2011 Report and Recommendations

Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee
College of Marin
2011 Report and Recommendations

Introduction

The Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) at COM concludes the fifth year of its five-year plan in 2011. The purpose of this document is to:

- provide background on the purpose and goals of BSI in California
- summarize the work that the committee, faculty and staff have completed so far
- describe the changing context in the state for basic skills students and identify best practices cited in recent research
- examine our current institutional practices and their results
- recommend steps to improve access and success for basic skills students going forward.

In so doing, we hope to promote “a broad dialogue and critical analysis of research data, especially in light of the changing student demographics” (College of Marin Evaluation Report: A Report Prepared for The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. December 10, 2010, Recommendation 4, p. 18).

The BSI in California

The statewide BSI was developed in 2006 as part of Strategic Plan Goal Area 2—Student Success and Readiness through a partnership between the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) and the statewide Academic Senate (ASCCC).

BSI is a response to growing concerns about the increasing numbers of students who enter community colleges unprepared for college-level work and their decreasing chances of ever achieving their educational goals. Students who place into one or more basic skills course at entry constitute 80% of community college students, yet they succeed at rates far below other students. BSI is built upon the premise that some practices—institutional, programmatic, instructional, and staff development—are more effective than others in promoting the success of these students. Local colleges’ efforts to improve student retention and success must be tied to these “best practices.”

Assistance from the state is offered to the community colleges through two streams. The first stream is a statewide professional development initiative that includes a constantly-evolving database of best practices; the second stream is through supplemental funding for individual colleges to develop and implement local plans to improve basic skills education. Colleges document their progress through locally-developed action plans documenting use of the funding, and outcomes are tracked using the Accountability Report for Community Colleges (ARCC), specifically the ARCC Basic Skills report.
A basic finding of the preliminary research is that the cost of retaining a student to graduation or transfer is estimated as one-fifth the cost of recruiting a new student to replace one who has left college. In addition to the human cost of failing to move basic skills students forward to transfer/graduation, the financial cost to the state is also significant. Further, policymakers in the state are increasingly concerned with building the number of college-educated students to meet projected workforce needs and keep the state competitive.

Besides the financial incentive cited in the BSI documentation, additional incentives for improving the retention and success of our basic skills students are predicted in our state’s future. Recent information on the statewide budget process projects that accounting for apportionment purposes will not be solely determined at census, but will likely include benchmarks throughout the semester, thus creating a fiscal incentive for retention. Nationally, there is also the promise that financial aid accountability will include proof of attendance throughout the semester and proof of students’ progress through the curriculum to achieve their educational goals. Yet, as documented in the Recently Published Research section of this report, the numbers of basic skills students in the state are increasing rapidly and they are much less likely than other students to reach their educational goals. Furthermore, their likelihood of success decreases substantially the longer they spend in remedial courses or sequences.

BSI at College of Marin

In 2007, COM began an in-depth analysis of existing practices and policies affecting students who placed into basic skills courses (see Appendix A). Building on the work of the Student Success Council that met at the College for five years, more than sixty faculty, staff and managers participated in this self-assessment that led to the following overarching 5-year goal:

- *To create a comprehensive support center, including a College Success Course, to better serve students who need assistance with Basic Skills/ESL, and*
- *To create a program of professional development in culturally responsive teaching and student support services.*

BSI has been funded at each college based on the number of student enrollments in math and English below the transfer level; at COM this allocation has been approximately $90,000 per year. Each college is also required to submit a college-wide assessment of current practices, and a plan, updated annually, for using BSI funds to improve student persistence and success in basic skills courses.

In 2008-2009, COM’s plan was expanded to include the formation of a Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee (BSISC) to guide the work. The BSISC includes representatives from Math, English, ESL, Counseling, the Tutoring and Learning Center, EOPS, and the Office of Institutional Planning and Research. The BSISC meets regularly throughout the semester and is responsible for developing the annual Action and Expenditure plans, reviewing faculty and staff proposals, setting and implementing a research agenda, reporting BSI information back to respective departments, and participating in campus-wide BSI events. The mission of the BSISC is to advocate for basic skills students at the College, assess our institutional practices related to BSI on an ongoing basis, and monitor progress towards...
completion of our five-year Action Plan. As part of our approach to achieve our goals, funded projects have included the following:

**Institutional Practices**
- Completing program review for basic skills courses (achieved in fall 2008)
- Revival of the *Road to Success*, a faculty and staff initiative involving all disciplines in orientation, welcoming, and presentation of support services and department offerings at the start of each fall semester
- Outreach to prospective students in Marin City
- Saturday services during the weekend before and after classes start to address the needs of late enrollees
- Two years of a full-time counselor funded half through BSI funds and half through Puente. (Luz Moreno begins her second year in this position in August 2011.)

**Programmatic Practices**
- Support for Math faculty to develop Math 85, a new course in the sequence to address the low success rate in Math 95
- Math Lab services geared to basic skills students
- Professional Math tutors embedded in a Math 95 class (pilot)
- English course sequence alignment project
- Mentoring and academic support for student athletes
- Purchase of ten new computers for the Writing Lab
- Hiring a basic skills liaison for the Tutoring and Learning Center
- Funding grant-ineligible services as part of the successful Vocational noncredit ESL project funded by Marin Community Foundation (MCF)

**Instructional Practices**
- A learning community pairing English 92 with Counseling 125
- Continuation of the successful College Prep Academy pairing courses in the basic skills English sequence with a transfer-level course
**Staff Development**

- Faculty and staff development activities including participation in statewide and regional training and a joint presentation with the Modern Languages Department on the learning strengths of culturally diverse students

- Funding the 21st Century Teaching Academy, an initiative on culturally sensitive teaching involving 15 COM faculty and staff, the first session of which was our fall 2010 convocation

**Recently Published Research**

Recent studies shed light on successful strategies for promoting success and retention for basic skills students. The October 2010 study *Divided We Fail: Improving Completion and Closing Racial Gaps in California’s Community College* (C. Moore and N. Shulock, October 2010 *Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy*) establishes the importance of basic skills students’ completing at least 20 credits during their first year in college, citing the achievement gap between white and minority students. Here is a summary of the findings:

Too few basic skills students reach their AA/AS/Certificate goals: Too many students fail to complete their educational plans; after 6 years, only 30% of basic skills students have completed a certificate or a degree. Of these, Latinos complete certificates/degrees at a rate 47% lower than other groups.

*Transfer:* Transfer success is low for basic skills students in general; about 23% of degree seekers transferred to a university; for Latino students only 14% transferred. Transfer does not mean completing two years of study (as we commonly assume); especially for black students the process takes much longer. The state Master Plan targets a far greater percentage of transfer students to meet state employment projections, but the majority of basic skills students do not meet those targets.

*Success Models:* Statewide, basic skills completion rates and levels of racial/ethnic disparity in achievement (the achievement gap) vary – however, some colleges find ways to be more effective at helping students of all backgrounds make progress. The report identifies some patterns of student enrollment that provide clues for improvement. Students who followed certain enrollment patterns did much better: 59% who earned at least 20 credits in their first year completed a certificate, degree, or transfer within six years. However, few basic skills students follow the successful patterns, with large racial/ethnic gaps: only 25% of degree seekers who placed into basic skills courses earned at least 20 credits in the first year; 29% passed at least one college-level math course within two years; 36% passed at least one college-level English course within two years.

Another paper, *Something’s Got to Give: California can’t improve college completions without rethinking developmental education at its community colleges* (*EdSource Report*, October 2010), documents not only the increasing number of California Community College students who require basic skills
A large portion of community college students enter unprepared for college-level academic studies; many students enroll in developmental education programs. (At COM, about 80% of our entering students test into at least one course below the college level; this level tracks with statewide trends.)

The greater the number of courses that must be completed in order for a student who tests into basic skills math and English courses to get to transfer level, the higher the non-completion rate. Therefore, community colleges need to accelerate the pace at which students get through these programs – so there is a significant increase in the numbers who successfully complete the (degree/certificate) programs.

California community colleges have responded to the need for remedial courses with vastly different approaches and programs’ and with various degrees of success. Improvements to programs include: a) reducing the number of students who need development education, b) creating conditions that will help students be more successful in the courses they attempt, and c) compressing the time it takes students to get through remedial sequences.

One key conclusion – “students outcomes depended heavily on where they started in the remedial sequences.” The higher their placement, the more likely they were to complete.

Insight into the weakness of the link between high school advising and the requirements of community colleges, which leads to poor planning for those students who need basic skills instruction, is referenced in Misplaced from the Start, David Moltz, October 2010 (http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/10/11/california). Here is a summary of the findings:

High school seniors do not fully understand that community college placement exams can significantly affect the number of math and English courses they need to take by determining whether they enroll in credit-bearing or development/remedial classes (and how far ‘behind’ they are in the sequence). These students erroneously believe that if they graduate from high school that they are prepared to start credit-bearing college classes. While they are still in high school, students should be advised of the importance of these placement tests, and they should be encouraged to review and study for them. Specifically, high school students do not know how prepared they are to begin credit-bearing classes in a community college; students should be tested when they are juniors in high school and informed of their level and counseled on what academic classes to take to enter college better prepared.

Finally, the Legislative Analyst Policy Brief issued on January 20, 2011 a report entitled The 2011-2012 Budget: Prioritizing Course Enrollment at the Community College, Mac Taylor, which shows how individual colleges can design early registration policies to prioritize rapid success for their basic skills students:
California’s community colleges (CCCs) are legally “open access”; however, recent reductions in course offerings due to budget cuts and increasing demand for re-entry career courses by displaced adult workers have limited access for many students. The competition for a shrinking number of courses amounts to de facto “rationing” of enrollments. Currently, the legislature allows CCCs broad discretion in determining registration priorities. Virtually all 76 of the CCCs currently prioritize registration for military/veteran, DSPS, and EOPS students. Most CCCs also prioritize continuing students, regardless of academic goals or progress, but not first-time students. This brief argues that CCCs should use priority enrollment to direct their resources to those students who meet the highest priorities under the state’s Master Plan: that is, students who enroll to (1) earn credits for transfer to a four-year college, (2) obtain an associate’s degree or certificate, or (3) gain basic job or language skills.

For example, the highest priority would be given to continuing students who are making satisfactory academic progress as defined by federal financial aid and who are fully matriculated, i.e., who have completed assessment, orientation, counseling, and an educational plan. Second priority would go to new students, especially recent high school graduates who have completed these same elements of matriculation. Non-matriculated students, students who declare their intent as personal enrichment, and students who are not making satisfactory progress would receive lower priority for registration.

To further these goals, the brief recommends that the Legislature eliminate taxpayer subsidy of CCC courses in two ways: (1) courses taken by students who have more than one hundred units (forty units more than typically required for a degree or transfer) and (2) any repetition of the same or similar “activity course” such as physical education and the visual and performing arts. These could be offered through community education. Exceptions would be made for intercollegiate sports, adaptive PE, and courses for PE or fine arts majors. The recommendation does permit individual CCCs flexibility to determine students’ priority enrollment ranking based on “extraordinary circumstances” such as lack of availability of counselors.
Basic Skills Students at COM

The chart below shows the math and English sequences at COM in descending order with the percentages of our students who placed at each level between June 16, 2009 and February 15, 2011. Any course below the transfer level is eligible for BSI funding to create sustainable support to student success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COM Entering Student Placement Levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104/110/115/123 transfer level (CSU) (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103 (35.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 (17.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 (17.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>5.1% are recommended to take the ESL placement test</em></td>
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</table>

**Placement:** When BSI first began our self-assessment in 2007, 16% of entering COM students placed into transfer-level math compared to 9% at community colleges statewide, and 4% of our students placed into transfer-level English compared to 27% statewide. At that time we were using an outdated test that is no longer accepted by the Chancellor’s Office. In fall 2008 the college piloted Accuplacer, a widely-used placement test in both math and English, and our placement rates changed substantially. Between 2009 and 2011, 13% of our entering students placed into a transfer-level math course and 26% placed into a transfer-level English course: in both cases closer to the statewide averages. It is not known how many students placed into both pre-transfer math and pre-transfer English.

**Student Success:** A 5-year cohort study conducted in 2006 suggested that students who tested into the lowest levels of math and English when they entered COM did not progress through the sequence at a satisfactory rate: only 21% of the students who completed Math 95 as their first course in the sequence in fall 2001 had registered in Math 101 (the subsequent course in the required math sequence) by fall 2006. In fall 2010, the math department began offering a new course at the start of the sequence, Math 85, developed through BSI funds. In its first semester, Math 85 had a student success rate of 63%. It remains to be seen whether this course will positively affect the long-term success and completion rate for our basic skills students in the math sequence because we know from national and statewide data that lengthening the sequences tends to decrease completion rates.

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1 COM Data from Office of Organizational Development & Planning; statewide data from *Environmental Scan: A Summary of Key Issues Facing California Community Colleges Pertinent to the Strategic Planning Process*, Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, 2005, p. 6
For those who entered the English sequence in English 92 in fall 2006, 47% had registered in the subsequent course, English 98, by fall 2006; however, only 12% of those who took English 92 as their first course in the sequence succeeded in passing the transfer-level course in the sequence, English 150.

We do not know enough about our students’ intentions when they begin the required course sequences in math and English to draw firm conclusions from these data. The registration form we use asks students for their intention, but offers choices “A through O” (see Appendix B) in a way that could be confusing to a new student. This information is not updated after the point of registration. As a result, many faculty and staff believe that a very small percentage of our students intend to transfer. But recent data for later cohorts suggest differently: nearly every student who passes a course in our writing sequence registers in the subsequent level. We need to learn more about why this is so.

BSISC Recommendations

Based on our four years of work, the BSI Steering Committee makes the following recommendations for consideration in going forward. The recommendations fall under two major goals:

A) Improve support services to enable basic skills students to navigate successfully through COM today
B) Work toward a cultural shift for the institution to make it easier for basic skills students to navigate successfully through COM in the future

A. Improve Student Support Services

1. Make student success in the English and math sequences a top institutional priority
   Studies show that successful completion of the first year in the required math and English sequences, based on placement testing, is a strong predictor of student persistence and success. BSI’s initial institutional assessment showed that we are not doing as well as our ARCC cohort in this area. This year’s ARCC data show us as doing better than our cohort but student success rates in most courses below transfer level were still under 50% in spring 2010. COM’s rates of students’ first-year completion—basic skills course completion and success—should be studied and targeted for improvement on an ongoing basis. Students and faculty should be regularly surveyed to determine what supports are needed and these should be provided.

2. Increase meaningful outreach to high school students and faculty
   COM’s Matriculation Advisory Group has recommended that we implement the Early Assessment Program (EAP), a project that would engage students in testing for college placement in English and math during their junior year in high school. Those students who place below the college level would then have more than a year to bring their skills up to speed and avoid basic skills requirements in college. The 2003 Stanford Bridge Project Study found that although 88% of the high school students they studied nationally expected to go to college, only 11% of these students knew the academic requirements of the college of their aspirations. In the state of...
California, the percentage was only 1%—the lowest in the nation. One of the key misconceptions noted in the study was that community colleges have no academic standards.

3. **Emphasize and provide easy access to full matriculation for our basic skills students** COM should improve access to all of the elements of matriculation for continuing and first-time students whose academic goals are transfer, degree or certificate. These students should be made aware of the importance of assessment, enrollment, orientation, counseling and educational planning from their first contact with the College and in every class they take. Yet cuts in matriculation funds have reduced services in these areas, and students hard hit by the economy cannot find the time to complete these essential steps if they do not realize their importance. At the very least, an extended orientation for basic skills students could be offered in their English classes and BSI has funded a faculty project to create a common vocabulary and outcomes for this work.

B. **Improve the institutional climate for basic skills students**

1. **Offer sufficient sections of basic skills courses to meet the demand** Studies of basic skills student success conducted over the past decade have emphasized the importance of students’ completing the math and English courses into which they initially place during their first semester in college and then moving rapidly through the requirements. Yet in fall 2010, COM had wait-listed more than twice as many students in the initial level, Math 85, than students registered (see Appendix C). For these students, the path to transfer-level math is a long one: they must successfully complete four levels (Math 85, Math 95, Math 101, and Math 103) before they can register for a transfer-level Math course. For students who are already weak in math, this long road can be discouraging. By not providing them the opportunity to start their path to math transfer, we are making it even longer.

2. **Implement priority enrollment for COM students, not out-of-county students** EOPS, DSPS, veterans and student athletes already receive priority registration and, with so many colleges statewide limiting enrollments, we should continue the policy implemented in fall 2010 of giving at least a week of priority registration to students who are already enrolled at COM. If research capability permits, we also recommend giving an even greater priority to COM students who were enrolled in the prior semester in a course in the required math or English sequences below college level and who succeeded in those courses. We should set a lower priority courses for students from other colleges to transfer back to their home institutions.

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3. **Embark on a serious study of our basic skills students’ aspirations** Currently our students’ reasons for enrolling in college are logged only once, at entry. However, research suggests that community college students often make up their minds to transfer because of some positive experiences they have while attending their first year of classes. We need to update students’ evolving sense of what is possible for them so that we can design our programs to help them achieve those aspirations.

4. **Update and implement the student equity plan** WASC has recommended that BSI and the Student Equity Plan (SEP) should be aligned (page __). BSI has created a chart of activities it has funded to help achieve the goals set forth in the SEP (Appendix D) and we plan to continue to support this important work, especially in outreach to and ensuring success for basic skills students of all ethnicities at our college.

Respectfully submitted by

**The Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee Spring 2011**

Susan Andrien Director of Learning Resources (co-chair)
Jim Arnold Dean of Math and Science
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Becky Reetz Interim EOPS Director/Tutoring
Rose Thompson EOPS Counselor
Appendix A and Appendix A-2

RESULTS OF SELF-ASSESSMENT DISSEMINATED FEBRUARY 21, 2008

INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Developmental courses in English and math should have their enrollment caps reduced to 25.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNICATION

- Professional development in culturally responsive teaching is not readily available or offered on campus. Professional development in this area has not been offered in a while and would be useful now. College should offer professional development in culturally responsive teaching.

- ESL teachers teach at different times of the day and week and it is difficult for them to meet to discuss issues of mutual concern or to develop common assessment tools. Develop methods or tools to facilitate faculty discussion (such as online discussion forums). Create simple but systematic tools for faculty to assess the overall progress of students in the program. Give faculty reassigned time to study and report about student success regularly. Consider ½ day staff development time perhaps once a month to bring ESL faculty together, particularly because all noncredit ESL is taught by part-time faculty.

- Faculty in English Skills and English would like professional development in current reading pedagogy, in techniques and methods proven to be effective with developmental students. The college needs to hire a full-time reading specialist to lead this initiative.

- Provide support for interested faculty who teach developmental and transfer-level English to explore ways to help students develop digital literacy skills and portfolio self-assessment.

- English Skills: While problem-solving and critical thinking skills are an essential part of the developmental courses, the approaches and SLOs are not consistent from class to class. Faculty in English Skills should continue to meet to discuss and refine critical thinking and behavioral SLO’s to make improvements. A better way of measuring behavioral SLO’s may need to be developed and implemented. Faculty have few formal opportunities for professional development on the new developments in the field beyond faculty meetings and their own initiative.

- English 98 and English 120 instructors should also begin meeting to discuss and implement their critical thinking SLO’s and discuss strategies that help students become more active learners.

- Since developmental English courses are taught in two departments (English skills and English), they are not as integrated as they could be. Formal discussions of alignments, exit skills, etc. have
not taken place for several years between members of the two departments. Create a “joint commission” of developmental English instructors to articulate the sequence from 62 to 120, to create joint pre and posttests and more unified curriculum. Establish “level meetings” for English 98 and 120 to develop a set of norms for the exit criteria of these courses that are linked to SLOs and supported with examples of students’ work, and that are linked clearly with English 92 and English 150.

- Develop formal mechanisms for content discipline faculty and developmental English faculty to align their expectations and skills so that developmental students are fully prepared for content courses.

- Some of the “best practices” in the field indicate the importance of Learning Communities, which we have just begun exploring in English Skills with the “Transfer Prep Academy.” We would like to expand on this approach, by expanding the Transfer Prep Academy. This will require release time for teachers.

- Create institution-supported opportunities for teachers to share assignments, lesson plans, and assessment measures. As part of the College Skills Department (or the “College Success Initiative”), assign an academic counselor and a personal/crisis counselor with training and interest in developmental education to work with developmental students.

- Provide ongoing and formal opportunities for English skills, English and ESL faculty to discuss approaches to tutoring, including tutoring for ESL and “generation 1.5” students who use both English and ESL labs and provide for developing and coordinating of lab resources.

- Create a committee of workforce, English skills, math faculty and counselors to create a network of transitional classes and supports, including collaborative/linked courses, community partnerships with local training programs, and new courses that could carry students “horizontally” into workforce classes (parallel in rigor to the traditional transfer-track English courses).

**Hiring Needs**

Mathematics faculty members are not trained to identify learning problems. We are aware and appreciate the help that is available at DSPS from assistants who are dedicated to the students’ mathematical needs. It might also be helpful to have a trained, certificated mathematics resource teacher who specializes in the special needs of students and who is an expert in the learning differences that so often occur.

English skills needs a full-time faculty member who is trained as a reading specialist.

Noncredit ESL needs full-time faculty. Currently there are no full-time faculty in the noncredit ESL department, although they serve approximately 2,000 students per semester.

The college appears to be in a good position in percentage of full-time faculty teaching developmental courses except at the level of English 92 (which is skewed because one of the two full time instructors is not available to teach English 92, and is instead located in English 62 and the
English lab). Using Fall 2007 for an example, the proportion of full time/part time instructors teaching sections at each level of the basic skills composition sequence breaks down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FT</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>%FT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English 62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 98</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 120</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65% is close to the ratio of FT/PT across the entire English program (65/35 in English Skills; 77/23 in English).

**Student Development**

**Counseling/Orientation/Matriculation**

Some students report they were encouraged to move ahead or skimp on prerequisites when they will almost certainly fail because they are not adequately prepared to do work which builds on the skills that were expected to be acquired beforehand. **We should enforce placement testing requirement consistently.**

Students are only required to take Math and English placement tests if test is prerequisite. **Need Counseling’s input. There may be a disconnect between a Counselor’s direction to test and follow up to be sure that student has tested.**

Students are enrolling in classes without guidance of a Counselor due to inconsistent enforcement of matriculation. **We need counseling or at least advising for all incoming students.**

Too much emphasis in Counseling is on the transfer-ready students. **The ratio of students to Counselor bears looking into.** The most recent ratio would be one Counselor to 1,000+ noncredit students.

Only in CalWorks or EOPS does monitoring of basic skills students' outcomes take place consistently. **An “early alert” system should ideally begin at assessment and flag that student for monitoring by Counseling.**

There is insufficient data available to both Testing and Counseling. The college’s database system is a dinosaur. **We are currently launching Banner, a cutting edge information system, which should help.**
The noncredit ESL program needs program advisors/professional experts who know the ESL program and are ESL-credentialed. These individuals can best serve the noncredit student ESL needs because at the lower levels. ESL classes are the only classes that they can take.

There is a 40 to 1 ratio of noncredit ESL students to staff at the noncredit test/orientation. Best practice is 20 to 1. This is a funding issue. Very recently, the budget has been increased with fixing this problem in mind. A lot of our Basic Skills students at COM are ESL students. COM has very few bilingual staff. In Counseling, there has been only one Spanish-speaking counselor. Until recently, only one counselor would see ESL students, even advanced ESL students. We need bilingual counselors or advisors who understand the needs of basic skills students (almost all of our students).

Conduct workshops with counselors so they all fully understand the English developmental sequence, the skills and reading/writing levels for each course, and how it builds on each step.

**Tutoring**

Tutors are recommended by instructors from their mathematics classes, so they should be competent in the subject matter. The tutors in the Mathlab take a tutor training course, Math 199. Although tutors in the Tutoring Center are required to take a general tutor-training course, they are not required to take Math 199. Math 199 should be a requirement for tutors who work in all math tutoring programs.

To ensure consistency, the tutor training course taught through the tutoring center should be taken by all peer tutors who tutor at COM (or through COM). Tutors should also be supervised centrally.

Develop a formal faculty referral system for students who need tutoring in non-required English courses and other content area courses.

Institute a practice of assigning specific tutors to specific students who need the most support, linked to that students’ English teacher (as a sort of “team” approach), so that ongoing working relationships can develop that focus on the core skills the student needs to improve. Separate learning assistance centers for ESL, Basic Skills English, English, and Math. The Tutoring Center is not permitted to tutor students in English or Writing courses. Consolidate these services whenever possible.

Tutoring Center provides some course-related learning assistance but only group tutoring is available unless students belong to EOPS. The writing center offers some course-related learning assistance but because student learning outcomes for writing courses are not clearly defined, the value is limited. There are separate centers for ESL, Basic Skills English, English, and Math. Tutoring Center is not permitted to tutor students in English or Writing courses. We need clear systems for maximizing tutoring resources.
The Tutoring Center currently serves a large population of Basic Skills students, but provides the bulk of support in subjects not defined as Basic Skills, since Basic Skills students usually also take some transfer-level courses. Specialized student success workshops led by peer tutors, model students or pt faculty could support student success in these courses.

**Financial Aid**

Students not meeting normal residency requirement receive assistance. In fund raising in Marin County for AB 504 students, many reflect an attitude of not wanting to support this type of student. We need to develop several fund raising strategies so potential donors can support those values they endorse.

The development of a scholarship office should be considered as there are scholarships available for AB540 along with other scholarships that could benefit all students.

**Placement/Assessment**

A new assessment tool, Accuplacer, is about to be launched any day now. Hopefully, with better placement the students will be in a more appropriate class and will be better prepared to succeed.

**Curriculum/Alignment**

**Math**

West Valley College has initiated math intensive preparation “camps” for students during the week before the official start of the semester. These are very intense non-credit programs, meeting for 5 days, 5-6 hours/day, for students where they use ALEKS to identify and remediate the topics that they are weak in. If we were able to do this at CoM students would be better prepared at the beginning of the semester or, alternately, they may realize that they are placed in a course that is too difficult for them. These camps could be recommended for all students who use the placement test and place below a certain level. Additionally, they could be recommended for students who have passed the prerequisite course, but who have earned a grade less than an A. These camps would have to be funded. Additionally, funding might be needed to pay for grants for ALEKS for some of the students.

A 10 hour/week section of Introductory Algebra course is being developed by one of our professors. This is modeled after a highly successful program at De Anza College. He is asking for funds from an I,R, & D grant. If this does not materialize, BSI it is hoped might provide funding.

The mathematics department feels that there are many students for whom placement in our lowest level course, Math 95, is too advanced. **Therefore, a proposal needs to be made to institute a more basic course (probably non-credit) which will start at the very beginning with the concept of number and basic arithmetic facts.**
A possible “stretch” version of Math 95 which the students would take over the course of 2 semesters instead of just one semester (much like Math 101AB and Math 103AB.)

**English**

Create alternative methods for students to gain the requisite skills, via modular courses, linked courses, courses specific to workforce programs, etc.

Have a process that shows the relationship of students’ reading and vocabulary levels to the textbooks and expectation of transfer-level courses, so that students can understand more fully what’s expected at that level. This would require release time for faculty to examine textbooks’ readability level and/or to use the Accuplacer reading levels to develop tools to show students expected levels as compared to their current skill levels

Institute a “Reading across the Curriculum” series that targets specific textbooks used on campus.

As part of the effort to develop uniformity at all levels of developmental English, stipends and/or release time is needed to form instructional teams to formally share syllabuses, instructional methods, exit criteria, etc. (see D7) Such teams should also be formed between key transfer and vocational content faculty and developmental faculty, to ensure that the developmental courses are providing the skills that content faculty expect students to have

SLO’s are not yet fully implemented in English 98 and 120 in terms of having faculty use a shared rubric or other form of final assessment, and faculty do not meet by level for these courses. The course outlines for all the developmental English classes have not been examined through any formal disciplinary discussion to ensure that they provide a streamlined sequence.

English Skills faculty want to re-evaluate the curriculum of the one-unit lab courses, to rewrite curriculum in courses with low retention, research computerized skills assistance at all levels, and re-evaluate the process and methods of the open-entry, open-exit labs. The one-unit lab courses need to improve their retention rates and possibly be offered in other modes (on line, etc.)

ESL: Developing “conversation circles” would enhance pronunciation, build vocabulary and would increase the ability of ESL students to use correct stress and intonation patterns in everyday conversation.

**Content Courses**

Create modular companion courses for targeted transfer classes that are commonly taken by Basic Skills students.
**Academic Support Practices and Procedures**

Consider putting the current English Skills and Writing Center labs in the same physical space. does not exist, and so the amount of help a student gets often relies entirely on the initiative and knowledge of an individual faculty member. **Implement a coordinated, integrated system of linking services to instruction**

English faculty should work with the Tutoring program to train peer tutors, buddy tutors, and mutual help study groups for developmental students to supplement existing support.

Students who are not required to use either of these labs are often informally referred by their teachers or counselors. A formal referral system does not exist for students not in certain developmental English courses, and students work with whichever tutors are available. **A formal referral system should be implemented.**

**Technology**

Current computer software used for English skills courses needs to be updated and made ADA-compliant.

- Need to provide adequate funding to permit students sufficient access to technological resources and support, as needed to create “innovative learning environment” as proposed in college mission statement.

Place ESL programs on all computers in labs.

- There is considerable enthusiasm in the Mathematics Department to use online homework resources such as MyMathLab and incorporate this use in some lecture sections to develop hybrid types of sections for developmental math students. One of our instructors did a pilot and found that some of the students didn’t have computers and this made it difficult for them to use the program unless they were able to stay on campus. The students who don’t have computers are generally the most financially challenged and have work schedules that make it most difficult for them to stay on campus. **Perhaps a computer loan system could be developed with some of the BSI funds to help these students.**
Meeting of the Basic Skills Initiative  
Friday, February 22, 2008  10:00 AM-12:00 PM  
SS A & B

The BSI had another action-packed meeting marked by the sharing of ideas for improving the ways in which we welcome, instruct, and support students who are taking one or more courses below college level. The enthusiastic participants included Sara Mackinnon, Faye Mueller-Delia, Nick Chang, Patricia Torres, Chris Schultz, Gwynne Petersen, Arnulfo Cedillo, Bruce Furuya, Susan Andrien, Vaughan Ariano, Windee Cottle, Gaylene Urquhart, Jim Arnold, Janice Austin, Melody Creel, Becky Reetz, Candice Garretson, Roz Hartman, Diana Verdugo, and John Jacob. Here are the high points:

1) A draft of the compiled recommendations from the four teams was distributed. Since many of the recommendations need to be reviewed by separate academic departments before we can go forward, we decided to focus our discussion on two major areas:
   a) the CSI: Marin idea of a College Success Initiative where academic and student services support would be available for students in one central location, and
   b) professional development in culturally responsive teaching and student

2) The CSI idea evolved from the recommendation in the recent Basic Skills English program review, written by Carol Adair, that recommended creation of a comprehensive and unified organizational structure and centralized space academic support, and student services for Basic Skills students. This initiative would provide the kind of personal, consistent outreach and support that is currently offered through EOPS. At CSI students would find an integrated approach to providing all levels of support is needed (counseling, advising, referrals, cohort-building, etc.). It would include:

   • Create a “College Skills department” for all of College of Marin’s developmental, pre-transfer programs; include disability testing, personal and academic counseling, academic advising, tutoring and job skills as an integral part of this department’s curricular offerings. Ideally, this department should be housed in a unified space or “home” for basic skills students on campus, where students can access all the services they need to use in one location. In a comprehensive support program model, developmental English students should find
   • Links with COM’s workforce courses, county/local union training programs, job placement, etc.
   • Academic advising, Academic and personal/crisis counseling provided by professional with expertise in working with developmental students and their issues.
   • Links to on and off campus resources, such as child care, transportation, tutors,
   • Social activities and clearly designated, institutionalized welcoming/orientation
   • Electronic bulletin board announcing campus events.
• A unified two-semester program that links students with the college services and resources through course offerings would be excellent. Key to success would be capable and supportive instructors, thereby creating the emotional/academic motivation for the attainment of developmental educational goals for these students.

• A thorough communication of the philosophic, academic foundation of the program would need to be conveyed to all faculty, staff and administration, including the board, to garner program support. Identification of appropriate participants—students—would need to be formalized through early testing and additional resources. Consistent evaluation, assessments and review will need to be maintained, including academic tracking on student success to determine program effectiveness. Regular meetings will need to be structured into program for members.
Appendix B

College of Marin

Credit Application for Admissions – Question 15: Students are asked to state their Educational Goal at the time of admissions

15. Educational Goal (Please enter the appropriate letter here)
A. Obtain an associate degree and transfer to a 4-year institution
B. Transfer to a 4-year institution without an associate degree
C. Obtain a 2-year associate degree without transfer
D. Obtain a 2-year vocational degree without transfer
E. Earn a vocational certificate without transfer
F. Discover/Formulate career interests, plans, goals
G. Prepare for a new career (acquire job skills)
H. Advance in current job/career (update job skills)
I. Maintain certificate or license
J. Educational development
K. Improve basic skills
L. Complete credits for high school diploma or GED
M. Undecided on goal
N. To move from noncredit coursework to credit coursework
O. 4 year college student taking courses to meet 4 year college requirements