**Proposal for Reorganization of Developmental Learning Assistance**

This purpose of this proposal is to recommend re-engineering Developmental Studies (Developmental Learning Assistance or DLA) at Edison State College from a centralized structure to a mainstreaming model. Pending the availability of comparative evaluation studies, colleges in the process of selecting between centralized and mainstreamed approaches must weigh the advantage and disadvantages of each model within the organization’s culture. However, it is possible and the intent of this proposal is to incorporate the beneficial features of both centralized or mainstreamed models into Edison’s programs for remedial students. Both mainstreamed and centralized models have good potential to prepare students for postsecondary academic work, as long as the college demonstrates commitment to the ongoing improvement of developmental education in whatever form.

**Edison’s Context for Change**

The main purpose of remedial education is to prepare students for college-level academic demands. Therefore, the quality of remedial instruction can be considered in terms of its alignment with the college curriculum. Specifically, the skills and content taught in developmental reading, writing, and math classrooms should be related to those that students will later encounter in their subject-matter classrooms. From a cognitive perspective, close alignment of developmental and college-level instruction should promote students' generalization of learning beyond remediation to the college-level classroom.

Currently, Edison State has a centralized remedial division that teaches lower level developmental courses, with academic departments teaching the higher level (for credit) courses. A particular problem with the prevailing model is the minimal collaboration that occurs between developmental faculty and their respective counterparts within academic departments. This level of isolation and lack of integration has prevented the institution from effectively aligning its curriculum courses in mathematics, English, and reading with content taught in developmental courses. Moreover, developmental faculty at Edison State College seldom meet within their respective developmental disciplines to discuss curriculum related issues such as content-specific pedagogies, assessment, or best practices for teaching remedial college students. Typically, developmental faculty only meet during bi-annual professional development days held during convocation and discuss general procedural processes related to state reporting/compliance issues. A most serious concern is the complete lack of any effort to ensure that remedial faculty receive professional development specifically targeted toward meeting students’ cognitive and affective needs.

In addition to the lack of professional development appropriate to the teaching field for developmental faculty, the college has not developed a systematic approach to ensure that instruction is aligned to match exit levels of developmental education to entry levels of the college-level courses. Lining up these levels, at least for college composition and mathematics courses, seems more feasible when developmental education is mainstreamed.

Whether mainstreamed or centralized, developmental reading, writing, and math curricula should be aligned with content and skills found in college-level courses. Remedial literacy and math practices should be authentic, utilizing actual material and examples from the college curriculum rather than drilling in skills that fragment the literacy process (Grubb & Associates, 1999; Levin, 1999). Alignment of remedial reading, writing, and math curricula may be easier when developmental education is mainstreamed in English and mathematics departments. Ideally, whether centralized or mainstreamed, the content of remedial reading, writing, and math instruction should be closely connected to the subject matter students will later study in degree programs. Many would benefit from being exposed to specific technical and career-related knowledge in the context of reading, writing, and math remediation.

Other rationale for mainstreaming developmental studies into academic departments includes the following:

1. The instruction of remedial courses is typically left to part-time, adjunct faculty who may or may not also be teaching college-level courses. If this problem can be overcome administratively, mainstreamed developmental education may have better potential than centralized departments to align curriculum, at least in the subject areas of English and mathematics, thus facilitating the generalization of student learning.
2. The benefits of the greater use of full-time instructors in centralized rather than mainstreamed developmental education programs may be undermined by the lack of awareness of the academic demands and content of college-level study that such instructors may have as a result of isolation from the academic departments. The danger in this case is that even at the highest level remedial courses, students considered ready to exit remediation may actually remain underprepared for academic study in the content areas.
3. Developmental education courses have been criticized as causing feelings of discouragement by reinforcing students' sense that they are at risk and forcing them to take longer to finish their degrees. Alternatives to traditional remedial courses include tutoring and adjunct courses directly connected with regular college-level courses (Commander & Smith, 1995; Maxwell, 1997, both cited by McCusker, 1999). These options provide opportunities for academically underprepared students to interact with their higher achieving peers and participate more fully in college life. Locating remedial education in a regular academic department may hold similar promise. Course numberings indicating that remedial reading, writing, and math courses are part of a larger departmental sequence including college-level English and math may also have positive effects on students' feelings about education. In terms of student reactions to developmental education, mainstreaming appears to be superior to centralization.
4. Further, because enhanced communication is an expectation of the mainstream model, and developmental faculty are more attuned and sympathetic to the needs of academically low performing students, integrated departments may be more likely to more effectively implement an "early alert" system that identifies and refers at-risk students for counseling or other support services.

**A Mainstreaming Model for Edison State College:**

**Role of the Academic Department**

Assistant Chairs will be established in the mathematics and English departments to facilitate appropriate support to faculty that teach remedial courses in the respective disciplines. The Assistant chair for Pre-Collegiate Mathematics will report to the Mathematics Chair and will assume responsibility for professional development, evaluation, and related curriculum development and alignment activities. Similarly, an Assistant Chair for Pre-Collegiate English and Reading will report to the English Chair and will assume responsibility for each of these two areas. Chairs of the math and English department will work closely with the Assistant chairs to ensure that courses are aligned and that at-risk students receive quality instruction.

In addition, an Assistant Chair for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) will also be established. Because there is not a counterpart within the existing academic departments, the Assistant Chair will report directly to the District Dean of Arts and Sciences. The responsibility of the Assistant Chair will be to establish regular meetings with faculty and adjuncts and provide appropriate professional development and curriculum review for the EAP discipline. It is recommended that each Assistant Chair receive a one course release to compensate them for their expanded duties.

In the mainstreamed model, collaborations between remedial and college-level instructors may help the latter develop the passion that the former feel for helping students who have failed in the past. Further, mainstreamed developmental faculty need to learn systematic techniques for teaching reading, writing, and math typical of the learning disabilities field, with which centralized faculty are often highly familiar. On the other hand, instructors in centralized departments may not be adequately familiar with the literacy requirements and content of the college-level, subject-matter curriculum. Contact with college-level English and math instructors would give them an opportunity to examine discipline curricula in order to identify content and skills that could improve the effectiveness of developmental courses in preparing students for college-level work.

Learning experience is enhanced when students feel that they are connected with an endeavor that is respected in the college. Efforts should be made by academic departments and college administrators to integrate developmental education with the rest of the college program, rather than marginalizing it within departments or within the college. Colleges will have different ways of accomplishing this integration. Doing so seems appropriate given the extent of remedial need in the student body and the growing centrality of developmental education to the community college mission.

**Role of Dean Academic Success Programs**

The Dean of Academic Success will maintain responsibility for administrative state reporting requirements, accountability measures, assessment practices, and orientation related to developmental studies. In addition, the Dean will serve as liaison between Academic Chairs and Assistant Chairs as needed to effectively facilitate a quality program. The success of the proposed model will be greatly by enhanced by the availability of ancillary support services. The Dean of Academic Support will provide leadership for such Academic Support Programs as Peer Tutoring; Disabled Student Services; Student Opportunities for Achievement and Rewards (SOAR); Student Support Services: and Upward Bound. The Dean will also oversee the academic tutoring in Centers of Excellence while students are enrolled in developmental and college-level courses as well as develop and supervise instructional modifications such as writing-across-the-curriculum in discipline classrooms and supplemental instruction.

These ancillary services are necessary to increase the persistence and performance of academically low functioning students, many of whom experience not only the family and financial difficulties typical of community college students in general but may also suffer from low self-esteem related to academic difficulties. Remedial students can feel lost in a college environment that they may perceive as impersonal. Support services seem especially important for students at the lower remedial levels who test into three or more remedial courses. In particular, students who enter the college with reading difficulties are at severe academic risk (Adelman, 1998; Roueche & Roueche, 1999).

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