

**STUDENT SERVICES PROGRAM REVIEW
AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SITE VISIT**



LAS POSITAS COLLEGE

Summary Report

February 26 - 27, 2008

Las Positas College

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This report represents the findings of the team
that visited Las Positas College on February 26 - 27, 2008.

Las Positas College
Student Services Program Review and Technical Assistance Site Visit
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REPORT FROM THE SITE VISIT TEAM

OVERVIEW

This report was prepared by the Student Services Program and Technical Assistance Review team following a site visit that commenced on Tuesday February 26, 2008 at Las Positas College (LPC) in Livermore, California. The purpose of this site visit was to provide the college with assistance and feedback with regard to the college's Self-Evaluation of its student services programs in general and of the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs), Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS), Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE), and Matriculation programs in particular. This report will provide the college with recommendations, commendations, and anecdotal information based on the review.

When the team arrived at Las Positas College, they were cordially greeted and the staff was very accommodating and friendly. The team's requests were met and the interviews went smoothly throughout the visit. It is evident that LPC is in a state of flux; poised for tremendous growth in the coming decades. The college campus has numerous construction projects funded by Measure B in 2004. The campus projects an image of innovation, cooperation, community involvement, support and planning for anticipated growth and development. The addition of a new Student Services Building will enrich the college's layer of service delivery from the categorical programs.

Currently, Las Positas College enrolls approximately 8,500 day and evening students and is projecting to serve about 14,000 students within 10 years. Coordinating planning agendas and integrating services requires active listeners and willing participants to make it all work. The team observed that LPC promotes a culture where communication and making connections is fostered. This culture has been built over time and serves the college well.

The team reviewed numerous documents prior to the site visit as well as other supporting documents while on site. Such documents included information on CalWORKs, DSPS, EOPS/CARE, and Matriculation, the Student Characteristics Report, along with Institutional Research data. In addition, there was a wide variety of well designed marketing and outreach materials on display throughout the campus. Many of these materials were produced in English and Spanish. Numerous interviews were conducted including some off-campus at the district office in Pleasanton. Two team members met with Information Technology (IT) and Fiscal Services representatives. Again, the college and district staff met each of the team members' requests for additional information.

Integration and Coordination of Student Services College-Wide

How the four categorical programs work with each other and with other student services programs

The four categorical programs at Las Positas College work well with each other and with other student services unit in an integrated manner. These programs are administered by the Dean of Student Services and Dean of Enrollment Services. Together with the Vice President of

Student Services (VPSS), the two deans meet weekly to discuss and review personnel, program issues, events, and budget updates. The management team and staff appear to share an air of collegiality and a pragmatic approach to getting things done. The organizational chart demonstrates how the programs intersect with other student services programs on campus. In the team's interviews with faculty and staff, the team found that the Student Services group also integrates well with the rest of the campus community. It was evident that, under the VP's leadership, the deans communicated the message well to staff, asking for participation and cooperation on various events conducted by the programs throughout the academic year. Communication is aided by regularly scheduled meetings with the VPSS, and among deans, department heads and staff. Student Services, Institutional Research, Instruction, and Information Technology also appear to work very well with each other.

Las Positas College is a young and vibrant college and expanding in many areas. As one approaches the college, you cannot help but notice the cleanliness and attractiveness of the grounds. This is vital for attracting students and making them feel welcomed. There is excellent signage strategically placed throughout the college. Thus, the college communicates that they are paying close attention to student suggestions and accommodating their needs. During the visit, the team witnessed many displays of student activity and involvement, including student publications, internet radio, art displays, and club meetings, all of which make the college feel inclusive and inviting.

How student services works with instruction, institutional research, and the management information systems (MIS)

Student Services and the categorical programs at LPC work in unison with Instruction, Institutional Research, and Information Technology. The deans and the VPSS work closely with the Office of Research and IT on a regular basis. LPC uses the Banner System for all their data entry and programming. The Office of Information Technology provides sufficient support for all student services programs at LPC. Together with the Institutional Research office, they provide information for the deans, counseling, matriculation, transfer, categorical activities and budget planning. Activities that benefit from IT and Research collaboration include the following:

- Review, establishment, and validation of course-specific assessment instrument cut-scores in English, English as a Second Language (ESL), and mathematics.
- Ongoing verification of MIS data.
- Identification of trends in student enrollment.
- Identification of support services that facilitate term-to-term persistence.
- Determination of the proportion of students by ethnicity, gender, age, and disability in pre-collegiate, degree applicable, or transfer courses from various areas.
- Development and identification program-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for all student services programs.

The Self-Evaluation supporting documents listed a number of studies conducted in relation to various matriculation issues including on-line orientation, assessment, and student demographics.

How these programs are integrated with student equity planning and other strategic planning initiatives of the college

The college has utilized data from both the System Office and from their own Institutional Research department to develop their student equity plan. The plan outlines the goals and activities to promote student equity based on the college's Strategic Plan, Educational Master Plan, Title V requirements, and Title III grants. LPC uses the information and services provided

by the Office of Institutional Research and it appears that all planning is data based. Thus, the goals of the equity plan and other strategic planning agendas are based on classical research and sound information. LPC has focused its attention on equity in enrollment, retention, graduation, and transfer of high risk transfer bound students. LPC is also aware of the campus climate and certain variables by race and gender were selected for co-relational studies. Like many community colleges, LPC faces a shrinking male population and rapidly changing student demographics. The team noted that the college's enrollment is more ethnically diverse than its immediate community.

How effective the programs are in enabling success for underprepared and underrepresented students (i.e. using data to reassess how services are provided)

Las Positas College is very innovative and sensitive to the needs of student success, progress, and access. In particular it has paid close attention to changing student demographics and the trends. The college has made it clear that it is listening to the needs of underrepresented and underserved student populations on campus. The college's participation in the Campus Change Network (CCN) has fostered the open communication and cooperation among programs that helps to create and sustain such notable services as CCN and the Early Alert System. The data provided by the Institutional Research office appears to be one of the driving forces for future planning and problem solving. Notable efforts for student success can be linked to those of the CCN and its impact on programs and services working together on campus and with the community at large.

How the directors/coordinators and the business office work together to monitor allowable expenditures and reconcile fiscal reporting

The programs function well with each other and form a collegial "support network" within LPC. While there is a good working relationship with Accounting and Budgeting for budget development, monitoring, and reporting, there is no evidence of written fiscal procedures between the college and the district office. This may be the result of a disconnect between the central Fiscal Services office and college fiscal operations and procedures. The current relationship can slow down the budgeting process, planning, reconciliations, year-end reports, and billing and create a procedural bottle-neck. Written policies can eliminate confusion related to rules, regulations, protocol and support clarity and collegiality between the campus program managers and the district.

Commendations:

The team commends the college for:

- Having enthusiastic faculty and staff that promote contagious energy and exemplary service. Based on student comments, the institution is also practicing its Guiding Principles as printed in the catalog and serving students and the community well. For such a relatively new college, this institution operates like a well-oiled machine.
- Demonstrating a proactive stand on student success by creating auxiliary programs and initiatives like CCN, Student Ambassadors, EXPO, College Bound Scholars, and College Foundation Semester. These initiatives show that the institution is innovative and caring.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the college:

- Establish written policies for the district and college with regard to their budgeting and accounting processes.
- Have key personnel from both the college and district office work closely in monitoring

the allowable expenditures, fiscal reporting, and reconciliation of figures for annual expenditure reports.

The remainder of this report is organized by categorical program and includes commendations and recommendations for each program.

California Work Opportunities and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs)

The CalWORKs program at Las Positas College is exceptional in service, considering the small staff operating the program. The program is well connected with the county CalWORKs officials, community programs, and other programs on campus, as well as faculty and staff. Interviews with CalWORKs students indicated that they are pleased with the college program and the services they receive. Students also felt that the program and staff were strong advocates and very supportive of their needs. CalWORKs is very active on campus and has daily contact with county and community officials. The team member who conducted the CalWORKs review was impressed with the amount of output from such a small program.

The CalWORKs program serves CalWORKs students and their families by providing education and career opportunities with individualized attention and quality services. It is a point of entry for many of the students being referred from the county or other community organizations. Students receive support as they initiate their academic education at LPC. The CalWORKs staff provides this service in the form of in depth intake which assists in identifying student needs. The program provides students with clear and consistent information and processes. Many students are not aware of the process but the CalWORKs office guides them through the matriculation components. Students are walked through the admission process from start to finish and have items explained thoroughly and appropriately.

Although the number of staff members is smaller than desired, the staff is very accommodating of students and makes every effort to assist all that come through the door. The office is managed exceptionally well. The CalWORKs program consists of one (1) full-time coordinator, half-time (.5) academic counselor, half-time (.5) job developer, and one (1) full-time counseling assistant. The staff and program design provide exceptional access for the students to take advantage of campus resources. Students are routinely referred to tutoring, financial aid, and EOPS/CARE, as well as connections to local community services available off-campus such as personal/family counseling. The program has healthy collaborations and connections with local community resources. This relationship allows students to better utilize the community One Stop, Human Services and other services available in the Tri-County area.

Student progress is monitored throughout the semester to ensure that students maintain enrollment. Each program component contains a "check and balance" system to ensure that students are eligible for services and continuing to make academic progress.

The CalWORKs program also provides funding for work-study opportunities, including positions both on and off-campus. These positions enable students to develop their job skills and provide opportunities for additional work experiences. Students are also able to participate in internships that meet their work participation requirements. Unfortunately on-campus child care is not available but the program has partnered with a campus agency to help students gain practical experience working with children in order to attain early childhood education certification.

The innovative work-based learning program, LapTechs, affords students the experience to learn while being paid. Students can learn to operate and manage the on-campus computer help desk from all aspects. Students are instructed by college mentors in the “business” portion of the operations; in addition to computer repair/troubleshooting.

Commendations:

The team commends the college and CalWORKs program for:

- Maintaining strong ties with the county CalWORKs office which provides an excellent conduit for student advocacy.
- Providing open access to program staff and the streamlining of program “paperwork” for student participation and compliance with county and program requirements.
- Partnering with the TANF-CDC Early Childhood Development program. The partnership allows students to be directly linked with practical career training.
- Utilizing the exemplary job placement system on campus. Utilizing the financial aid posting system to find the best personal and professional matched environment for student development is notable.
- Providing an informal women’s support group that offers additional support and resources for the CalWORKs participants.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the college and CalWORKs program:

- Develop a comprehensive outreach component.
- Increase connections and availability of off-campus job placement sites.
- Create a check and balance system that will clarify the accuracy in collection and submission of data.
- Review the availability of counseling time and increase hours if necessary.

Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS)

Las Positas College is notable for its wellspring of student services programs that create learning communities for staff and students. This is especially true of the DSPS program. The program benefits from fluid processes that promote access, provide exemplary leadership, a welcoming staff, a student centered approach and strong ties with faculty. DSPS has set high standards and is on target with its objectives.

The DSPS program works closely with instruction, primarily in the area of providing accommodations for students with educational limitations secondary to verifiable physical, learning or psychological disabilities. Throughout the academic year there is contact between DSPS, faculty, and other departments involving multiple means of communication. These include emails, phone calls, memos, face-to-face contact, letters and presentations to the college and community. Follow up between DSPS and instruction helps to ensure not only accommodations being provided but also involves assisting faculty in their implementation.

The program has a strong coordinator who is very involved in shared governance. This makes the program visible and well respected campus wide. The access process is smooth, but the team noted some difficulties with the assessment process including intake, scheduling appointments, and getting in to see the Learning Disability (LD) Specialist. The LD Specialist’s

workload is huge, including classes and student contact. Coverage for LD services needs to be increased and to have a more individualized assessment process. Program staff provide services while students are in the process of taking assessments and they are undertaking a promising project to revamp the Learning Skills Curriculum. Staff is also undertaking extensive grant writing and making innovative plans for the future.

The program provides good assistive technology and a strong emphasis has been placed on incorporating technology into the global institutional experience. However, the location of the Tech Center is disconnected, since it is housed away from the Tech Coordinator. Since the person monitoring the use of the Tech Center is housed away from site, staff has apparently underreported the use of adaptive technology. The disconnected location will be remedied with a new building. However, the program needs to put a formal process in place to track adaptive technology lab use.

The program has also established strong collaboration with faculty using effective training, forms and systems. Staff respect faculty input and have earned faculty respect. However, some students raised concerns about feeling stigmatized by faculty in mainstream classes.

The college also has an excellent licensed therapist in the health center, but its services don't appear to be advertised well.

The DSPS program's visibility and campus-wide collaborative relationships create an atmosphere of acceptance and confidence among many students and staff. Universal design has been incorporated institutionally, and the DSPS Coordinator is working with architects on new designs for buildings. According to anecdotal data, the majority of referrals to the program come from faculty.

Students seemed to be strong self-advocates, demonstrating the effective mentoring by staff on this skill. However, students need to be more involved in the program evaluation process.

Overall there is only a small percentage of the overall student body identified to participate in DSPS despite strong outreach to high schools. Attention should be focused on conducting more "in-reach" advertising to students already on campus.

The program's planning agenda identifies areas that need to be addressed. Data collection is highlighted. It seems that oversight of the Web site is very tight, making it difficult to make needed modifications. There is a need for more training on Web administration so that more people can make modifications and regular updates to Web materials.

Commendations:

The team commends the college and DSPS program for:

- Having exemplary staff, specifically the LD Specialist and adjunct counselors. The program is projected to grow as a result of the recent additions to the staff.
- Having a very organized access and documentation process; staff has been making marked efforts to speed up the intake and eligibility process to ensure priority registration for incoming students.
- Having strong department leadership under a very involved coordinator who has brought acclaim and exposure to the program campus-wide and in the community.

- Providing services that are above and beyond, including a passionate support staff who have developed strong connections with their students, thus creating a warm inviting atmosphere.
- Making technology and campus-wide incorporation of universal design a priority for the program and the innovative leadership that has brought about significant improvements.
- Creating strong collaborative efforts with other programs on campus and retaining a strong student-centered approach to the delivery of services.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the college and DSPP program:

- Continue efforts to revamp the learning skills curriculum and provide relief for the LD Specialist, including time for more individualized assessment.
- Increase outreach efforts to the existing student population.
- Continue to address space and location issues.
- Find ways to reconcile the underreported use of adaptive technology.
- Improve web administration and update antiquated intake forms.

**Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)/
Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE)**

By all reports, the Las Positas College EOPS/CARE program is making a significant difference in the lives of the students it serves. The staff and faculty – from the front desk to the EOPS Director – make strong connections with students, creating a safe place where students feel encouraged and supported. The program is run efficiently with limited staff. They have developed a comprehensive data tracking system that includes both an electronic database and paper files. As a result, information about the students being served is available immediately upon request.

The program is transitioning from a small to a midsize program. The number of students served grew significantly during 2007-08, reaching 310 in early spring, which is well over their cap of 184. This increase prompted the EOPS Director to stop accepting applications, and has created some program management challenges with staffing and procedures that still reflect a smaller program. One impact of the growth is that the program must limit services or run out of resources for students. Both students and faculty reported that the program ran out of childcare funds before the end of the spring semester in the past, leaving students scrambling to make up the gap in their budgets or to find other childcare options. The EOPS/CARE program's Self-Evaluation indicated an interest in training from the System Office on how to manage growth effectively. The program should consult with the System Office on how to adapt their planning and budgeting processes to ensure that they can best utilize the resources available to continue to provide services to program students.

The EOPS/CARE program provides comprehensive services to the students, and students are very appreciative of the services they receive. Distribution of book vouchers appears to happen efficiently, and the program has a good relationship with the bookstore staff. The program also has a good connection with the tutorial center and has developed an efficient process for ensuring that EOPS is paying for the “above and beyond” tutoring.

Although students are making good connections with counseling assistants, the program should examine levels of staffing to make counselors more accessible. With the majority of the EOPS Director's time dedicated to the coordination of the EOPS and CARE programs, there is effectively a .50 FTE of counseling available to serve all of the students. There are two days a week when there are no counseling appointments available for students, which can create problems in finding appointments that fit the students' schedules. Given the growth in the program, it may be time to review the EOPS Director's part-time status, rather than splitting time between coordinating and counseling.

The EOPS/CARE program works well with other areas on campus, particularly with the CalWORKs program which shares many of their students. While EOPS has developed a process for sharing information about book voucher awards with Financial Aid, that process could be refined. Recently, there were audit findings for Financial Aid because a few students' awards had exceeded unmet need after the book vouchers were added in. A system should be developed to identify students who will exceed unmet need before the book vouchers are awarded in the financial aid system, so that other awards and loans can be adjusted to allow the book awards. This will become more important as student numbers increase; also increasing the potential for similar audit exceptions in the future.

The EOPS/CARE program has instituted many effective practices, some of which have been expanded to campus-wide services. The Psychological Services Intern program started with the EOPS/CARE program and became a service for the entire campus community, funded by student health fees. The EOPS Club is a strong student group that is very active in planning an annual celebration and award ceremony to honor students for their successes. This annual event appears to be a highlight for both students and staff, and has become a very effective tool for motivating students to improve their academic performance.

The planning agenda provided by EOPS/CARE is very general. Rather than listing specific innovations or projects, it primarily provides a list of ongoing program services and very general suggestions for change. The program staff should consider amending it to reflect how they plan to address the specific challenges presented by their recent growth.

Commendations:

The team commends the college and EOPS/CARE program for:

- Having passionate staff and faculty who are dedicated to the program because they care about serving students. Students report that EOPS/CARE has made a significant difference in their lives, and often has been the one program that has kept them in school.
- Initiating innovative services on campus, including the original tutoring services and the psychological services. This capacity for innovation will serve them well in meeting the challenges of a growing program.
- Developing and maintaining an excellent database system for tracking and reporting student data.
- Having a very active EOPS Club that provides an excellent opportunity for active student participation in the program and appears to have created a sense of ownership for the students, particularly in the annual celebration of student accomplishments.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the college and EOPS/CARE program:

- Seek assistance from the System Office in setting specific parameters for their program

with respect to the number of students they will serve and the level of service they will provide.

- Review the level of counselor availability for EOPS students.
- Work with IT to obtain access to important student contact information in the Banner system and improve ability to print student transcripts.
- Work closer with Financial Aid to establish a process that ensures EOPS book vouchers do not put students over their unmet need.
- Involve the EOPS/CARE staff in the planning for transitional office space during construction of the new Student Services building to ensure a smooth delivery of services during that period.

Matriculation

Matriculation is a vital function at every college and Las Positas College is no exception. The Matriculation process appears to be well coordinated and updated by responsible staff for various components of the total matriculation effort. For example, the college provides an on-line application process and a hard copy for students who make that request. Both formats are available in Spanish (CCCApply for on-line). In addition, the new Student Services building will provide easy access to admissions, assessment, counseling, and financial aid for students. However, current conditions are crowded. The counseling staff at LPC is a solid team that is focused on assisting students reach their full potential. The program also benefits from strong leadership that reminds staff about program development and planning.

The Matriculation program appears to have a strong team management approach to their daily operations. Matriculation services are under the auspices of the Dean of Student Services and the Dean of Enrollment Services. The Deans' collaborative management styles foster both cohesion and innovation among staff members and a collaborative and complementary relationship seems to exist. Both share budget and resources to meet their programmatic and service needs throughout the fiscal year.

Counseling

While the counseling staff is limited in size, it is unlimited in commitment to student support. Their efforts result in effective programming and efficient use of counseling hours. Utilization of technology is also strong at LPC, as they are actively working to automate the Student Education Plan and the new student orientation. Despite the workload, the counseling staff is very motivated and show great care for their students.

The counselor to student ratio was identified as 1:1200. Although the ratio is at a lower level than the state-wide average, students indicated that they would like more access to counselors.

Follow-up

Student follow-up includes a comprehensive process for students on probation (academic and progress) as well as for students that have been dismissed. While it was listed in the college Self-Evaluation, the impression given was that the Early Alert System is not being consistently implemented. Title 5 Matriculation guidelines require that community colleges provide a follow-up system that ensures regular monitoring for early detection of student difficulty and allows for referral to appropriate services and curricula as necessary.

Research and Evaluation

Research studies have been conducted to evaluate persistence rates of new students who receive core matriculation services (orientation, assessment and counseling). However, MIS data is incomplete and does not permit adequate monitoring of program effectiveness.

Orientation

Student orientation is presented in several formats to meet the needs of different student populations. Different orientation processes to target specific populations have been implemented and other options are being explored to best serve students.

Student Activities

Strong efforts are evident that the campus maintains a commitment to be inclusive and sensitive to diversity and equity of its growing population. The college gives evidence of many innovative activities and practices in the student service delivery.

Effective Practices:

The team identified several programs that appear to be highly effective. These include EXPO, College Bound Scholars, College Foundation Semester (incorporated campus-wide), Campus Change Network (CCN), and Student Ambassadors program (students interested in participating in outreach programs).

Commendations:

The team commends the college and Matriculation program for:

- Having a counseling staff that is committed to student support and shows great care for their students.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the college and Matriculation program:

- Collaborate with MIS to set parameters for clearly defining the Matriculation population and reexamining the database for comparative analyses of matriculation students and all Las Positas students.
- Update validation studies for English as a Second Language (ESL) and chemistry assessments.
- Review the use of Student Ambassadors' time to possibly include having them make follow-up phone calls to prospective students to remind them to enroll in classes.
- Assess the effectiveness of the college's current Early Alert System.
- Develop and implement a professional development component that is systematic and addresses the cultural competency needs of the staff.
- Review the counselor to student ratio to see if students' needs are being met.