



Basic Skills Department Exploration Committee Report: Fall, 2004

*A Proposal to Provide a Comprehensive
and Strategic Response Toward Improving
the Success of Basic Skills Students*

Executive Summary

Caveats

Below is a report summarizing the recommendations, process, and findings of the Basic Skills Department Exploration Committee as charged by the President and Academic Senate to “explore” the establishment of a basic skills department at LATTC.

This report is intended to represent the consensus of the group of individuals who participated on the committee but may not reflect specific recommendations, conclusions, or opinions of any particular member or member(s).

Recommendations to the President

The committee reached consensus on the following five, general recommendations.

1. Establish a Basic Skills Center. An independent Center should be established to operate as a hub for all basic skills-related programs and support services at LATTC.
2. Assign Positions to Coordinate/Administer Center. Create at least a two, 1.0 FTE positions to serve as a coordinators/administrators of the Center.
3. Assign Positions to Provide Academic and Support Services. Create at least one, 1.0 counseling position, additional learning skills instructional assistant positions, and support staff to provide academic and support services in the Center.
4. Incorporate Matriculation and Assessment Services. Assign matriculation and assessment resources and services to the Center whereby all functions

and activities of the Center are designed, implemented, and evaluated using extensive assessment and testing data/outcomes.

5. Develop a Comprehensive Basic Skills Plan. Imminently, a comprehensive plan for basic skills should be developed to provide a framework for developing the Center and its programs and services.

Benefits to LATTC

We feel that the implementation of the recommendations of this committee will result in the following benefits/outcomes for LATTC:

- ❖ Creation of a one-stop facility where students can access a myriad of courses, services, and activities that successfully prepare them to achieve their long-term educational/vocational goals—a LATTC Basic Skills Center.
- ❖ Coordination of all basic skills efforts at LATTC.
- ❖ Creation of preparatory and literacy course to meet the needs of a core student constituency at LATTC.
- ❖ Increased competency of students as measured by retention, completion, and/or transfer.

Demand, Need for Basic Skills

Because of the changing demographics and academic histories of both LATTC's service area population and incoming students, the demand for basic skills resources is likely to increase. According to a United Way study published through USC, 53% of Los Angeles residents are functionally illiterate and Los Angeles has the highest percentage of under-educated adults of any U.S. urban center. These figures are mainly due to the high non-English speaking immigrant population.

More people than not, living in Los Angeles Trade Technical Colleges' service area have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalency. 55.2% of the adult population does not possess a high school diploma, GED, or equivalency; 20.2% have between a 9th and 12th grade education; and 35.0% have less than a 9th grade education.

Of new students entering LATTC between fall 2001 and spring 2004, 27.8% have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalency.

Furthermore, an examination of Accuplacer placement results between spring 2001 and 2003 reveals that 98% of test takers placed below English 101 and 97.5% placed below Math 115 (e.g., placed in courses considered basic skills level courses).

Students' educational goals also reflect an increased need for basic skills. Between 1999 and 2003, the percentage of students who indicate their educational goals are to: (1) improve basic skills, or (2) complete a high school diploma increased 10.5%. This increase in basic skills-related educational goals is also reflected in an increase of 38.78% in credit-related basic skills FTES from 2001 to 2003.

Moreover, the following conditions also demonstrate a high demand/need for providing adequate and sufficient basic skills courses, services, and resources.

- ❖ While the majority of LATTC courses (both vocational and academic) list no pre-requisites, much of the coursework assigned assumes that students will possess certain basic skills enabling them to read well enough to understand course texts and written instructions, competently communicate in both oral and written forms, and to perform basic math functions.
- ❖ Students in academic transfer-level courses are expected to complete college-level work that is legislatively mandated to be substantially the same as comparable university courses.
- ❖ Students who enroll in courses without the basic skills necessary to earn a passing grade in the class face one of several undesirable options:
 - they may fail the class;
 - they may pass the class through the self-remediation of their deficient skills and thus, potentially spend less time learning course content; and/or
 - they may pass the class because of a reduction in academic standards and rigor, either to the individual student or to the entire class. Reduction of academic standards, though admittedly often well intentioned, is a dangerous precedent.

Committee Process

Key campus stakeholders (See Appendix 1) were invited to a meeting chaired by the Academic Senate President to discuss basic skills needs, efficacy, and logistics of developing a department to deliver services at the request of Dr. Castro (college President) and Dr. Cardoza (Vice President of Academic Affairs). The initial meeting included a discussion of recommendations made by Dr. Hunter R. Boylan, Professor and Director of the National Center for Developmental Education, who served as a consultant to the Title 5 Learning Communities during fall, 2003. The goal of his visit was to help the college identify developmental education needs and make recommendations related to student success. Recommendations made by Dr. Boylan were based upon general observations following interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff involved with Title V vocational and academic learning communities and related programs and services. Dr. Boylan's report is provided as an attachment to this report.

The committee was charged with reviewing and evaluating services and logistics with the expressed outcome of developing consensual recommendations for the administration regarding delivery of services, faculty, staffing, and implementation of services for this cohort of student learners. The committee reviewed documents related to Basic Skills from Associate Dean Marcy Drummond and engaged in discussion incorporating the views of all major stakeholders during meetings held during the Summer, 2004 and early Fall, 2004 semesters (a bibliography of reviewed documents is provided in Appendix 2 and copies are attached to this report). Ensuing meetings discussed the magnitude and complexity of college-wide integration of programs, services, and instructional delivery modes for under-prepared students with a goal of improving basic skills and coordinating college services and resources.

A Basic Skills Needs Assessment (See Appendix 3) was developed to survey and assess internal and external issues and opportunities; barriers and obstacles to student success and access; programs; curriculum development; student and support services; technology and learning resources; facilities and organizational structure; climate; and funding.

The committee also reviewed and discussed the campus document Title V Basic Skills Competencies Assessment Findings, 2002-03 (attached to this report) which presented a summary of basic skills strategies in use, additional resources needed, and faculty requests to improve basic skills in their areas. It also surveyed basic skills in reading, writing, math, vocabulary, oral language, computer, and other college survival skills.

Committee Findings

The campus wide committee followed the recommendations of Dr. Boylan to find ways to improve collaboration, coordination, and communication among the various courses, programs, and services available to students at Los Angeles Trade Tech by addressing these items:

- What common goals and objectives do these courses and services share;
- How can communication among these service providers be improved;
- What opportunities exist for greater collaboration between programs, courses, and services;
- How can greater integration be obtained for courses and programs serving the same students;
- How can existing resources be used more effectively;
- How can programs and services be evaluated more systematically; and
- What additional training may be required for those who work with under-prepared students and what additional resources are required to increase effectiveness?

After thorough review, the committee reached consensus upon the following:

- Services are currently disjointed and need to be unified physically in an area designed to serve basic skills students. This would be achieved by the formation of a Basic Skills Center.
- Development of a comprehensive 5-year plan for basic skills developed in consultation with faculty and staff from those areas.
- The need to clarify the boundaries and needs of credit and non-credit ESL students to eliminate duplication of services among noncredit, credit, Learning Skills, GAIN/CALWorks and ESL offerings.
- The establishment of a FTE position to direct, coordinate, and implement basic skills services and curriculum development in collaboration with academic and vocational departments. Minimum qualification for this position would be an advanced degree in one of the basic skills disciplines.

- Establishment and funding of counseling FTE position(s) for this cohort of students.
- The development of a brochure outlining and explaining basic skills services for prospective students, and for appropriate referrals from faculty, staff, and administrators.
- The need for on-going staff development training and coordination of faculty serving basic skills students.
- Development of research and assessment tools and methods to support on going research to assess and evaluate student success levels and services.
- The need for course content review to establish prerequisites, co-requisites and advisories for student success and to develop baseline assessment scores in reading, writing and mathematics that would validate placement into basic skills classes.

Basic Skills at LATTC – General Definition

The committee has generally defined basic skills at LATTC as follows:

Basic skills are reading, writing, math, computer/information technology, workforce, and self-sufficiency competencies that prepare individuals for success in college-level academic courses, vocational courses, employment, and for achievement of their long-term educational and vocational goals.

These skills include, but are not limited to, reading, written English language fundamentals, oral communication, mathematics, keyboarding and general software applications, time management, study skills, and interpersonal /inferential/ critical thinking skills, and problem solving skills necessary to navigate unfamiliar physical environments (such as the campus), documents, and the Internet. These are literacy(s), skills, and/or competencies expected in the competitive, global work place of our region.

General Recommendations

While many recommendations were proposed throughout the committee's meetings and deliberations, the committee reached consensus on the following five, general recommendations.

1. Establish a Basic Skills Center

An independent Center should be established to operate as a hub for all basic skills-related programs and support services at LATTC. A major finding of this committee is --that although there is a myriad of courses, programs, and services at LATTC-- there is insufficient coordination, duplication of efforts in some areas, and a gap in resources /services in other areas. As such, it is recommended that a Center be established, within Academic Affairs, with the primary purpose of coordinating and facilitating basic skills courses, programs, and services.

We recognize there exist multiple means and methods for the structure, services, and activities of the Center and, as a result, more specific recommendations regarding these matters are outlined in a separate section below.

2. Assign Positions to Coordinate/Administer Center

Create at least a two, 1.0 FTE positions to serve as a coordinators/administrators of the Center. Although the committee recognizes the resource limitations of the college, we recommend--that at a minimum--the staff requirements of the Center include two, 1.0 full-time administrators as follows.

- A curriculum administrator to work with departments in both academic and student services to establish basic skills curriculum and to coordinate all basic skills courses, programs, services, and activities at LATTC.
- A facilities administrator to oversee the day-to-day technical operation of the Center, such as maintaining lab equipment/software--in conjunction with the VP of Business, Physical Plant, Management Information Systems Department, and Campus Security.

More specific recommendations as to the qualifications and duties/responsibilities for these position(s) are provided later in this report.

3. Assign Positions to Provide Academic and Support Services

Create at least one, 1.0 counseling position, additional learning skills instructional assistant positions, and support staff to provide academic and support services in the Center. It is envisioned the Center would offer a comprehensive range of basic skills courses, services, and activities including, but not limited to: counseling/advisement, tutoring, instruction, learning skills courses, lab resources, supplemental instruction, assessment, faculty/staff development/training, extra-curricular activities. As such, we recommend that sufficient academic and support service staff levels be established.

In the Specific Recommendations section below, more suggestions as to the qualifications and duties/responsibilities for these position(s) are provided.

4. Incorporate Matriculation and Assessment Services

Assign matriculation and assessment resources and services to the Center whereby all functions and activities of the Center are designed, implemented, and evaluated using extensive assessment and testing data/outcomes. To ensure that the Basic Skills Center is adequately preparing students for successful completion of their long-term educational/vocational goals, matriculation and assessment should be an integral function/responsibility of the Center. It is recommended that a ongoing, comprehensive assessment process be established, which includes developing multiple tools and methods for assessing basic skills courses, resources, and activities; and includes using placement pre- and post-test methods for placing and advancing students.

Additionally, more specific recommendations regarding matriculation and assessment are provided in a subsequent section of this report.

5. Develop a Comprehensive Basic Skills Plan

Imminently, a comprehensive plan for basic skills should be developed to provide a framework for developing the Center and its programs and services. The committee recommends—immediately—that a comprehensive, five-year strategic and operational plan be developed for the Center. The plan should address both short- and long-term goals, objectives, outcomes, and tasks/activities. The planning process and resulting plan should be designed and conducted in a manner that seeks to transform paradigms and models of basic skills instruction and services. It is recommended that an advisory committee be established and convened to develop the plan as well as to provide ongoing consultation for the Center. Furthermore, we strongly recommend that the process and specific findings/recommendations provided by this committee and report (and appendices) serve as the basis from which the planning process and comprehensive plan are developed.

Benefits to LATTC

Lastly, we feel that the implementation of the recommendations of this committee will result in the following benefits/outcomes for LATTC:

- ❖ Creation of a one-stop facility where students can access a myriad of courses, services, and activities that successfully prepare them to achieve their long-term educational/vocational goals—a LATTC Basic Skills Center.
- ❖ Coordination of all basic skills efforts at LATTC.
- ❖ Creation of preparatory and literacy course to meet the needs of a core student constituency at LATTC.
- ❖ Increased competency of students as measured by retention, completion, and/or transfer.

Specific Recommendations of Committee Members

Outlined in this section, are specific recommendations that were made during the deliberations of the committee. These recommendations were made by individual(s) who participated in the committee and may or may not represent the consensus of the committee as a whole. Those recommendations that were made by consensus were discussed in a previous section, titled General Recommendations.

Basic Skills Center Overview

The department should follow the American Psychology Association's Learner-Centered model that emphasizes the *whole* student as the primary focus. Elements include, but are not limited to the following:

- Academic Scaffolding
- Attendance Requirement
- Immediate Feedback

In its first year, it is recommended that the Basic Skills Center initially coordinate existing basic skills remediation efforts that exist at LATTC such as Learning Skills. The Basic Skills Center will work with departments and programs to streamline and consolidate existing basic skills programs. Further, the Basic Skills Center will act as a communications clearinghouse

to disseminate information to both students and faculty about existing programs. The Basic Skills Center could also serve as an information center where they will learn how to access basic skills instruction at LATTC.

In that first year, the Curriculum Manager will meet with all stakeholders to conduct a needs and wants assessment. This will be completed within four months of the establishment of the center. The next four months will involve program investigation and assessment of Basic Skills programs at other colleges (ideally this assessment would include site visits to the most promising programs). The remaining four months will be spent organizing the Basic Skills Center for its first operational year. However, credit and noncredit classes could be launched immediately. Existing faculty can be utilized.

Staffing

A facilities manager who could oversee the day-to-day technical operation of the BSC, e.g., computers—in conjunction with MIS; budget—in conjunction with the VP of Business; the facility—in conjunction with Physical Plant and Campus Security. The Center will be in the building stage and all personnel need to be versatile. Minimum qualifications may be appropriate to staff now working at LATTC.

A curriculum manager could work with departments in both academic and student services to establish basic skills curriculum and to coordinate all basic skills programs at LATTC. Minimum qualification is an advanced degree in one of the disciplines taught. A degree in Education or Educational Psychology is highly desirable.

While optional, it would be desirable, to assign a counselor to the Center.

Additionally, at least one instructional assistant (or a sub and relief position), such as a learning skills instructional assistant, should be hired with minimum qualification of B.A. or B.S. in one of the areas taught.

The Center would also need to hire student peer tutors for ESL, English, and math.

Student Intake

The student intake is the first contact that students will have with the Basic Skills Center. There should be bilingual staff members available; and the aesthetic characteristics of the environment should be friendly and welcoming. Students will participate in a program orientation which will include a walking tour of the campus, program specifics, and an academic contract agreement.

Counseling/Advisement

The counselors/advisors will assist students in selecting the appropriate classes. If deemed appropriate, the counselor will recommend additional assessment(s) such as provided by Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSPS) or GAIN/CalWorks.

Students who are placed in basic skills courses should be limited to enrolling in a maximum of 12 units with a maximum of 6 units in courses outside the basic skills curriculum with approval from a counselor. Students should be strongly cautioned about the meaning of course advisories.

Students make a commitment by signing a contract. If students stop attending, they will have to wait for an opening to be readmitted.

Courses

In addition to classrooms, small group and conference rooms will be used for classes and activities. A menu of course schedules, content, and delivery methods will be used. Short-term classes will start, for example, every six weeks. Day, evening, and weekend classes will be offered. And, courses will involve both a lecture/lab format and online methods could be utilized. For example, a 3-unit basic skills course could involve 1:25 minutes of classroom lecture instruction and 1:25 minutes of Computer Aided Instruction (CAI). An example is a pre-literacy ESL course involving lecture and use of headset adaptable computers for phonics. If necessary, a modularized format could be established. Examples of courses that would be offered include:

- Arithmetic
- Computer Literacy
- Workforce Literacy
- English Language Fundamentals
- English as a Second Language
- GED
- Handwriting and Penmanship
- Introduction to College
- Life Skills
- Literacy
- Reading
- Study Skills
- Test-taking

Eventually the Basic Skills Center should offer courses in mathematics, reading, writing, and GED preparation. Additionally, basic skills students should be required to take a course in college survival skills (study skills, time management, etc.). Part time faculty from departments and Gain/Calworks can be utilized.

In the longer term, we should consider adding courses in other basic skills: computer literacy, basic science, oral communication (speaking and listening), workforce literacy. Part-time faculty from departments can be utilized. Until such time, we could offer short seminars on these subjects. These seminars will be conducted on a drop-in basis and will be available to all members of the campus community.

With the creation of the Basic Skills Department - Center, all disciplines can reexamine and reconsider within the confines of their own disciplines the issue of advisories and pre-requisites as part of their program review.

Labs

The interactive labs are intended for student practice and will encourage students to interact with one another and with personnel in collaborative and cooperative learning. They are not intended to be quiet environments. These high-tech labs will include multimedia technology, educational software, print material, and visual aides. Some lab characteristics are cited below.

Interactive Labs

- Math Lab (Characteristics include: Math games, manipulatives)
- Reading Lab (Reading aloud practice, reading circles, ability groupings)
- Writing Lab (Examples: Grammar, process writing)
- Language Lab (Examples: Conversation circles, listening and pronunciation stations)
- General Computer Lab (Providing Internet access, keyboarding, etc.)

Peer Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and Individualized Services

- Individual
- Group
- One-on-one literacy services (separate native and non-native services). This service can be delivered by USC students who are native speakers in the student's language and can teach literacy in the student's strongest language. This will make the student more successful in learning to read and write in English and will allow him/her to progress at a faster rate in further English classes.

Activities (Family Friendly)

- Arts & Entertainment night (USC plays, etc.)
- ASO Sponsored Events
- College Athletic Events
- Family Events
- Field Trips
- Guest Speakers
- Picnics (On and off campus)
- Program Orientations

Matriculation and Assessment

An ongoing, comprehensive assessment of the basic skills courses/services combined with placement testing (before and after completion of basic skills course sequences) should be developed.

Baseline assessment scores in reading, writing, and mathematics should be established that would trigger immediate placement in basic skills. For instance, English 64 students currently receive an Accuplacer assessment score of 30-50. With a (department) (center) in place, students who receive a 0-29.5 score, for example, would be required to engage in courses/activities in the (department) (center) such as additional testing, placement counseling, and enrollment in basic skills courses.

One test should be implemented to more accurately assess and place both noncredit and credit ESL students (such as the Compass ACT which is already on the Chancellor's approved list).

Special considerations, regarding matriculation and assessment, pertaining to DSP&S and lower academically achieving students should be made (see recommendations immediately following).

DSP&S and Lower Academically Functioning Student Support/Services

DSP&S served 800 students at LATTC last year. Some of students were referred to Learning Skills to improve their basic skills. This may include the following populations: Developmentally Delayed Learners (IQ – 70 & below), some Learning Disabled (IQ - 85+, there is a discrepancy between ability & achievement), and some individuals with psychological disabilities or neurological disorders.

Other groups that may need basic skills are those who have not received a high school diploma or passed their GED, in addition to those individuals who have been injured or laid off their jobs and need to retrain. This group may have gaps in their academic educational background.

Many of these lower academically functioning students do not know how to use a computer, and do not have access to a computer at home.

The Accuplacer Test is given on the computer. Some students will score lower because they have difficulty reading the questions or become confused when using the computer.

The Basic Skills Center needs to work very closely with DSP&S. There needs to be an understanding of the educational limitations and emotional needs of the individuals who would fall into the basic skills group. Classes need to be presented in a way that the students would understand. It is advisable that these students be able to work with an instructor on a regular basis. There needs to be an additional method for accessing their skills and potential. The students who come from High School Special Education programs should have an IEP that would hopefully provide some information on students' levels of functioning. This needs to be reviewed by a Disability or Learning Disability Specialist. (Up until last year, DSP&S administered the California Community Colleges Learning Disability Assessment). However, the DS& PS center has been considerably downsized within the last two years and we no longer have someone to provide this support/function).

Appendix 1:

Campus Stakeholders and Meeting Dates

Campus Stakeholders

Below is a list of stakeholders who participated in at least one committee meeting or activity.

Almada, Christina	Counseling
Brinkman, Cathy	Title V Director
Cole, Linda	CalWorks, Director
Dawkins, Thomas	Counseling
Drummond, Marcy	Associate Dean Academic Affairs, Committee Co-chair
Gangel-Vasquez, Jan	Language Arts
Grunbaum, Dorien	Language Arts
Hochman, Mary	Learning Skills Center Director
Dr. Hollingsworth, Patricia	Language Arts
Lichtman, Donna	DSP&S
Lindsey, Ayesha	Learning Skills Center
Johnson, Chini	Academic Senate President, Committee Co-chair
Kinyon, Kindra	Language Arts
Mancia, Roberto	Language Arts
McDowell, John	AFT Chapter President
Moreno, Lisa	Language Arts
Smith, Dorothy	Language Arts
Tishler, Sheila	Director, EOP&S
Dr. Troost, William	Writing Center
Deirdre Wood	Language Arts
Dr. Bradley Vaden	Dean, Academic Affairs
Wright, Xenia	Science/Math Department Chair

Committee Meetings

The committee convened on the following dates:

- July 8, 2004
- July 21, 2004
- August 5, 2004
- August 19, 2004
- September 2, 2004
- September 16, 2004

Appendix 2:

References

Primary References

The following are primary, internal documents, report, and data sources that committee members used as references. These documents are also provided as attachments to this report.

Boylan, Hunter R. (2003). Review of Basic Skills Programs at Los Angeles Trade Technical College.

LATTC Office of Research and Planning (2004). Basic Skills Overview.

LATTC Title V Office and Lindsey, Ayesha (2004). Faculty Resource Manual – Basic Skills. A resource manual compiled by the Ayesha Lindsay under the auspices of the Title V Office for LATTC faculty and staff.

Secondary References

The following are secondary documents and reports that committee members used as references. These documents are also provided as attachments to this report.

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, Basic Skills Ad Hoc Committee (2000). The State of Basic Skills Instruction in California Community Colleges.

California Community Chancellor's Office (2002). Effective Practices in Basic Skills: A Study Session.

California Community Chancellor's Office (2002). Basic Skills: A Report.

California Community Chancellor's Office (2002). Study Session on Basic Skills.

Appendix 3:

Basic Skills Needs Assessment

Assessment Inventory and Responses

Committee members completed a brief basic skills needs assessment inventory. In addition the Title V Grant Office conducted a survey/assessment of several departments on campus during the academic year and the results of these surveys are incorporated within. Outlined below are the combined responses to the needs assessment and campus survey.

Basic Skills Needs Assessment – Questions and Responses

Definition of Basic Skills

What is your personal and/or working definition of basic skills or what do you consider to be basic skills necessary to succeed academically and/or vocationally?

Basic skills are reading, writing and math competencies that prepare students for college level work.

A definition of basic skills should be expanded to include skills that enable students to succeed in college and the workplace (e.g., computer literacy, study skills, time management, note taking, working collaboratively).

Basic Skills are competencies that persons entering the college should be able to demonstrate to enroll in their first college-level course. (At LATTC, any degree-applicable course, and such course designation could change over time.) These skills include, but are not limited to, reading, written English language fundamentals, oral communication, mathematics, keyboarding and general software applications, time management, study skills, and interpersonal /inferential/ critical thinking skills, and problem solving skills necessary to navigate unfamiliar physical environments (such as the campus), documents, and the Internet. These are competencies expected in the competitive, global work place of our region. These basic skills translate to a qualitative shift in how persons know and understand themselves, their worlds, and the relationship between the two.

How would you measure whether or not students at LATTC have the ability, knowledge, or skill you identified above?

Assessments such as Accuplacer or other state assessments on the state chancellor's list, diagnostic assessments for Learning Disabilities, CASAS, other standardized assessments including PLATO's Fast Track, and assessments that present materials from the simple to the complex and require students to create independent and group documents and/or projects as well as answer problems.

I would measure whether or not students at LATTC have the ability, knowledge, or skill identified above by offering assessment tests.

Issues and Opportunities

What do you see are major issues and opportunities (both internally and externally) that could have an impact on basic skills instruction and services at LATTC? Please type your response below.

Increased funding available for basic skills courses; increase in number/percentage of persons in LATTC's service area without a high school diploma; increased demand from employers for employees with basic employment skills; etc.).

Opportunities: collaboration between college and local high schools and social agencies, Literacy @Work project in the city of Los Angeles, L.A. Corridor partnership, increase in grant opportunities with new staff support, emerging technologies that require basic skills of entry-level employees, GED requirement for jobs, immigrant population growth, prerequisites for vocational programs and academic courses (and fear of lower enrollment if classes have prerequisites).

Issues: reliance on special programs for funding, lack of Program 100 funding, number of high school students who do not graduate, cultural values and biases that conflict with current college pedagogy, immigrant population growth, prerequisites for vocational programs and academic courses (and fear of lower enrollment if classes have prerequisites).

Question: How can students succeed in college-level courses if they do not have college-level skills?

Ineffective or nonexistent leadership in the area of basic skills and curriculum are major issues that have a negative impact on basic skills instruction and services at LATTC.

Student Access and Student Success

What do you see are obstacles to student access and success in basic skills?

Student Access

We do not offer enough basic skills courses to meet student demand; we do not offer ESL level 0 or 1 classes, we do not have basic skills courses at times that are convenient for working students; there are many services and programs on campus but they are distributed across campus, therefore students may not know where they are or may not be able to find them; etc.)

Many students come to the college with the need to develop marketable skills in order to support themselves and their families, but they are not aware of the competencies needed to be successful.

ESL components on this campus should be unified under one umbrella.

Lack of: appropriate diagnostic tools to assess specific skills needed by students, coordinated program from non-credit through to college level courses, learning disabilities specialist, separate student needs assessment that would identify what students perceive as their needs so that college could plan better, and limited coordination between various areas involved with basic skills.

Limited study skills, learning how to learn classes, learning communities based on selective student characteristics, phonics courses, courses that focus on discrete skills (for example, using a ruler and math anxiety), limited number of courses offered on the weekend (including Sunday), number of counselors, limited number of bilingual faculty and support staff, limited opportunities for students to learn from one another outside of the classroom but while still at the campus.

Low motivation and low self-efficacy (of students)

Student Success (progression to “college-level” courses that lead to degree, certification, and transfer)

Accuplacer is not accurately placing students in lower-level ESL classes; courses are offered in blocks that are too time consuming for working adults; the scheduling of courses is not coordinated and may cause delays in students progressing through sequences; etc.)

Developing competencies in basic skills can take longer than the current college programs encourage. In addition, perhaps there will always be a percentage of students who enroll in the college with the intention of not progressing to the certificate or degree or transfer level. They enroll to complete a few classes, and they view the completion of those courses a successful experience.

New Directions

Given the issues, opportunities, and obstacles to student access and success you identified above, what do you see as new directions for basic skills at LATTC in the following categories? Please type your response below each category. Your response(s) may fit in multiple categories, however, please choose and place your response in a category that you feel most closely fits.

Programs, Courses, Curriculum, Delivery Methods

Develop short-term courses; develop basic skills courses designed specially for vocational programs; offer more basic skills courses in the evening; develop a cadre of online basic skills courses; develop workplace basic skills programs and curriculum; develop content standards for basic skills courses, develop supplemental instruction; basic skills learning communities; we need a basic skills “track” that students can complete in a limited amount of time; we need more open-entry and open-exit basic skills courses, array of noncredit and credit courses, etc.).

All of the above with the following caveats: 1. Students in basic skills courses typically do not have the focus and independent study skills necessary to successfully complete online courses. 2. LATTC currently has a limited “track.” Many courses are repeatable because repetition improves skills. We should not underestimate the complexities of developing basic skills. 3. More basic skills courses in the evening and on the weekend, and courses offered in the learning community model reinforced by SI.

SI cohorts could be very responsive to identified student needs and help students learn how to learn. It’s a great program.

Summer classes such as: introduction to college, family buy-in and support, vocational vocabulary, and tools of the trade.

Vocational and basic skills instructors could develop interdisciplinary courses from the perspective of the vocational area.

Workshops for students on the following topics/skills: customer service, interviewing, math anxiety, public speaking, problem solving, time management, teamwork, note-taking, online research, formatting a paper, Excel, Power Point, pronunciation.

Reading comprehension class

Basic Online Research Class

More Classes for Computer Skills

Classes in Basic Math

Silent Leader Development

Student Services

Academic counseling, financial aid, streamlined registration process, multi-lingual materials and resources, etc.).

Learning styles assessment for students and faculty and support staff.

Introduction to college course prior to registration, written documents and presentations in many languages.

Academic and goal-setting advisement.

Basic Computer Operation Tutoring, Math and English Skills Tutoring, Tutoring at Night, Extended Hours in Learning Skills Center, Use of Learning Skills Lab, Additional Tutoring, Access to Computers.

Support Services

Outreach, routine assessment, high school coordination and partnerships, etc.).

L.A. Corridor partnership, outreach to area service unions and cultural groups, outreach with local high school counselors, 12th graders at risk of not graduating, and their families. Industry and peer mentors for basic skills students.

Better Assessment Test and PreRequisites

More Thorough Screening of Student Prior to Class Registration—Remedial Classes Take Before Enrolling in Vocational Classes

Faculty/Staff

Need additional basic skills faculty, need additional tutors, basic skills professional development on flex days, etc.)

Need additional basic skills faculty, need full-time Supplemental Instruction supervisor and more SI leaders, need more staff development workshops about learning disabilities and the

process of testing for learning disabilities, about educational psychology, and educational research.

Teaching Assistant in Lab

Computer Instructor/Lab Tech for Culinary Arts

Technologies and Learning Resources

Computer-aided instruction, multi-media learning resources, online classes and resources, etc.).

Newer generation computer aided instruction software and hardware, more multimedia instructional, remembering that technology is not the answer to all of our problems; independent-learning resources, labs with flexible design to accommodate computers and small group interactions, cohort study areas, and quiet areas.

Resources that offer students an array of tactile, hands-on experience with hardcopy materials and physical models, and problem solving opportunities.

Software for Technical Reading and Writing

Facilities

We need one location (e.g., “one-stop”) that students can go to for a myriad of basic skills courses, services, etc., we need a larger computer lab for computer-aided instruction, etc.).

Interactive computer labs should provide work stations large enough for more than one person, storage space for personal belongs, space for faculty and support staff to meet privately with students, lounging areas, counseling areas, production areas, and student intake areas that support service, privacy, and confidentiality of records.

Organizational Structure and Finance

There needs to be an ongoing basic skills committee, task force, or group that routinely assesses basic skills programs and services, we need a person(s) who is assigned to coordinate all basic skills activities, a certain percentage of basic skills over-cap funding should be earmarked for basic skills instruction/service enhancements).

One of the things that come to my mind when discussing a basic skills program is “a college within a college,” but I do not see it as isolated from the rest of the institution. If the college creates a basic skills department, incorporating elements of academic affairs and student services, all students could be served across disciplines. Conducting program reviews, just like other departments, would provide opportunities for improvement. An advisory committee (rather than a task force) including community/industry members, could act as a check and balance to the department. With a global college plan for basic skills, all departments could measure how they and the college are meeting basic skills goals.

An ESL Center—separate from Basic Skills—would be able to unify all the disparate ESL programs on this campus.

Organizational Climate

Basic skills should not be viewed as ancillary to our mission, but rather, an educational and moral imperative; we need more people working with basic skills who are multi-lingual; increasing student access and success in basic skills should be viewed as everyone's responsibility; etc.).

Increasing student access and success in basic skills should be viewed as everyone's responsibility. It is a moral, educational, and economic imperative.