Title V Newsletter

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

February 2010

MT. SAC!
Mt. San Antonio College

INTRODUCTION

Since October 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 support services. A list of the grant personnel and steering committee members is included on page 7 of this newsletter. The Title V team enthusiastically shares encouraging progress in counseling initiatives, learning communities expansion, increased faculty development, tutoring expansion, and integration between instruction and support services and among support services. An underlying principle of this grant effort is integration of initiatives with programs, services, and classrooms so that students reach the services they need as early as possible. Another grant emphasis is expanded faculty development in learning communities, awareness of readability and reading strategies, and developmental education pedagogies. The grant has also provided technological tools to support these activities. Now in Year 4, the team looks forward to continued evidence of improved student retention and success rates through deliberate coordination of efforts.
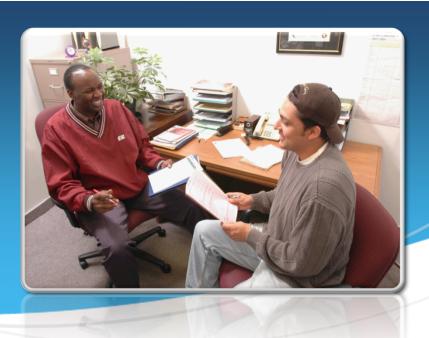
Title-V Five-Year Institutional Goals

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 1 2006-2007	YEAR 2 2007-2008	YEAR 3 2008-2009	YEAR 4 2009-2010	YEAR 5 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	

Stanley Mbuthi (left) is one of Mt SAC's committed counselors "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 continued to make significant strides toward supporting student success in Year 3 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

The activities that had been developed and implemented to address the grant objectives in Years 1 and 2 were continued in Year 3. This included a huge effort to inform students of the changes to the probation policy which became effective Fall 2008. In addition to the policy change, the counseling department continued to offer Student Success workshops for students on probation. The workshops included a discussion of personal responsibility and the probation policy, strategies to improve academic success, and an overview of campus resources. Visits from Tutorial Services and the Writing Center emphasized the benefits of our campus resources and really strengthened the collaborative efforts with these resources. A significant number of students commented that the visits were among the most helpful things about the workshops. For Year 4 of the grant, some of the workshops will be held in the Writing Center as a continued part of our collective efforts to expose students to campus resources.

Preliminary research with the Fall 2008, Winter 2009 and Spring 2009 workshop cohorts showed that over half of the students who attended a Student Success workshop ended the term with a GPA of at least 2.0. Although not enough time may have elapsed for the groups to raise their mean GPA above the 2.0 level, there is preliminary indication that students who have contact with a counselor do better than those who did not.

Online Services

As an alternative to the live Student Success workshops, an online Student Success workshop was piloted in Winter 2009. Survey results were positive, and more than half of those students ended their Spring 2009 with a term GPA of 2.0 or higher. In addition to the online success workshop, online counseling continues to meet students' online needs. In Year 3 (October 2008 -September 2009), 2,370 students benefited from online counseling. These students were invited to participate in an online survey about their experiences with online counseling, and 13.2% of the students responded. Of those students who responded, the majority of them indicated that they were satisfied with online counseling. Fifty-seven (57%) percent of the students felt that online counseling was equal to in-person counseling, and 18.5% thought that online counseling was better or much better than in-person counseling. For Year 4 of the grant, the counseling department plans to pilot the New Student Orientation online.

Learning Communities

By Anabel Perez, Counselor, Learning Communities Coordinator

"Students from the accelerated English Bridge had a 100% pass rate for the short-term English 67 course for the fall 2009 semester!"

Learning communities students uses On Course by Skip Downing. It is a foundational textbook for counseling courses in learning communities.

Expansion

Thanks to the support of the Title V Grant, we have increased in the variety of learning communities offered. The goal of these learning communities is to improve success rates in "gateway" courses; to provide skills in English, reading and literacy; and to support students through counseling interventions. In Year 3, we expanded the number of learning communities from 10 to 14, increasing the number of participants from **254** to **350**. As a point of reference, in Year 1 of grant activities, we offered 4 learning communities serving 74 students.

Learning Communities supported via the Title V grant include:

- **General Education** learning communities: courses that meet general education requirements
- **Transfer Bridge**: college levels transferrable courses for students interested in transferring to a four-year college or university
- **English Bridge**: pre-college, degree appropriate courses with a focus on reading and counseling
- **Reading Bridge:** reading courses linked with counseling or general education courses

Although many of the students who participate in these learning communities are first-year students, some learning communities focus on specific populations of students, such as athletes, single parents, while others serve specific majors, such as child development.

Success Story

Great News! Students from the accelerated **English Bridge** had a 100% pass rate for the short-term English 67 course for the Fall 2009 semester!

These students enrolled in the following courses for a total of 14 units:

- English 67 (1st 8 weeks) **100% pass rate**
- English 68 (2nd 8 weeks)
- Read 90
- Counseling 2

Kudos to the students and to their learning community support team:

- Paul Frahs (English professor)
- Ema Burman (Read professor)
- Lyssette Trejo-Espinoza (Counseling professor)
- Jose Davila (Peer Advisor)

Want to join the Learning Community Movement?

If you are interested in participating in an already existing learning community, getting more information or developing your own learning community, please contact Anabel Perez, Counselor/Learning Communities Coordinator at ext. 5904 or aperez@mtsac.edu. The Bridge Program is located in the Student Services Annex (9D).

Reading and Learning Assistance Center (LAC)

By Bailey Smith, LAC Director, Patricia Bower, LAC Faculty
Barbara Gonzales, LAC Faculty, and Lester Lawenko, Tutorial Services Specialist LAC

The Title V Read-LAC tutoring team continues to take on various activities to support Title-V goals. Year 3 showed the team's sustained efforts to collaborate with other departments and integrate campus services.

Reading

Mt.SAC currently uses the Degrees of Reading Power to place students into the READ courses. The beauty of this placement measure is the scale, which is not based on a presumed grade level, but on a nominal number scale of 1 to 100. Correspondingly, this same scale can be applied to readabilities of texts. This allows students who know their placement scores and the readability ranges of course texts to determine how ready they are to grapple with the required reading assignments. Currently, Title V has a project in collaboration with other departments on campus to make readability ranges available (in the schedule of classes, on the web, etc.) to help students to use their DRP placement to make informed decisions about their course work and needed support for success. So far, our database includes readabilities on biology, counseling, history, and nutrition textbooks, as well as teacher-generated texts. If you are interested in the readability level of the text you use in your class, please contact Pat Bower at ext. 6606, or pbower@mtsac.edu.

READ 100 (Expository) Analysis and Critical Reading 65+ DRP units	Biology Textbooks Range 68-74 DRP Units Nutrition Textbooks Range 71-72 DRP Units
READ 90 (Expository) Preparing for College Reading 54-64 DRP units	On Course 62 DRP Units Writing with Confidence 60 DRP Units
READ 80 (Narrative-Expository) Developing Reading Comp. 39-53 DRP units	No current textbooks rated
READ 70 (Narrative) Developing Reading Comp. 28-38 DRP units	No current textbooks rated

We have also expanded tutoring support for reading with the institutionalization of TUTR 10R (Tutoring in Reading), which is available as of Spring 2010. The course is designed to prepare tutors to help READ students. The team has been conducting Read Tutor Workshops since Year 1 of the grant. In Spring 2009, two workshops were conducted that focused on vocabulary and comprehension. These workshops highlighted the collaborative efforts among Tutorial Services, Writing

Center, and EOPS tutoring as staff and tutors from each respective program participated.

Learning Assistance Center (LAC)

The LAC enthusiastically continues its collaboration with departments and services across campus. Here are a few examples of projects we initiated:

- **Tutoring Coordinators group**: representatives from eight tutoring programs met regularly to share ideas, discuss common issues, and strategize responses to change
- **Tutoring Centers brochure**: information about all tutoring centers in one place
- **"Everything Tutoring" portal channel**: user-friendly channel to keep the Mt. SAC community informed about tutoring on campus
- **Flex Day presentation**: "New Directions In Tutoring" panel discussion
- **Online tutoring**: pilot project using web-based tutoring platform

A sub-committee of the Tutoring Coordinators group, along with faculty and computer lab staff, met three times in Winter and Spring 2009 to look at online tutoring platforms and design a pilot project. After looking at a variety of online tutoring programs, the group chose Link Systems' World Wide Whiteboard. The first baby steps into the world of online tutoring took place in Fall semester, with the LAC's Amos Jo and his intrepid group of Geology students leading the way. Online tutoring will expand in Spring 2010 to selected math and writing courses, through the efforts of the Writing Center and the MARC. Keep an eye on our other online project, the "Everything Tutoring" channel (see picture above), for the latest updates on campus-wide tutoring initiatives.

Writing Center

By Dr. David Charbonneau, Writing Center Director

Do you need help with any of the following?

- Making sure the writing prompts you give to students are clear

- Setting up a sequence of steps in the writing process to increase your students' chances of success

- Creating a grading rubric that will clarify your expectations on writing assignments and that will make grading those assignments easier

- Interpreting what the English pre-requisites mean for your courses

- Understanding how the Writing Center can help your students

- Helping students to use outside sources without plagiarizing

If so, join the faculty from courses ranging from Anthropology to Child Development to Respiratory Therapy who attended workshops and received help last semester with these challenges in courses across the curriculum. Please contact Nicole Blean or David Charbonneau in the Writing Center or Margie Whalen in the English Department. We'd be happy to work with you and your department in formats that meet your needs.

The old adage that "Writing is easy; you just stare at a blank page until drops of blood form on your forehead" holds true for faculty who assign writing, too. Reduce the bloodshed—give us a call today!

The Writing Center Reaches New Heights

In this fourth year of the grant, we can confidently report that the Grant's vision to develop a fully integrated Writing Center that serves the whole campus is being realized.

In terms of academic support, trained peer tutoring in writing continued to grow in the Writing Center with almost 1,400 students visiting the Center for tutoring in the Spring of 2009—a 16.8% increase from the Fall of 2008. The increase in number of sessions for these students was even greater with a 33% increase in the number of hours students were tutored. (The Writing Center has seen double- and triple-digit increases in the usage of tutoring every semester since it began tutoring in the Fall of 2007.) Success data from 2009 also show that students in English courses from 67 through 1C had, on average, 17% higher success rates than students who didn't receive tutoring.

One of the most exciting developments in terms of growth in the past year has been the jump in attendance for the Writing Center's workshops. Over 1,050 students attended seventy-one workshops last fall—an increase of 223% over the previous fall. This growth was spurred by word-of-mouth among students as well as by an increase in the number of faculty recommending the workshops to their students. The faculty making these recommendations are not confined to English, but include professors from across the curriculum, including child development, physical anatomy, microbiology, history and other departments. The workshops are taught by Writing Center staff as well as English faculty and focus on such topics as developing a thesis, correcting major sentence level errors, conducting library research, and using MLA and APA documentation style. In post-workshop surveys, 99.2% of students reported they would recommend the workshop to other students. "It's very exciting for us to see the workshop attendance numbers double and equally exciting to hear the students provide positive feedback about them," said Writing Center Specialist Nicole Blean.

Working with Tutorial Services, the Writing Center also expanded the grant's Early Alert Program, which gives English 67 and 68 professors the opportunity to refer at-risk students to a writing tutor early in the semester. The program had 15 sections participate in the Spring of 2009 with 121 referred. Eighty-four percent of the students referred found the tutoring they received "useful or very useful." Surveys also showed that students responded positively to the referral.

As Professor Margie Whalen, Title V faculty coordinator, said, "We know that getting help early is crucial, but we were concerned that students might react negatively to an early alert referral. Our research brought good news: students overwhelmingly appreciated the individual attention and were grateful to know about the tutoring resources available to them."

The Writing Center also sought to address issues of professional development for writing across the curriculum as the Center held a Flex Day workshop and a series of POD workshops, led by Professor Whalen. These workshops were created to help faculty across the curriculum design better writing assignments and respond more effectively to their students' writing (see sidebar story).

Title V Supported Technology Tools

OmniUpdate - a web content management system that allows design of templates into which account holders may input content. In collaboration with IT, a few groups are piloting the use of this tool.

WCOnline - an online appointment making tool used by Tutorial Services and The Writing Center to allow 24/7 student access to making appointments with a tutor.

SARS-Grid - an appointment making, service tracking database used by Counseling, Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS), and Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS). **SARS-Call** and **e-SARS** features enable outreach and reminders to students to keep their counseling appointment.

Link Systems' Whiteboard - a web-based tutoring platform used by Tutorial Services and The Writing Center in their pilot online tutoring project.

Implementation Team - 2009-2010

Title V Personnel:

- ❖ Meghan Chen, Project Director, Dean of Library & Learning Resources
- ❖ Pat Bower, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Barbara Gonzales, Faculty Co-Coordinator, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ 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
- ❖ Vacant, Title V Learning Communities Faculty Coordinator

Title V Steering Committee:

- ❖ Pat Bower, Dept. Chair of Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ Dr. Virginia Burley, Vice President of Instruction
- ❖ Dr. David Charbonneau, Director of Writing Center
- ❖ Meghan Chen, Dean of Library & Learning Resources
- ❖ Dr. Dyrell Foster, Associate Dean of Counseling
- ❖ Barbara Gonzales, Learning Assistance Center
- ❖ James Jenkins, Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences
- ❖ 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

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? QUESTIONS? Want to get involved? Please contact Meghan Chen at ext 5658 or mchen@mtsac.edu, 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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