May 10, 2013

TO: PRAC

FROM: Student Access & Success Committee

RE: Student Access Data from Program Reviews

One of the charges of the SAS Committee is to review Program Reviews and provide feedback not only to the disciplines but also to PRAC. Specifically,

The committee will analyze the student access and success sections of the full Program Reviews in order to determine trends, provide supporting materials, and inform PRAC decisions related to resource allocations.

What follows is a summary of access- and success-related items from the 2012-13 program reviews and SAS recommendations relating to identified themes.

Summary of 2012-2013 Program Review Access & Success Sections

A number of themes are evident in the submitted Program Review documents. These include:

1. Student Preparation—General
2. Student Preparation—Math
3. Schedule Coordination/Adequate Sections
4. Other Issues

1. Student Preparation—General
As one faculty member states, “Students who don't succeed often don't know how to study for classes with the degree of workload found in our area. They don't have good study skills, note taking skills, time management skills, the ability to form questions in office hours, or even come to office hours. They lack organizational skills and they often think by just showing up they will get a good grade. On the other hand, the students who do well have often times mastered the above mentioned skills. Luckily we have many of them as well. Basic preparation would be helpful to all students.”

This concern is expressed repeatedly in the Reviews. Another faculty member relates these issues to a disconnect between student expectations and the necessary expectations for success that the College must have: “Students who don’t succeed also often struggle with the transition from high school expectations to college expectations. One pervasive expectation is that ‘extra credit’ will somehow remedy poor test grades, rather than the more effective application of greater hours spent studying to improve those test grades in the first place. Student also sometimes expect that material missed by their
absences can be made up; I try to emphasize, from the first day to the last, that the spontaneous give & take of classroom discussions makes regular attendance essential; one can't simply read the book when the class is about interactively exploring questions. I hope that by the end of my courses students who struggle in this regard will understand the connection between their behavior and their grading.”

This statement hits on the need for more effective—and more widespread enrollment in—student success-related coursework. Having students first understand and appreciate the expectations of the College and what it will take to be successful (and how that is different than high school) and then practice the behaviors that will help them be successful academically (many of which they have never learned, let alone utilized effectively) will go a long way to addressing these concerns.

SAS recommendation: Encourage a College-wide commitment to enhancing and expanding student success-related curriculum in a variety of forms, early in students’ academic careers, perhaps even making it a required part of each student’s SEP.

2. Student Preparation—Math
The Engineering Program Review is one of several that suggest math-related preparation is a significant problem and one that interferes with student progression and success. Their analysis of the issue is, “Success rates within ENGG courses are high, averaging 82% from Fall 2008-Fall 2012….Because most ENGG courses have significant pre-requisites, students tend to be adequately prepared for success by the time they reach these courses. However, success rates in the "pathway to ENGG" are significantly lower. All of the 200-level ENGG courses have pre-requisites of PHYS 207A and MATH 124, or higher. These courses in turn have a pre-requisite of MATH 123 (Calculus I), which in turn has a pre-req of MATH 109 (or 104 and 105). These courses have a pre-req of MATH 103, which is still above the math level of most entering COM students. The "filtering" that takes place at each step in this pathway substantially reduces the number of students that eventually make it to a 200-level ENGG course.

“As an example, using the Cohort Tracking feature of the Data Dashboard, 42 students enrolled in MATH 123 in Fall 2010; 26 (62%) passed the course. Of these successful students, 18 (69%) eventually enrolled in PHYS 207A; 12 (67%) passed the course. Of these successful students, 8 (67%) eventually enrolled in some ENGG course as of Fall 2012. Notably, 7 (88%) passed these ENGG courses. However, these 7 represent only 17% of the 42 students who began the journey (though granted not all of the 42 students probably intended to pursue engineering). It is worth noting that the success rates in the MATH courses below Calculus I (i.e., MATH 103, 104, 105, 109) are even lower--50% or less. It seems likely that less than 5% of engineering majors who start at the lowest MATH levels will ever make it to an ENGG course at College of Marin.

“The lesson is that if we hope to increase enrollments in ENGG courses, we must (a) attract more students that have already achieved a high math level in high school, and/or (b) provide greater academic support to math and science majors in their Pre-Calc, Calc I, and Physics 207A courses, so as to increase success rates.”

SAS recommendation: Form a ‘Math Success Task Force’ composed of faculty and staff from across the institution, charged with creating goals for institutional improvement in student attainment in math and recommending proven strategies to get there.
3. **Schedule Coordination/Adequate Sections**

More than one Review hinted at the scheduling of classes—the number of sections offered, the frequency of offerings in a sequence, and the coordination of times/days of the week of related/pre-requisite courses— as a student access issue. As one faculty member wrote, “Unlike our department, which [attempts to make] a schedule that works for students, then populates it with faculty, there are times when other departments move courses around to serve a particular instructor’s desire for teaching days and times. While I don’t think that is necessarily a misguided way of scheduling, I think it can be unfortunate if it affects other programs by overlapping core courses, etc. Before any move like that is made, all [related] disciplines/department chairs should be consulted.”

**SAS recommendation:** Continue to support the ongoing master calendar/schedule work that is currently underway.

4. **Other Issues**

One issue outlined in a Program Review that has also been discussed recently by ASCOM (and appeared in the latest issue of the student newspaper), is that of transportation. Regarding issues impeding student success, one faculty member wrote, “In a subjective sense, I have anecdotally heard from a number of students that the lack of access to public transportation is an impediment to their educations; several students have asked me, for example, if they may leave a few minutes early at the end of a late-night course in order to catch a scheduled bus, which if they miss will delay them an hour until the next bus. This probably is not something CoM can directly affect, but it does seem to be an issue for a number of students.”

Transportation issues impact many colleges. COM can play a greater role in working with local transit authorities, researching the feasibility of a College shuttle between the two campuses (which might also serve as a connector to public transportation), and other solutions to this issue.

**SAS recommendation:** Create a Transportation Task Force to look into these issues and offer potential measures for implementation.