgrades and facilities renovations. The planning team is comprised of Learning Center faculty, college librarians, Learning Center and library classified staff, college administrators, District facilities project managers, and architectural firm representatives. Currently, the project is in the furniture, fixture, and equipment (FF&E) phase of planning for both the Learning Center and the Library. Plans are also underway for the move of the Library to swing space in Building A. The completion of Learning Center and Library Facilities Renovation Project and move to Building L is scheduled for Fall 2011.

Concerns affecting Learning Center services are on-going problems with the new student sign-in system implemented in Fall 2008. The Learning Center staff has requested, but not received the required assistance to complete the customization of the system to meet

Merritt's Learning Center service needs. System problems affect students using the services of the Learning Center and generate which in turn is used in college budgetary and staffing planning, and decision-making processes. In the past, students were able to review their Learning Center contact hours in real-time. Now, those hours may or may not be displayed. The urgency of this problem is reflected in the sharp decline (possibly inaccurate data) reported data on student usage of the Learning Center (student contact hours).

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?

Course outlines for LRNRE 280 and LRNRE 501, including Student Learning Outcomes Addendums, were updated in February and March 2009.

The course outline and Student Learning Outcomes Addendum information for the English courses taught in the Learning Center are reflected in the Program Review for the English Department.

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

Yes. This was a joint effort in collaboration with Barbara Dimopoulos who also uses the LRNRE 280 course outline for DSPS students.

- What are the department's plans for curriculum improvement (i.e., courses to be developed, updated, enhanced, or deactivated)? Have prerequisites, co-requisites, and advisories been validated? Is the date of validation on the course outline?

Learning Center faculty will collaborate on future plans for any curriculum improvement to LRNRE 280 and the English 270 and English 280 courses. Discussion is underway to determine the benefits of a possible lecture and/or workshop component for LRNRE open/entry, open/exit, Pass, No Pass courses.

- 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?

Student Learning Outcomes have been incorporated in the curriculum and were approved in presented to the Curriculum Committee in March 2009 for LRNRE 280 and LRNRE 501.

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

N/A

- Recommendations and priorities.
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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?

Each semester, changes in the delivery of course content for the LRNRE 280 Study Skills course syllabi are made. The goal and challenge is to increase the active engagement of students enrolled in a self-paced, open-entry, open-exit course, for variable units. Diverse learning strategies are employed to create a safe learning environment and to increase the number of students meeting with the instructor on a weekly basis. A textbook is not required for the LRNRE 280 course, so resource materials compiled by the instructor are continually assessed and improved upon. More recently, a college study skills website was integrated into semester-long learning activities including a web based Learning Styles survey.

Overall, the Learning Center environment promotes an environment designed to meet a variety of student learning needs: one-on-one tutoring, individual and group study, faculty assistance in English, Mathematics, ESL, and Study Skills, and computer lab technology to support students in research and completion of course assignments.

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

N/A

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

Note: Accurate Learning Center data is currently unavailable. The Learning Center Director is working with the Office of Instruction to access accurate Learning Center course/FTE/FTEF data.

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

The courses scheduled in the Learning Center are open-entry/open-exit, positive attendance courses.

The following reflects the data tracked by the Learning Center staff:

School Year	Learning Center Contact Hours	Learning Center Students Tutored	Learning Center Tutors	Learning Center FTES	% of Students Using Learning Center
Summer 2008	3,757	566	7	Not available	22.09%
Fall 2008	19,981	1,930	22	*37.720	29.14%
Spring 2009	21814	1,868	24	*31.280	21.09%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>45,552</u>	<u>4,364</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>69.000</u>	
Summer 2007	4,056	637	8	7.649	27.32%
Fall 2007	27,380	2,308	22	48.568	34.60%
Spring 2008	24,443	2,138	20	39.61	32.00%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>55,879</u>	<u>5,083</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>95.817</u>	
Summer 2006	5,221	878	10	8.998	29.97%
Fall 2006	28,667	2,482	20	52.552	36.42%
Spring 2007	28,240	2,257	22	47.832	35.48%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>62,128</u>	<u>5,617</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>109.382</u>	
Summer 2005	5,950	871	7	10.592	31.17%
Fall 2005	31,645	2,465	26	49.43	38.05%
Spring 2006	29,064	2,404	24	53.072	37.92%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>66,659</u>	<u>5,740</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>113,094</u>	

*May not be accurately reflected due to flood in the Building D in December 2008. Summer 2008 data does not show in the system.

- Recommendations and priorities.

5. Student Success:

- 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?

The Learning Center provides supplemental/academic support outside of classroom instruction to support student success. Initiatives to improve retention/completion rates are in collaboration with academic instructional departments, counseling, and student services. Key initiatives in progress to improve the overall effectiveness of Learning Center services and student success include: 1) establishing a certified tutor training program; and, 2) to increase the availability of professional development resources for tutors. Recommendations from the recent external evaluation conducted on the college's Developmental Education Program by Dr. Hunter Boylan are serving as the foundation in developing the tutor training program. The guidelines of the College Reading and Learning Association's (CRLA) International Tutoring Program Certification process will serve as the basis in creating the tutor training program. Title III grant project funds will be used to purchase tutor resource materials.

- 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?

N/A

- 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?

N/A

- Recommendations and priorities.
 1. Expand the current tutor manual and orientation.
 2. Develop tutor training curriculum according to CRLA guidelines.
 3. Develop a library of tutor professional development resources.
 4. Integrate procedures for the Writing Across the Curriculum (WRAC) lab and the new Mathematics and Science Study areas into the Learning Center Facilities Renovation planning process.

6. 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.

Official Learning Center FTE/FTEF data are not available at this time. However, the Learning Center is staffed by a .50 Director (faculty), Learning Center Coordinator (full-time classified staff), and Computer Lab/Instructional Assistant (full-time classified staff). English, Mathematics, and ESL faculty are assigned to the Center each semester. Tutorial services, computer lab techs, and Center receptionist positions are staffed by students.

- Describe your current utilization of facilities and equipment.

All areas in the Learning Center are currently utilized including: general tutoring, the Mathematics lab, two computer labs used by students and for classroom instruction, limited storage areas, and faculty/staff offices. Within the past five years, computers in the labs and staff offices have been upgraded. The Go-Print System for student printing and updated computer lab printers were purchased with Measure A funds and installed in 2009.

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

Facilities and equipment in the Learning Center located in Building D are capable of serving the current needs of students, faculty, and staff. Services will be enhanced when the Learning Center relocates to the newly renovated facilities on the lower level of Building L in 2011.

- Recommendations and priorities.
 1. To establish the Learning Center as a standard/annual allocation in the college's budget planning process.
 2. To identify funding to support the purchase of instructional resource materials (e.g. study skills manuals, English and Mathematics program software, etc.).
 3. To implement the Noel Levitz external evaluation report recommendation of changing the name of the Learning Center to the "Success Center" upon the move of services to new facilities in Building L beginning Fall 2011.

7. Community Outreach and Articulation

For vocational programs:

- Describe the department's connection with industry. Is there an Advisory Board or Advisory Committee for the program? If so, how often does it meet? Is the program adequately preparing students for careers in the field? How do you know?

N/A

- Have students completing the program attained a foundation of technical and career skills? How do you know? What are the completion rates in your program?

N/A

- What are the employment placement rates? Include a description of job titles and salaries. What is the relationship between completion rates and employment rates?

N/A

- What industry trends are most critical for the future viability of the program? How do you know? What are the implications of these trends for curriculum development and improvement?

N/A

For transfer programs:

- Describe the department's efforts in meeting with and collaborating with local 4-year institutions. Is the program adequately preparing students for upper division course work? How do you know?

N/A

For all instructional programs:

- Describe the department's effort to ensure that the curriculum responds to the needs of the constituencies that it serves.

The Learning Center staff conducts classroom presentations and workshops to facilitate outreach and to promote the benefits of tutorial and computer lab services to students. Recommendations from the 2009 Boylan and Noel Levitz external evaluation reports and the April 2009 Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey results have been used to assess the responsiveness of the Center in meeting student and faculty needs. Students complete tutor evaluations following individual tutorial sessions.

- Recommendations and priorities.
 1. To increase outreach efforts to discipline faculty and student services departments so that they become effective referral agents for students.
 2. To participate in the college's planning process for the implementation of an effective early alert system.