

The BSI Steering Committee at COM

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Coming Fall 2009... The Road to Success!

The Road to Success is a college-wide event designed to raise student awareness and understanding of the services our college offers to support student success. The idea for this event originated from the College Success Council, a group of dedicated COM educators brought together by Carol Adair and Joyce Marks. Their vision helped us produce the first two Road To Success events. They were a huge success and hundreds of students, faculty, staff and administrators participated.

This fall, we're going to do it again. We will build on the work started by Carol and Joyce to create an event that will once again bring us together for a common purpose: raising awareness of what we do at the College of Marin to help our students succeed.

To make this happen, we need your help! We are looking for volunteers to participate in the following task groups: advertising and marketing, soliciting prizes, organizing the actual event, department outreach, and of course, the "Road Crew". If you are interested in participating, contact Becky Reetz. Planning meetings are already underway.

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Spring
2009

BASIC SKILLS INITIATIVE

At College of Marin

The Basic Skills Initiative in California

The California Community College Chancellors Office, in partnership with the statewide Academic Senate and other professional groups, developed this initiative to provide basic skills and ESL education to community college students who are underprepared for college-level work. The initiative currently has 5 main goals:

1. **Research and data collection**- Demonstrate student progress through basic skill objectives towards basic skill outcomes.
2. **Professional development**- Train community college faculty, staff, and administrators to implement BSI action plans on their own campuses.
3. **Student equity**- Incorporate college student equity plans with basic skills initiatives.
4. **High school to College Transition**- Strengthening the connection.
5. **Website and Electronic Sharing**- A central repository for strategies for working with ESL and basic skill students.

For more information about the statewide Basic Skills Initiative, go to:
www.cccbsi.org



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The Basic Skills Initiative at COM

The first meeting of the College of Marin Basic Skills (BSI) committee took place in fall 2007. The meeting was open to everyone interested in the success of developmental level students and was well-attended by faculty, staff, and administrators. At COM, any student enrolled in pre-college level math, ESL, or English is considered a basic skills student (for math, below math 115/121, or for English, below Engl 150). The initial meeting marked the start of many exciting conversations and innovative ideas on how to support our basic skill students at College of Marin.

As part of this effort, a number of faculty, staff and administrators conducted a comprehensive assessment of the needs of basic skills students at COM. The assessment yielded the following findings:

- COM has low rates of progress and success in Math 95.
- We also have low rates of progress for students moving from English 92 to English 98.
- Students in basic skills courses who are not in EOPS or other categorical programs need the kinds of counseling and academic support that those programs provide.
- We need further information about the needs of our basic skills students.

After reviewing this data, the committee reconvened to develop our first Action Plan. Development of a support center for basic skills students.

- Assignment of Basic Skill Co-Coordinator responsibilities
- Supplemental instruction for math 95
- Research into the alignment of English courses
- Continuing development of learning communities through the Transfer Prep Academy
- Increased academic, counseling, and mentoring support for student athletes

A Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee (BSISC) composed of faculty, staff and administrators has now been formed. The BSISC will work together with the larger BSI committee at COM to develop ongoing BSI Action Plans, foster communication among departments, create professional development opportunities, and set a research agenda. The BSISC will help faculty develop new and innovative ways to support our basic skills students, including bringing the annual event, The Road to Success, back to COM.

The success of these projects depends on broad participation from the college. If you are interested in participating, please contact any of the BSISC members listed on the back of this newsletter.

PROFILE OF A COM BASIC SKILLS STUDENT



“Nothing is easy if you are an ESL student, but everything is possible if you are determined”

Kuan-Chien Lee graduated from a vocational high school in her native country, where she received no formal general education. At the age of 31, she began taking ESL and math courses at College of Marin. She began by taking ESL 55 and math 101, with the eventual goal of transferring to either UCLA or UC Berkeley.

With hard work and perseverance, she moved from the ESL courses to the Basic Skills English and English courses. In the course of her studies, she also discovered that she had an aptitude for math.

With encouragement from her math professors, Kuan-Chien took nearly every math course offered at the college and began offering her services as a math tutor in the math lab and the Tutoring Center.

This spring, Kuan-Chien completed her remaining transfer requirements and was accepted at four universities including UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, UCLA, and UC Berkeley. In the fall, Kuan-Chien will begin the Operation Research and Management program at UC Berkeley.



BSI Projects in Motion at COM

After the first BSI Action Plan was developed by the Basic Skills Committee in 2007, the following projects were put into motion.

- ◆ *Scholar Baller*, a project that provided proctored study activities for student athletes who placed into basic skills courses.
- ◆ Enhanced peer tutoring for basic skills students.
- ◆ Support for a project in which the math faculty revised their curricula in entry-level courses that had been a barrier to success for students.
- ◆ Support for a learning community pairing Math 95 with a weekly hour of directed practice to enhance student success.
- ◆ The English Alignment project, which is funding an examination by faculty from English, English Skills, and English as a Second Language of the alignment of Student Learning Outcomes across all of the courses in the required writing sequence.
- ◆ Formation of a Basic Skills Initiative Steering Committee (BSISC) representing the various disciplines most involved in basic skills instruction and support: English, math, counseling, matriculation and assessment, EOPS, research, and tutoring. BSISC is charged with setting an annual research agenda for BSI, reviewing and approving proposals from faculty and staff, and oversight of the BSI overall.
- ◆ Professional development opportunities including two on-campus workshops on learning communities support for faculty and staff to attend the Conference on College Composition and Communication, as well as regional BSI meetings.
- ◆ Enhanced tutoring for students in basic skills courses including conversation groups for ESL students to practice speaking and listening.
- ◆ Continued support for the Transfer Prep Academy.

The BSISC has begun meeting during the spring 2009 semester and has reviewed and approved several new faculty and staff proposals to be implemented in fall 2009 and spring 2010 including:

- ◆ A new learning community pairing English 92 and Counseling 125
- ◆ A project using podcasts to provide study skill support,
- ◆ A project using Kurzweil software to support reading, writing and study skills
- ◆ Development of the curriculum for a new basic skills math 85 course
- ◆ A research project tracking the needs of students who place into basic skills courses.

Request for proposals from faculty and staff for projects to support basic skills students starting in spring 2010 are due on May 31, 2009. Please contact any member of the Basic Skills Steering Committee if you are interested.



Learning Communities at COM by Meg Pasquel

Learning Communities have been around for awhile, and though various manifestations can be found, they all involve the integration of distinct course curricula, the creation of a student cohort, and the willingness of teachers from different disciplines to work together.

The advantages derived from Learning Communities affect both students and teachers. Students benefit from an increased sense of community and academic support. Often times at “commuter colleges,” students fail to develop a social circle and/or study group, support systems that studies show make learning easier and more enjoyable. Learning Communities, on the other hand, have both built in, and thus augment a student’s success. Another benefit for students in a Learning Community is skill transference.

When subjects are combined and teaching occurs across the curriculum, students better understand that the skills they are learning, be they reading, composition, note taking, or technology, can and should be applied in all classes.

A student’s academic arsenal grows when they understand this, and thus their chance of success increases.

The benefits accrued by teachers are threefold: the opportunity to work academically with colleagues from different disciplines enhances knowledge and enriches curriculum; students are more invested in a learning community and thus are more motivated, thereby increasing class participation and ameliorating attrition; and finally, working with an academic partner and incorporating new material is energizing and lots of fun.

Here at College of Marin we have a couple of different Learning Community models currently operating. The Puente Program, a year-long community primarily targeting Latino students which combines English 120 and 150 with a counseling component, will be starting its second year in Fall 2009. The Transfer Prep Academy, which pairs English 92 with Speech 128, English 98 with History 117, and English 120 with Political Science 101, will be offered for the fourth semester in Fall 2009. Though raw data has not yet been quantified, anecdotal evidence suggests that students involved in both programs are well on their way to long-term academic success and personal satisfaction.

EYE ON IT Best Practices in Basic Skills

City College of San Francisco: Non-Credit to Credit Pathways

City College of San Francisco has a large noncredit ESL program (17,000 students, most at satellite campuses) and has built in systematic pathways for noncredit students to move up to credit classes when they are ready. Counselors there serve both noncredit and credit students and academic support services are open to both populations. Each semester counselors offer “Steps to Credit” workshops that emphasize the different expectations for credit classes and strategies for student success in credit courses. A 90-hour course, Strategies for Success in Credit ESL, teaches the students academic skills like note taking, homework management, and class participation. A second round of workshops then assists students in completing the credit application, and finally the credit ESL placement test and orientations are brought to the students’ own campuses.

The college also sponsors field trips to the Ocean campus, where most credit ESL courses are offered, to help students make the transition. Students learn to reach their new campus using public transportation and learn the layout of the sprawling Ocean campus, where they are greeted by the credit ESL department chair and the credit ESL Campus Coordinator. City had 2,500 credit students registered in fall 08. 45% of their credit students start in non-credit, and 52% of their students who earn AA/AS degrees began in ESL classes, either noncredit or credit. For more information about CCSF’s program, contact Greg Keach (gkeach@ccsf.edu).

**This semester I really feel like I have
“college friends”**

~Quote from student participating in English 92 and Speech 128 Learning Community