

LACCD Student Success Initiative

Steering Committee

October 11, 2006

Minutes

Attendees: David Beaulieu (ELAC), Gary Colombo (DO), Jack Daniels (LASC), Marcy Drummond (LATTTC), Deborah Harrington (Dean, Crafton Hills CC), Stanislav Levin (DO), Alexandra Maeck (LACC), Leon Marzillier (DAS—LAVC), Joy McCaslin (LAPC), Ed Pai (WLAC), Hector Plotquin (LACC), Sally Raskoff (LAVC), La Vergne Rosow (DAS—LAVC), Pat Siever (WLAC), Rebecca Tillberg (LACC), Scott Weigand (LAVC)

Absent: Laurence Bradford (LACC), John Clerx (District), Angela Echeverri (LAMC), Tony Gamble (WLAC), Chini Johnson-Taylor (LATTTC), David Jordan (LAMC), Daryl Kinney (LACC), Susan McMurray (LAHC), Abbie Patterson (LAHC), Gary Prostack (LAMC), George Prather (DO), Carlie Tronto (LAVC), Maria Elena Yepes (ELAC)

Minutes of 9/8/06

The committee reviewed and approved, with minor revisions, the minutes of the SSI Steering Committee meeting held on September 8, 2006.

Local SSI Committee Formation and Representation

The Committee reviewed initial memberships of local SSI committees. It was agreed that each college should designate at least two individuals from the local SSI committee to serve on the District Steering Committee, and that at least one of these individuals should be chair or co-chair of the local committee.

Professional Development & Block Grant Funds

D. Bealieu noted that at least \$400K is expected to arrive from the State to support professional development. During the ensuing discussion, it was noted that these funds could be used to support STARS-like programs at the college level. It was also noted that in the future the colleges should consider earmarking some portion of their block grant (basic skills) funds for joint district-wide projects dedicated to enhancing student success.

Student Success Conference

J. McCaslin reported on the recent RP Group-sponsored Strengthening Student Success conference in San Diego. It proved to be extremely popular, with more than 350 in attendance. Pierce College alone sent ten representatives. Breakouts were held on Student Learning Outcome assessment in relation to all major disciplines. In addition, several nationally-recognized leaders in outcomes assessment and student learning were featured, including Lee Schulman of the Carnegie Foundation and Kay McKleeney. Themes that emerged from the conference centered on teaching basic skills across the curriculum, summer bridge-to-college

programs, meta-cognitive strategies, and enhancing student engagement. The idea of moving beyond small sheltered programs to implement college-wide approaches for student success was also in the air. As a result of the conference, Pierce's senior staff got together for dinner to discuss how to strengthen the college's approach to student success.

District Student Survey Update

R. Tillberg updated the Committee on progress made toward revising the district-wide student survey. Plans are to include a list of new student engagement questions. However, concerns have been voiced in the District Research Council about clarifying the originality of the new questions, particularly since they might be seen as too closely resembling items in other engagement inventories. During the follow-up discussion a number of other issues were raised, including the need to make the survey report clear, useful, and graphically appealing, concerns about faculty involvement in distribution of the survey instrument, and timeliness in reporting the survey results. It was suggested that faculty be encouraged to build the survey into their course activities, and it was agreed that issues of the faculty's role in survey administration should be relayed to the DAS.

LATTC Basic Skills Initiatives

M. Drummond informed the committee about recent initiatives at LATTC aimed at improving the college's basic skills curriculum. The college has agreed to devote 100% of its recent basic skills allocation to the examination of basic skills instruction. An additional sum of approximately \$300K was added to the effort, bringing the total amount devoted to improving basic skills at Trade to roughly \$625K for this academic year. As a first step in this year-long undertaking, the Office of Academic Affairs held workshops for all divisions at which faculty were given packets with baseline data for student retention and successful course completion. They were also provided with summaries of ten things that faculty can do to increase student retention, and discussed the use of technologies, like pod-casting, to help students engage with classes. Eventually, the college plans to take a more "fine-grained" look at student skill levels and to partner with USC faculty to explore the use of contextualized basic skills instruction in vocational programs. LATTC faculty and staff are also planning to work with local feeder high schools to collaboratively map the English and math curricula expectations and outcomes. The college also plans to create a student success website and to pod cast all future workshop sessions.

The STARS Model of Student Engagement

STARS creator and now Dean of Academic Affairs at Crafton Hills College, Deborah Harrington, and current STARS program coordinators Sally Raskoff and Scott Weigand offered the committee an overview of the central principles of Valley's successful STARS program. They noted that students, faculty, and college staff often have different models of what college is all about. To help students engage productively with colleges, students, faculty, staff, and administrators need to develop a core set of shared values. To reach beyond highly specialized "silo" support programs that benefit only a few hundred students at best, and to reach the thousands who come to college without strong ties to college, we must create a culture of

learning that extends beyond the classroom. This is one of the basic principles of the STARS program at LAVC. In a sense, STARS is an attempt to transform the entire college into a “learning community”—a place where students, faculty, staff, and administration gather to learn and teach each other. STARS also emphasizes the need to “teach students how to learn.” Too much time is spent focusing on content in traditional college classrooms and not enough attention is paid to helping student learn how to learn. As D. Harrington noted, “learning is not embedded in teaching, but teaching is embedded in learning.” This principle underlies STARS’ “metacognitive” focus. STARS is built around the idea that students must become self-aware of their own academic development as learners if they are to become successful students. They must learn how to assess and guide their own academic development.

STARS also builds on the central ideal of the “ally” approach that was pioneered by gay and lesbian support programs at the university level. The central idea behind these programs is that students at risk need a “safety net”—a safe place where they can become empowered to cope with what may be seen as an otherwise hostile environment. STARS aims to develop this kind of college-wide safety net by engaging faculty, administrators and staff in a college-wide network dedicated to helping students succeed. This is done by clearly identifying all college personnel who opt into the STARS network by means of buttons, stickers, and door plaques. All STAR faculty pledge to help students and to be available at any time to offer students advice or to provide them with the information they need. In addition, the STARS network is supported by an on-going series of professional and staff development activities that involve students and focus on topics related to learning how to learn. This “organizational development” approach is essential to STARS because it is the mechanism for effectively transforming the entire college into an active learning community.

It was agreed that D. Harrington, S. Weigand, S. Raskoff, and G. Colombo would collaborate to produce a brief summary of how to establish a programs modeled on STARS at other district colleges. It was also noted that S. Weigand S. Raskoff are currently working on a dissemination grant related to the STARS program.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the SSI Steering Committee would meet next on Wednesday, November 8th, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in room 803 at the District Office.