

# Title V Newsletter

Hispanic Serving Institutions Grant: Addressing Acute Student Needs at Mt. SAC

March 2009

## INTRODUCTION

Since October of 2006, the first (federally defined) year of a five-year grant, a team of faculty leaders, classified staff, and administrators has been diligently implementing the Title V Hispanic Serving Institutions grant focusing on increasing student success and retention in reading, writing, and use of integrated student services. A list of the grant personnel and steering committee members is included on page 7 of this newsletter. The Title V implementation team enthusiastically shares some early progress in counseling initiatives, learning communities expansion, increased faculty development, tutoring expansion, and

further integration between instruction and support services. An underlying principle of this grant effort is seamless integration of initiatives with programs, services, and classrooms, so that students reach the support services they need as early as possible. Another grant emphasis is the support for our faculty through expanded faculty development in learning communities, awareness of readability and reading strategies, and developmental education pedagogies. Now in Year 3 of the grant, the implementation team looks forward to even more significant evidence of improved student retention and success rates in grant activities.

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## Title-V Five-Year Institutional Goals

1. Improve curricula and instructional delivery with a focus on community needs, student access, and learning.
2. Offer comprehensive student services and programs to facilitate student success.
3. Assist students to unlock barriers to course completion and certificate and degree attainment.
4. Provide staff and faculty with knowledge and skills required for effective teaching, leadership, teamwork, management, and customer service.
5. Expand and improve institutional technology infrastructure to increase the capacity of the college to better serve students.
6. Increase fiscal stability by increasing the capacity of the college to raise revenues to support and maintain new initiatives.

## Title-V Five-Year Activities

YEAR ONE 2006-2007	YEAR TWO 2007-2008	YEAR THREE 2008-2009	YEAR FOUR 2009-2010	YEAR FIVE 2010-2011
Improve Writing Skills and Success in Developmental and Gateway Courses				
Develop integrated writing center	Pilot writing and data e-folders with tracking	Pilot writing across the curriculum		Assess and institutionalize practices
Pilot conversational tutoring, student writing workshops linked to developmental and gateway courses, and faculty workshops on writing across the curriculum				
Improve Critical Literacy Skills and Success in Developmental and Gateway Courses				
Assess reading level of textbooks	Publish reading level and delivery style of classes on Web	Assess reading level of syllabi and course materials; publish on Web; publish reading level of course materials in class schedule; faculty development in assessment of reading requirements		
Develop and pilot tutor training and tutoring for reading and study skills				
Expand Learning Communities in Developmental English and Reading				
Identify faculty needs; begin faculty training	Faculty training; pilot faculty summer institute	Faculty training; design faculty mentor program	Faculty training and pilot faculty mentor program	Assess and institutionalize faculty training and mentoring
Pilot sequential developmental English and reading learning communities.				
Improve Student Services Access and Intensity				
Enhance online orientation; develop online counseling; On Course faculty training; develop distance education orientation	Pilot online orientation and counseling; develop and pilot early alert; develop and pilot online probation workshop; develop and pilot student “map to success;” develop student services tracking system; pilot online distance education orientation; pilot Web-casting of developmental English and gateway courses		Pilot mandatory face-to-face probation workshops and referral; pilot tracking system	Assess and institutionalize early alert, probation workshops, and tracking
Develop and Utilize Web Integration and Student Tracking Capabilities of New MIS				
Evaluate business processes; identify critical reports and Web services	Target business process improvements for new MIS; develop Web services and student tracking; train staff; create custom reports to support student success initiatives; integrate new student e-mail platform		Develop additional integrated Web services and continue staff training to leverage MIS capabilities	



Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia (right), counselor, and a Mt. SAC student standing side by side. She said “the [counseling] team focused on decreasing the number of students on probation and improving student utilization of support services.”

## Counseling

By Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia, Counseling Faculty

The counseling team made significant strides toward supporting student success in Year 2 of the grant. The team focused on decreasing the number of students on probation and improving student utilization of support services.

### Probation and Student Success

A number of activities were developed and implemented to address the objectives in Year 2 of the grant including changes to the Board and Administrative probation policies, which became effective Fall 2008. In addition to the policy change, the counseling department continued to offer Student Success workshops for first-time probation students. The workshops included discussion of personal responsibility, strategies to improve academic success and an overview of campus resources and probation policy. Visits from Tutorial Services and the Writing Center emphasized the benefits of our campus resources and strengthened the collaborative efforts between these areas. Preliminary research with the Summer 2007 and Winter 2008 cohorts who attended a Student Success workshop has shown that **students who made at least one follow-up appointment with a counselor and then subsequently attended the appointment ended the academic year with an average GPA higher than those who made an appointment but never attended a counseling session.** Although not enough time may have elapsed for the groups to

raise their mean GPA's above the 2.0 level, there is a difference between those who had contact with a counselor and those who did not. **The group closest to achieving a mean cumulative GPA at or above 2.0 is the group who attended a counseling intervention.** They also had the highest term attendance rates than any other group. This data suggests favorable results for the counseling intervention, which included a workshop and counselor follow-up; however, further detailed analysis will be conducted.

### Online Services

As an alternative to the live Student Success workshops, an online Student Success workshop was developed and recently piloted with the Winter 2009 cohort of first-time probation students. In addition to the online success workshop, online counseling continues to grow. It launched in January of 2007 and served 3,274 students between January and December of 2007. This included over 5,000 unique interactions/exchanges between students and counselors. Between January and October of 2008, the number of students utilizing online counseling increased significantly. During that 10-month period of time, 5,471 students received online counseling. For Year 3 of the grant, the counseling department will enhance the online new student orientation in our continued efforts to improve access and utilization of student support services.

# Learning Communities

By Anabel Perez, Counselor, Learning Communities Coordinator



“Student success rates (“C” or “credit” grades) were higher in courses that were part of a learning community than their stand-alone courses.”

*-Anabel Perez,  
Learning Communities Coordinator*

## Expansion Efforts

The Title V grant has expanded and improved our already successful learning communities program. The focus of Title V supported learning communities includes English, reading, literacy, counseling and general education courses. In year 2 of grant activities, we expanded the number of learning communities offered from 4 to 10, increasing the number of participants from 74 students to 254. Student success rates (“C” or “credit” grades) were higher in courses that were part of a learning community than their stand-alone courses. We are developing new learning communities which will focus on reading and general education courses through a Reading Bridge

If you are interested in participating in an already existing learning community, want more information or would like to develop your own LC, please contact Anabel Perez, Learning Communities Coordinator at ext. 5904 or [aperez@mtsac.edu](mailto:aperez@mtsac.edu).

## Faculty Professional Development

In March 2008, twenty-eight faculty attended a 2-day Learning Communities Institute (LCI) at the Kellogg West Conference Center. The Institute’s goal was to

support faculty who were planning to teach in a learning community during the fall 2009 semester by providing training on how to develop curriculum and integrate assignments across disciplines. At the institute, faculty teams worked on developing their learning community, set goals, shared best practices and received peer feedback. The LC Institute was such a huge success that we are pleased to announce **The LC Institute 2!** Please save the dates for **April 30 and May 1, 2009**. LCI2 will focus on strategies to incorporate in the classroom, such as how to build community and incorporating diverse learning styles.

## LC Innovation

At the LC Institute, many faculty developed innovative learning communities. The themes of learning communities were diverse and included themes of multiculturalism and the history of oppressed groups to themes of self-actualization, such as how to live a purposeful life. One team in particular focused on developing a Transfer Bridge, which is a learning community with a focus on helping students transfer to a four-year college/university. Students in this learning community are part of a four-semester cohort, which begins with Eng. 67 (Writing Fundamentals) and Counseling 1 (Intro. to College) as part of the Summer Bridge Program. Each semester, students progressed through a series of English and Counseling courses, while also taking other courses. The model is as follows:

- Summer = Eng. 67 + Counseling 1 + Community Class  
Focus: Transition from high school to college
- Fall = Eng. 68 + Counseling 2  
Focus: Improve college success strategies
- Spring = Eng. 1A + Counseling 5  
Focus: Research writing and career and life planning
- Fall = Eng. 1C + Counseling 7  
Focus: Critical thinking skills and transition from 2-year to 4-year college/university

Gary Enke (Chair, English, Literature and Journalism) and Anabel Perez (Counselor, Learning Communities Coordinator) piloted this program and consider it a success. Of the 21 students who completed the last sequence (Eng. 1C and Counseling 7), 100% are transferring to a 4-year college or university! In addition, the pass rate for both classes ranged from 89% to 100%.



# Reading and Learning Assistance Center

By Patricia Bower, Learning Assistance Center Faculty and  
Lester Lawenko, Tutorial Services Specialist, Learning Assistance Center

The Title V Read-LAC tutoring team has undertaken various activities to support Title-V goals. We are proud to announce that year 2 included the passage of TUTOR 10R, Tutoring in Reading. It follows the successful line of other tutor training classes offered by the College. The course is designed to prepare students to become reading tutors for all READ students. The institutionalization of TUTOR 10R provides a long-needed bridge between tutorial support and READ students. The course will be offered in spring 2010.

To address tutor training in reading for the meantime, the Read-LAC tutoring team has been conducting Read Tutor Workshops since the summer of 2007. In spring 2008, two workshops were conducted that focused on vocabulary and comprehension components. The workshops were very well received and attended by Tutorial Services tutors and staff. They were interactive and provided insights from a student perspective. One participant said, "I like the hands on approach and working at the questions together. It gives us a feeling or understanding of...students' questions."

To further increase the scope and integration of tutorial support on campus, LAC tutoring has been working collaboratively with the Writing Center, EOPS, Cal WORKS, and CARE to support their Early Alert pilots. We have served as another resource that provides tutoring in writing, math, science, and various other subjects in one location. Moreover, joint publicity and open referrals with the aforementioned programs show the interaction and integration of services between programs.

LAC Tutoring has taken the first steps in expanding

tutoring to distance learning students. We are aggressively exploring potential platforms that can best serve the needs of our online student population. We will also be involved with the Writing Center in making online tutoring come to fruition in the near future.

Another initiative that supports distance learning is the promotion of Study 85C to students and faculty. Housed in the LAC, the course addresses the skills for successful online learning and prepares students to take online classes and effective online communication tools. The course was first offered in Spring 2008.

In addition to expanding tutorial support, we have also addressed faculty development. A textbook workshop was offered to faculty to assist them in assessing their textbooks used in class. Participants, with the help of the READ faculty, analyzed the structure, organization, and presentation of a chapter in their textbook and made discoveries about how the materials support student learning. A faculty commented that "I liked the applicability of what I learned to the students I teach." Although a small group of faculty participated, the workshop provided a foundation for future textbook workshops.

To further support faculty development, instructors' syllabi and course materials were assessed for their readability. A Degree of Reading Power (DRP) score is assigned to the course reading material. So far, our database includes readabilities on biology, geology and history textbooks and teacher-generated texts.



Barbara Gonzales, READ faculty, helps Mt. SAC professors analyze their textbooks for how their reading materials support student learning. She co-facilitated the textbook workshop with fellow READ faculty Pat Bower and Larry Silva.

# Writing Center

By Nicole Blean, Tutorial Services Specialist, Writing Center and  
David Charbonneau, Writing Center Director

The second year of the grant saw big changes for the Writing Center. No longer hidden in renovated classrooms in 26D, the Writing Center emerged at the end of the “Miracle Mile” and became a popular destination for Mt. SAC’s student writers.

Supported by the grant, the Writing Center began piloting conversational tutoring in writing in October, 2007 as well as writing workshops targeted to help students with particular issues of rhetoric and grammar. After moving into its new, expanded “digs” in 26B, the Center saw its usage dramatically increase. Almost 1200 students were tutored in the Center this fall for over 4000 hours. The computer lab, which now boasts on-site tutors to help students with briefer writing questions, also saw dramatic increases, with over 3800 students taking advantage of the services there.

“Location has certainly been a factor in our growth, but we also feel the tutors do a very fine job. They are the heart of the service here,” said David Charbonneau, the Center’s director.

In addition, this Fall the Center offered eleven different types of workshops on a regular basis. Nearly 500 students attended these workshops taught by Center staff and English department faculty. The workshops in particular have been a key component of the Center’s participation in Title V.

“Awareness of our Writing Center Workshops has spread among students and faculty. The workshops supplement and reinforce many of the concepts students are learning in their composition classes. We also hope to give students who attend workshops new perspectives and strategies for their

writing,” said Nicole Blean, Writing Center Specialist.

Working with the Learning Assistance Center and Title V Faculty coordinator, Margie Whalen, the Writing Center has also piloted an Early Alert Program designed to help identify ‘at-risk’ students in writing and direct them to academic support services in a timely fashion. Early research as to the program’s impact on the success of identified students has been very positive (with one hundred percent success for students attending multiple tutoring sessions). These results involved only a small cohort, but participation has exponentially increased each semester, and everyone involved in the program is eager to see what impact Early Alert will have in the third year of the grant.

The Writing Center will also join the Learning Assistance Center in exploring in the coming months the possibility of online tutoring as a means to support the distance education instruction here at the College.

Finally, in line with the grant’s goal of providing professional development opportunities to faculty, the Center held a workshop last spring dedicated to Writing across the Curriculum. The Writing Center will also hold three workshops on Flex Day for Spring 2009, addressing issues of assignment design, preventing plagiarism, and integrating technology into the writing classroom.

The Center is happy to discuss any faculty suggestions for continued improvement. Please contact David Charbonneau at x4559 or via e-mail at [dcharbonneau@mtsac.edu](mailto:dcharbonneau@mtsac.edu).



“Location has certainly been a factor in our growth, but we also feel the tutors do a very fine job. They are the heart of the service here.”

-David Charbonneau, Writing Center Director

# Implementation Team - 2008-2009

## Title V Personnel:

- ❖ Meghan Chen, Project Director
- ❖ Pat Bower, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Barbara Gonzales, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Anabel Perez, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Learning Communities
- ❖ Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia, Faculty Coordinator, Counseling
- ❖ Margie Whalen, Faculty Coordinator, English, Literature, and Journalism
- ❖ Nancy Kam, Clerical Specialist
- ❖ Nicole Blean, Tutorial Services Specialist, Writing Center
- ❖ Lester Lawenko, Tutorial Services Specialist, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Lisa DiDonato, Researcher
- ❖ Deanna Smedley, Counselor
- ❖ Jennifer Flores, Counselor
- ❖ Barbara Austin, Professional Expert Counseling
- ❖ Angelica Villalpando, Adjunct Counselor, EOPS
- ❖ Huu Bui, Professional Expert, EOPS

## Title V Steering Committee Members:

- ❖ Dr. Debbie Boroach, Dean of Instructional Services
- ❖ Pat Bower, Dept. Chair of Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Dr. Virginia Burley, Vice President of Instruction
- ❖ David Charbonneau, Director of Writing Center
- ❖ Meghan Chen, Dean of Library & Learning Resources
- ❖ Gary Enke, Dept. Chair of English, Literature, and Journalism
- ❖ Barbara Gonzales, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ James Jenkins, Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences
- ❖ Tom Mauch, Dean of Counseling
- ❖ Anabel Perez, Counselor Coordinator, Learning Communities
- ❖ Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia, Counseling
- ❖ Adrienne Price, Director of Grants
- ❖ Bailey Smith, Director of Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Margie Whalen, English, Literature, and Journalism
- ❖ Dr. Audrey Yamagata-Noji, Vice President of Student Services



QUESTIONS? Want to get involved? Please contact Meghan Chen at [mchen@mtsac.edu](mailto:mchen@mtsac.edu), ext 5658, or any of the faculty coordinators.

*US Dept. Of Education Title V Hispanic Serving  
Institutions Grant - Focusing on increasing  
student success and retention in reading,  
writing, and use of integrated student services.*



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