Efficiency Improvement Proposal: Learning Centers and Labs

Background
- The College’s instructional reorganization process began in spring 2010. As a result of that reorganization, the Library Services division merged with the English Language Arts division, and all of the College’s learning centers came under the new division. Until this merge, the College’s Math/Science Learning Center (MSLC) was under the direction of the Math and Science Division Dean, and the Reading/Writing Learning Center (RWLC) was under the direction of the English Language Arts Division Dean.
- The reorganization and creation of the Library Services, Learning Resources and Language Arts division paved the way for discussion of the learning center operations. Because the two centers were previously under separate leadership, policies, procedures and operations varied between the centers.
- Examination of California education code and Title 5 regulations revealed that the center operations were not well-aligned with state requirements for tutoring apportionment collection.
- Discussions with learning center staff revealed that a significant amount of staff time was spent entering student data that was now, for the most part, available via SARS Track or System 2000.
- In addition to the two major learning centers, the College offers tutoring in an ESL lab and via the CalWorks Job-Specific Basic Skills (JSBS) program. An athletic learning center (The Zone) was established in summer 2010, with tutoring and study space available to student athletes in fall 2010.
- Staff members from the RWLC, MSLC, The Zone, CalWorks program and ESL lab were invited to be a part of the learning center efficiency improvement team.
- The entire efficiency improvement team—which included a total of 10 Instructional Support Assistants (ISAs), one faculty member, a program coordinator, division dean, vice president and Information Services (IS) Operations Manager—was invited to complete the College’s organizational climate assessment. Thirteen team members completed the organizational climate assessment. Results of the assessment revealed that 1) interpersonal relationships were a major strength of the team, and 2) feeling toward management was the most significant area in need of improvement.

Current Student Intake Process
- The division leadership identified several learning center processes for improvement, including student intake, tracking and scheduling. Intake was selected as the first process for improvement because it was the starting point for tutoring student data collection.
- At present, the student intake process varies greatly from learning center to learning center. The two largest learning centers use hard copy forms that students complete on their first visit to the center. These forms are used to ensure students are eligible for tutoring and are attached to student tracking folders in both the MSLC and RWLC. These forms are slightly different at the two learning centers, although the purpose of the form was the same. The ESL lab and CalWorks lab use different intake mechanisms but collect similar information. None of the learning centers or labs share the current intake
form, so if a student visited more than one center or lab, he/she would fill out additional intake forms.

- Although the MSLC, RWLC, and The Zone use SARS Track to collect positive attendance for tutoring, the three centers also keep hard copy logs of each student tutoring session. Neither the ESL lab nor the CalWorks lab use SARS Track to collect positive attendance; all tutoring is tracked via hard copy tutoring logs.
  - Copies of the student intake/tracking process maps for each center/lab can be found in Appendix A.

Assumptions
- Although the present budget situation does not necessitate the collection of apportionment for tutoring services, the College must be prepared to collect apportionment in the future.
- In order for the College to collect apportionment for tutoring and assess tutoring outcomes accurately, the student intake and tracking processes must change.
  - Title 5 regulations require that a student be enrolled at the time of tutoring, approved by a counselor or faculty member, and diagnosed with an identified learning need.
  - Tracking data must accurately reflect the course for which students receive tutoring in order to meet apportionment requirements and to provide accurate data for outcomes assessment.

Actions Taken
- The efficiency improvement team attended an efficiency improvement orientation session and five other sessions in order to 1) review state Title 5 regulations pertaining to tutoring, 2) begin outlining steps in the student intake and tracking processes, 2) learn about process mapping, 4) map the current processes, 5) identify data needs, and 6) select areas for improvement.
- The Efficiency Improvement Steering Committee (division dean, learning center coordinator, research analyst and IS operations manager) developed a research and reporting agenda for the learning centers and obtained preliminary approval of the plan from the Vice President of Instruction. The plan was presented to learning center staff, and the staff were informed of the data reporting capabilities of the Office of Planning, Research and institutional Effectiveness (PRIE). Based on the presentation, learning center staff decided to stop entering student demographic and academic data into stand-alone databases at each center and to instead allow the PRIE office to report aggregate student data at the end of each year.
- Learning center staff presented several suggestions for process improvement. These suggestions included standardizing System 2000 access for all ISAs, sharing data between learning centers and replacing folders with a shared electronic resource.
- There was strong consensus among the Efficiency Improvement Steering Committee members that a shared, System 2000-linked electronic intake form would improve the student experience at the learning centers and would free up staff time for more critical tasks, such as tutoring. This process was proposed to the larger efficiency improvement
team, and preliminary feedback was obtained from staff and incorporated into the proposed process. A map of the proposed process is located in Appendix B.

**Proposed Process**
- Students will register for tutoring services via an online form accessed through the learning center web sites.
  - The form will be programmed using existing student portal programming and accessed securely by student ID number/PIN combination.
  - The program will ask the student to verify their contact information and will include a link to the Change of Information Form if the student indicates there is a need to update/correct the information.
  - The form includes questions about learning needs, which will meet the learning need documentation required for apportionment.
- Based on the course and identified learning need, the student will receive a message directing them to one or more of the learning centers.
- Student identity will be verified by photo ID at first visit to a learning center.
- Intake form data will be stored in System 2000 and accessible to all ISAs, the division dean and learning center coordinator.
  - A draft version of the form can be found in Appendix C.
- The intake process is directly related to student tracking and scheduling. These processes will be redesigned and integrated with the intake process in the future.

**Proposed Efficiencies and Service Improvement**
- The electronic intake form will eliminate the need for ISAs to enter data for each student when they first visit the learning center. The student will be responsible for signing up for tutoring and identifying at least one learning need. The learning center coordinator will serve as the referring faculty member and will review student registration records for approval. These changes will allow the College to accurately collect data required for apportionment.
- A student will only be required to complete one registration form each semester, eliminating the need to fill out a different form at each learning center and freeing up staff from unnecessary clerical duties.
- The first week of the semester will serve as the registration period for students. Because students enter their own data online, the ISAs would be free to participate planning, professional development or other training activities during the first week of the semester.
  - Registration will continue throughout the semester. Students would be able to register for tutoring online at their convenience.
- Long lines of students waiting to register for tutoring during the first week of class will be reduced or eliminated.
- The proposed process will eliminate the need for hard copy folders for each student at each center, which will result in supply savings and reduced paper waste.
- Student intake data would be accessible to the PRIE office via the System 2000 database.
Next Steps

- In order for the new process to truly be efficient, each of the learning centers and labs must have SARS Track installed. This is perhaps the most critical piece of the proposed process.
  - Having SARS Track installed will save substantial amounts of staff time at the JSBS lab and ESL lab, which will free up staff for tutoring and other direct services to students.
- To ensure that the data on the proposed form is adequate to meet the needs of the learning centers and labs, a hard copy of the form will be piloted in the RWLC and MSLC.
- Feedback about the new process from staff and students is essential. Staff will pilot the process at the two learning centers and will gather feedback from students about the process. Staff will participate in a feedback session and will provide recommendations for the proposed process to the Efficiency Improvement Steering Committee.
- The form and process will be adjusted based on pilot feedback.
- The intake process is closely linked with student tracking and scheduling. These processes will be addressed immediately following the intake process implementation. The goal of these projects will be to eliminate paper tracking and duplication of tasks by relying exclusively on SARS Track for positive attendance and SARS Grid for tutor note-taking.

Tentative Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Present proposed process and hard copy intake form to learning center/lab staff</td>
<td>Gather feedback and obtain buy-in from learning center staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Submit proposal to VP of Instruction and VP of Information Services and Technology</td>
<td>Obtain approval and guidance to move forward with process</td>
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<tr>
<td>October-November 2010</td>
<td>Pilot hard copy of intake form in RWLC/MSLC</td>
<td>Assess form adequacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assess process implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2010</td>
<td>Submit final form to IS for programming</td>
<td>Program form for piloting</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2010</td>
<td>Program form and portal in System 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2010</td>
<td>Web form piloting</td>
<td>Pilot test new form</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Implement new intake process and gather student and staff feedback</td>
<td>Assess new process implementation</td>
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*Subject to VP approval and programmer schedule*