

PROGRAM REVIEW 2008-2011

Division: **Learning Resources: Student Success Center (SSC)**
Department or Program: **Academic Skills Center (Skills)**
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w/Jeannie Kastelic, Program Coordinator**

I. Description and Mission of the Program

Basic Skills Transfer Career/Technical Other (describe)

A. Brief description of program and mission statement

De Anza College Tutorial Centers and Academic Skills Center support classroom instruction in basic skills, transfer, and career/technical courses by helping students at all levels become better learners and gain the confidence and skills to achieve their greatest possible academic success.

We do this by providing:

- Free individual, group and online tutoring in a variety of subjects
- Flexible, self-paced skills courses
- Course-specific Adjunct Study Skills courses
- Tutor training courses

The Academic Skills center is one of the nine programs integrated within the Student Success Center (SSC). The Academic Skills Center provides ½ unit self-paced and Adjunct Skills courses (small group sessions focused on study skills linked to content courses) as well as free study skills workshops open to all De Anza students.

Much of the actual instructional work in the Academic Skills Center is performed by Teaching Assistants (hereinafter referred to as TAs). As in other SSC programs, students depend on the work of TAs. These classified hourly employees facilitate learning for students in individual and small group settings and are regular members of the classified bargaining unit at De Anza. Working up to 16 hours weekly, they provide excellent attention to students at a very low cost to the district. Combined, up to 47 TAs have worked in the Academic Skills Center and other SSC programs, but their numbers are down to only 33 because of the current hiring freeze.

B. Summary of the program's main strengths

All Tutorial/Skills Programs:

- Exceptional staff: Patrick Dowling, Secretary for both tutorials centers and the Academic Skills Center coordinates all tutor hiring paperwork and extremely complex monthly payroll for student assistants across many campus programs, including the Writing and Reading Center (WRC), Math Lab assistants, and the 200 plus student tutors, paid from at least four separate funding sources.
- Student awareness of and support for programs: 84% of students surveyed said that they were aware of tutoring services (2005 Accreditation Self Study, p. 152); DASB dedicates 10% of its annual budget to support tutoring.
- Tutor training: cross-listed subject-specific courses. All training courses address diversity, learning styles, metacognitive strategies, learning skills.

- LRNA/EWRT 97 (3 units) Introduction to Tutor Training in Writing
- LRNA 98 (1 unit, 2 units effective Fall 2009) Tutor Training for General Subject Tutors
- LRNA/Speech 96 (2 units effective Fall 2009) Tutor Training for Group Tutors
- LRNA/PSME 95 (2 units effective Fall 2009) Tutor Training for Math and Science Tutors
- Comprehensive efforts for tutor recruiting hiring, supervision, program planning and evaluation;
- Technology: Hybrid tutor training courses, online Skills orientations and labs, comprehensive tutor-tutee database in progress.
- Coordination with other programs: (academic departments, Puente, !Lead!, DSS, EDC, MPS, International Student Office)
- Programs serve large numbers of students with physical and learning disabilities.
- Flexibility: despite severe space limitations (both capacity and design) and no stable funding, programs continue to serve large numbers of students.

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- Exemplary staff: Jeannie Kastelic (Skills Coordinator) has developed highly efficient scheduling, tracking, planning and evaluation processes essential to growth and quality of program.
- Strong support among faculty and students: faculty referrals to workshops increased by 75%. Faculty teaching courses linked to Adjunct Skills are universally enthusiastic about the positive affects on their students. Instructors report much higher levels of engagement, class participation, and grades among students in the Adjunct program (see written statements by Fernandez, Heffner, Druehl.) Adjunct Skills courses recognized by BSI, CRLA, ACTLA (professional organizations) as model statewide.
- Cost effectiveness: Adjunct program serves ~300 students/quarter at a cost of \$8K-\$10K per month in student salaries.
- Innovation and responsiveness to students' needs: new delivery methods, expanded workshops, incorporation of community service and civic engagement activities.
- Self-paced Skills courses are gateways to De Anza for non-traditional, disabled, veteran, and other at-risk populations.

C. A summary of the program's main areas for improvement

- 80% cut in TA hours resulted in less personal attention for students, impact success rates. Low success rates in self-paced skills (common to self-paced program across campus, state and nation) due to demographics, understaffing.
- Space limitations, both capacity and design impede efforts to enforce line-of-site supervision. See description of growth and efficiency potential with improved space under IIA.

D. Expected outcomes

Tutorial and Academic skills programs provide student-centered instruction and support for developing skills, strategies, and behaviors that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes that improve learning outcomes. By helping students achieve their learning potential and succeed academically, learning assistance programs seek to significantly influence student retention.

Upon completion of tutor training classes, student tutors are expected to be able to practice active listening skills, demonstrate cultural competence as they adapt their tutoring practices to students from diverse backgrounds with diverse learning styles, incorporate metacognitive strategies that focus on helping students learn to learn, as opposed to simply attaining the correct answer, and demonstrate professional and ethical behavior in their role as tutors. Group tutors are expected to analyze group dynamics and use collaborative learning techniques that disrupt negative patterns of participation among targeted groups of students.

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Students completing self-paced Skills courses will demonstrate increased confidence, understanding of their own learning strengths, and strategies to improve in weaker skill areas; they will demonstrate greater engagement with their own learning.

Students completing Adjunct courses will be able to work with their classmates as productive team players in collaborative learning environments and will improve metacognitive and study strategies that help them gain mastery of course content.

II. Retention and Growth

A. Access, growth, and retention for all students

From 05-06 to 07-08 enrollment in LRNA 100 (Supervised Tutoring) increased **43%**, from 2255 to 3228. Enrollment in tutor training courses (LRNA 97 and 98) has increased 7.2%, from 97 to 104. 08-09 enrollments increased dramatically (in Fall 2008 **88** new tutors enrolled in LRNA 98, 20 enrolled in EWRT/LRNA 97.)

This growth has further positive effects across the college, since tutoring by trained tutors increases retention and success in content courses as evidenced by research (Basic Skills Initiative D.10) and students' self-reported behaviors.

Because of extreme space limitations (as well as budget limitations, see below), **our programs are above capacity** for the number of seats available in the center, especially in L47. The fact that despite these limitations programs have continued to grow comes at the cost of adequate disabled access and tolerable noise levels for learning. Space and noise are the most common student complaints on student satisfaction surveys. On three occasions (3/00, 6/06, 5/08) specific designs for improved space have been requested, developed and approved, then later reneged upon, and the need for improved space is cited in the accreditation elf Study (p. 152) If some of all of the nine SSC programs were provided contiguous, well-designed space, they could improve their program delivery and student access through:

- Cost savings and greater efficiency through staff job-sharing;
- Shared use of small group rooms, with increased line-of site supervision;
- Extended hours that programs could stay open due to shared staff;
- Improved control of noise and traffic through use of small group rooms;
- Improved access for basic skills students, offering a one stop-shop referral system.

Enrollment in Skills 132 (Adjunct Skills, renumbered 232 as of Fall 2008) decreased only slightly from 05-06 to 07-08 (down 3.8%) despite decreasing budget and staff hours due to almost complete loss of teaching assistants. However, Fall 2008 enrollment (344) increased **25%** over Fall 2006 (268) despite these staff and space shortages. Retention rates range from 93% to 95% in 06-07, while success rates range from 81% to 84%.

Adjunct classes have a positive affect on retention and success in the parent courses to which they are linked. Preliminary data suggests that the success rates may be up to 10 percent higher for those students who take and pass the Adjunct skills. Students certainly feel that Adjunct helps them stay in their courses: on student satisfaction surveys, an average of 69% responded that the adjunct course "greatly or significantly affected [their] decision to complete" their content course (Question 9, Skills Surveys.)

Enrollment in self-paced Skills courses (100-130, now renumbered 200-230) increased 7.7% (from 719 to 775) from 05-06 to 07-08, despite a reduction in staff. Retention increased 3%, while success decreased 4%. Self-paced classes across the state and nation have low retention and success rates. They attract a large percentage of students with very low level skills, as well as those who enroll in order to maintain full-time status, then never attend or do not complete the work. Efforts to phone and e-mail each non-attending student and to convince counselors not to promote Skills as a means to achieve full-time status have been moderately successful. Recent discussion with Disabled Student Services about minimum reading levels to participate in Skills classes may improve success rates.

Skills workshop attendance grew 32%, from 1094 in 06-07 to 1440 in 07-08, with 188 workshops offered in 07-08. Fall 2008 workshop attendance was 16% above Fall 2007. Workshops promote retention campus-wide by helping students improve skills such as time management, critical thinking, or stress management.

B. Access, growth and retention for targeted populations

Enrollment in tutor training classes (LRNA 97 and 98) among targeted groups increased from 4% in 05-06 to 14% in 07-08, due to increased recruiting efforts and partnerships across campus. In 07-08 10% of new tutors were Latino/a. Among tutees (LRNA 100), students from targeted groups represent 18% to 22% of the total. (Specific breakdown of demographic data between L47 and S43 is not available.)

Enrollment in self-paced skills classes by students in targeted groups ranged from 33% in 05-06 to 28% in 07-08, which is at or above the college-wide average. Self-paced skills courses often serve as gateway courses for many re-entry, first-generation and target population students, who take skills classes before attempting placement tests.

In Adjunct Skills (Skills 132) participation among targeted groups was 23% in 07-08. Though below the college-wide total of 29%, the figure exceeds the percentages in many of the content courses to which the adjuncts are linked.

C. How the program addresses the basic skills needs of De Anza students

Our programs are on the cutting-edge of research-based practices to support the success of students in basic skills courses. In "Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success," section D10 identifies effective academic support mechanisms, including the use of trained tutors, supplemental instruction, and study skills courses linked to course content.

Research indicates that these programs work best when created not solely to support remediation, but integrated with instruction across the campus. "Tutors participating in a systematic training component are more likely to promote higher pass rates and higher grade point averages." (p.63)

De Anza's BSI Self Assessment (A.5, D.10) clearly shows that academic support at De Anza is comprehensive and high quality, coordinated across various programs, with the vast majority of support occurring through the two tutorial centers and the Academic Skills Center.

Skills courses are, by definition, basic skills courses. Faculty regularly refer basic skills students to self-paced skills for extra practice, while, Adjunct courses support the language and study skills of students either currently or formerly in developmental courses as they complete their GE coursework.

III. Student Equity

A. What progress or achievement has the program made toward decreasing the student equity gap?

In 07-08 success rates among targeted population in Adjunct Skills classes was 79%, compared to 86% for non-targeted populations, which echoes the college-wide figures of 75% and 81% respectively. Data suggest that success rates among targeted groups in content courses increases with participation in Adjunct courses, but more research is needed to confirm this.

B. In what ways will the program continue working toward achieving these goals?

Increasing success among underrepresented students is a major goal of all Tutorial and Skills academic support programs. Both staff and tutors participate in continuous cultural competency training, and work hard to implement the concepts learned. Cross-cultural communication and diversity training for tutors is intensive: incorporated into each tutor meeting and training session, with over one hundred of tutors participating in a three hour workshop each winter quarter. Prior to 2008, tutors watched and discussed the film *Skin Deep*, which explores the college experiences of Latino, African American, Native American and Asian students. For the past two years, we have collaborated with faculty and students across the Student Success Center and with Puente and !LEAD! students to design and conduct "Tolerance Tags," which forces students to confront stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, social/economic class, gender and sexual preference, followed by panel discussions exploring the educational experiences of immigrant and undocumented Latina/a students. These efforts have proved life changing for many of our tutors, and have become models for diversity training at other schools.

C. What challenges exist in the program in reaching such goals?

The challenges faced in closing the gap are many. Student surveys suggest that several factors, including demanding work and family obligations, inhibit students from target populations both from becoming tutors and using tutoring services. When tutoring is required or structured into courses, as the Algebra Project and Adjunct Skills courses, participation among targeted populations increases. Aggressive outreach can also make a difference, but with understaffed programs at or above capacity in terms of space and funding, such aggressive efforts to recruit tutees have not been feasible. Due to decreased funding, tutors are not paid to attend training, which has resulted in decreased participation in diversity training activities.

Research (BSI, UM-KC SI model) shows that collaborative learning and supplemental instruction can disrupt patterns of unequal achievement among targeted student populations.

Future plans include intensifying tutor recruitment among targeted groups and expanding collaboration with academic departments, Puente, LEAD, SSRS, DSS and the new Sankofa Scholars program to customize academic support for targeted populations

IV. Budget Limitations

A. Limited Funding and Critical Resources

B-budget is almost non-existent for all Student Success Center programs, with a mere \$18K for the entire Student Success Center for 08-09. Student salaries increased by 20% in January 2008. Our programs have become entirely dependent on limited and unstable one-time funds such as DASB, Title III, Basic Skills and Strategic Planning. This budget uncertainty has resulted in a precarious existence, one-time solutions and ongoing crisis management. Painful cuts have already been made: temporary and part-time classified hours, online tutoring, paid training, and budget for water and food have all been eliminated.

Space is another crucial limiting factor for our programs. See the description of space limitations and potential cost savings with improved space in section IIA.

B. Describe the consequence to students and the college in general if the program were eliminated or significantly reduced.

Funding is already far below minimum levels. If funding for our programs were reduced further, our programs would be forced to limit tutoring to basic skills only, creating further isolation and reducing success among students at the developmental level, and abandoning students completely as they move into college-level courses. Without funding to pay tutors, we would eliminate student salaries at a time when students most need jobs to support themselves. Volunteers are much less reliable than paid tutors, and much less willing to participate in training courses. Quality, quantity and diversity among tutors would plummet, with only privileged students able to afford to volunteer. Retention and success across campus would decrease. Accreditation standards for learning support services of "sufficient quantity, currency, depth and variety" (Library and Learning Support, IIC) would be in jeopardy.

V. Additional Comments

- **Strategic Planning Initiatives**

The Academic Skills Center participated in planning sessions for Individualized Attention for Retention team, and began several projects funded by Strategic Planning, such as support for Puente, !Lead, First Year Experience, and the Social Science Tutoring project. As funding disappeared, many of these efforts stalled.

- **Relationships with Other Programs**

Increased cost savings and efficiencies would be possible through sharing improved space with other SSC programs. See IIA above.

Tutor training for Adjunct Skills is cross-listed (effective Fall 2009) with Speech (LRNA/Speech 96.)

Hiring and payroll for student assistants in the Math Lab and the Writing and Reading Center is handled through the Tutorial Center.

- **State and Federal Mandates**

Changes to Skills scheduling and curriculum will ensure compliance with Learning Assistance and TBA guidelines are in progress.