

Mt. San Antonio College

Research & Institutional Effectiveness (RIE)

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TERC — Is it good for students?

By Lisa DiDonato

The Technology Education Resource Center (TERC) opened its doors in Fall 2007 with a main goal of preparing students to succeed both academically and professionally by offering applied activities to address their basic skills needs. Dora Edney is the Center's director.

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TERC Director Dora Edney and Professor Jon Preacher welcome students to the Center located in the Technology Building 28B, Room 108.

Family and Consumer Sciences: Evolving Beyond an SLO

By Jennifer Tucker and Priya Chaplot

Last year, the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Department was interested in exploring the ability of its FCS 41 (Life Management) students to manage time. Spearheaded by Lisa Ledebor, a FCS faculty member, a student learning outcome (SLO) was developed stating that "FCS 41 students

will be able to increase their skills in the area of time management." In order to assess this SLO, Ms. Ledebor researched existing external resources and came across a survey designed to gauge student perceptions in a Life Management course that was adapted from a survey designed by Driggers et al. (1989). The reliability and internal validity of the

adapted scale were assessed by the research office. There were items in the survey that dealt with time management, but it also addressed other skills that students would learn in the course. She decided to keep the entire survey in hopes that it would shed greater light on her students. The survey would be administered twice —

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Technology and Health students now have a conveniently located center in which they can meet for study groups, complete homework assignments, connect to trade-specific materials and tutoring, access textbooks, take assessment tests resulting in individualized educational plans, attend career workshops, and much more. Since the beginning of the Fall 2008 term, TERC has had over 1,500 sessions! According to Director Dora Edney, "We are extremely proud of the students, faculty, and staff collaboration and support. We look forward to another great year!"

What do students think about TERC?

A survey was conducted at the end of the Fall 2008 term of students who had used the TERC. Just over 97% of the students surveyed Agreed to Strongly Agreed that the Center was helping them to be successful in their classes. Of those surveyed over 60% wrote comments of appreciation or complimented some aspect of the TERC. Here are a sample of those comments.

- *"Thank you for having Tech Ed. I am in a wheelchair and to have a place to do research and study in the same building as my classes is great. The room offers enough space for me to move about in my wheelchair. It is a very big help for me. Thank you."*
- *"Thank God for this center! It saves me SO much time to come here and has helped me tremendously! THANK YOU!"*
- *"The Tech Ed resource center is very helpful along w/the Aeronautic tutors."*
- *"There's no other place convenient enough to where I go to class."*
- *"[I] would have failed without you guys."*
- *"Keep it going! This place has helped me get a lot of things done that I otherwise would not have."*
- *"Thanks so much--I'm disabled & this set-up allows me flexibility with my schedule & important resources."*
- *"Open 5 days a week would help! Some of us don't have a good study environment at home."*

Overall, the Center was given positive reviews by the students surveyed. Two areas of the Center that were most mentioned for improvement were to increase the hours of operation and to increase the number of computers available. Evidently, TERC is good for students.

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The report on the
**2007-08 ACADEMIC YEAR UPDATE ON MT. SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE'S
 BASIC SKILLS INITIATIVE FUNDED PROJECTS**

is available at: <http://www.mtsac.edu/administration/research/newsletter/2008FinalBSIUpdate2.pdf>

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Gender of Students Who Visited TERC During the 2007-08 Academic Year

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	294	40.4%
Male	424	58.3%
Unknown	9	1.2%
Total	727	100%

TERC Students' Most Frequently Taken Classes During Spring 2008

Course	# of Students (duplicated)
Basic Skills	506
Aeronautics	333
Alcohol/Drug Counseling	189
Vocational Training	175
Nursing	149
Air Traffic Control	112
Physical Education	79
Math	96
English	82
Electronics	77
Fire Technology	61

These tables show that more male students visited TERC during the 2007-08 academic year. The most frequently taken type of course by TERC students was basic skills classes followed by aeronautic classes.

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once at the beginning (pre-course survey) and once at the end of the term (post-course survey) — to gauge the change in the students' ability to manage time. The Research & Institutional Effectiveness Office was contacted to assist in the design, administration strategy, and analysis of the surveys. The items were modified to fit the curriculum of the FCS 41 course at Mt. SAC. Then, a scannable format of the survey was designed to ease the process of collecting the pre- and post-course surveys of hundreds of students. The survey was administered by the FCS 41 faculty during the beginning (first week) and the end (week before finals) of the Fall 2007 and Winter 2008 terms.

Once the data was collected, it was then turned over to the research office for a step-by-step plan including the assessment of the results. First, the researchers organized the data so that pre- and post-course survey results were matched for each student by the Mt. SAC student identifier. Next, the researchers used data-driven analytic techniques to examine whether overarching themes such as time management concepts aligned with other major themes or topics in the survey. The students' time management was revealed through various themes such as life management strategies and routine management. In addition, the survey also tapped into the students' money management skills, their negative coping skills and their socio-cultural awareness. Finally, the major themes were then tested for their relationships with students' beliefs about their life management behaviors. For example, students who reported having successful routine management strategies were more likely to feel that they had changed positively during the course, while students who reported struggling with money management skills were less likely to feel that their behavior in the course changed successfully. These and similar findings were articulated between the researchers and Ms. Ledebor through a series of team meetings, with a goal of understanding how these results could be used to "close the loop" for Ms. Ledebor's SLO of having her students increase their time management

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skills. Because of this project, Ms. Ledebouer discovered what contributed to the students' development of time management skills and *why* some students may not have increased their time management skills by the end of the course.

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Through this project, there was a greater awareness of what and how the FCS 41 students learned. The process provided evidence for changes that needed to be made in the course. Compared to what was expected to be gained from the SLO process, there were even greater surprises. Ms. Ledebouer is now even more confident that the FCS 80 Financial Planning course that is being offered next semester will be more relevant to the needs of the students. The collaboration between FCS and research has been mutually beneficial.

But that's not all! The team of researchers and Ms. Ledebouer are now working on fine-tuning the summary of findings to submit an article to a FCS scholarly journal. In summary, this SLO process has brought Ms. Ledebouer's initial SLO to another level. For the instructor, the work on her SLO generated new insights about her students. For the researchers, the SLO process produced further research inquiry, which advanced to the level of increased knowledge in this area and publishable material.

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Reference: Driggers, J., Wright, R. N. (1989). *Impact Assessment of Life Management Curriculum*. Retrieved November 21, 2008 from Education Resources Information Center.

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RIE MISSION STATEMENT

The Research and Institutional Effectiveness Office will support the mission of the college by providing accurate, timely, and reliable information to respond to the research needs of the various institutional constituencies. It will engage in and support processes for determining and documenting the effectiveness of programs and services and the institution as a whole in order to foster continuous quality improvement.



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