

## **Standard II**

### **Student Learning Programs and Services**

*The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. The institution provides an environment that supports learning, enhances student understanding and appreciation of diversity, and encourages personal and civic responsibility as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.*

#### ***A. Instructional Programs***

*The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.*

*A.1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institution and uphold its integrity.*

#### **Descriptive Summary**

The mission of Merced College is simply stated, “Students are our focus and we are known by their success.” This mission is integral to planning for instructional programs at the college. Merced College offers general education, transfer, vocational education, remedial education, non-credit classes, and community services. The college offers Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees in 81 different major courses of study and Certificates of Completion in 58 different vocational areas. All programs are approved by the Chancellor’s Office of the State of California. Transfer courses are articulated with the University of California, California State University, and other institutions of higher learning. Distance education courses are separately approved through the Curriculum Committee and are articulated with other institutions. Courses taught at the college's off-campus centers must meet the same rigor and criteria as those taught on our Merced and Los Banos campuses.

## Self Evaluation

Merced College programs are developed following a standard protocol. The planning process for programs and curriculum includes:

- Instructional program review for each program on a regular basis.
- Instructional Master Planning Committee that accepts five-year plans from the divisions.
- Educational Master Planning Committee that oversees the planning for all areas of the campus: instruction, technology, facilities, student services, and administration.
- Curriculum Committee that approves individual courses for each program on a six-year cycle and that approves any changes or creation of new programs prior to Board approval.
- Board of Trustees approval of all courses and programs.
- Chancellor's Office approval for all new programs.

All courses follow a rigorous approval process through the Curriculum Committee. Transfer courses are submitted through the articulation process for approval for IGETC (Intersegmental General Education Transfer Credit), CSU Breadth (California State University), and UC-TCA (University of California Transfer Credit Approval.) If a course is not approved for transfer, the faculty are notified and offered the option to redesign the course. Courses designed for transfer are offered only if they have prior approval for transfer credit from the four-year institutions of higher education.

Our students complete approximately 450 degrees and 80 certificates annually. Our transfer rates continue to improve, and we anticipate a greater success with transfer once the University of California's Merced campus opens in 2005. Data on employment is harder to obtain. The vocational programs, especially those in Allied Health, are able to track the employment rate of their students in the community. Vocational Advisory Boards provide anecdotal information regarding graduates and their success. No formal method of tracking our students' employment outside of the vocational areas exists at this time.

The currency of programs is ensured through a regular cycle of planning and review. All courses must be reviewed under Title V guidelines on a six-year basis. This maintains a level of currency. Merced College participates in many intersegmental cooperatives, including the Higher Education Consortium of Central California (HECCC), the San Joaquin Valley Learning Communities Consortium, and the IMPAC Project (Intersegmental Major Preparation Articulated Curriculum.) The college has added new areas of concentration within the past few years in response to community needs. Two Liberal Studies courses have been designed as part of a grant for teacher preparation in cooperation with California State University at Stanislaus. These courses are now part of

the regular curriculum and are fully enrolled each semester. The Merced College Technology Institute, which includes programs in Biotechnology, CISCO networking and Laser Electro Optics, has partnered with the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and CISCO Systems, Inc. to provide technical training in these emerging fields.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College does not yet have the ability to monitor student achievement outcomes for employment. The college's vocational faculty are working with their advisory committees to design a survey of employment for students. The general education students will be more difficult to monitor. Students at a community college attend for many different reasons. These include the desire to do a more effective job with their current employer, a wish to transfer, and for more personal life-long learning reasons.

Successful program completion data is another area of need. The college's educational plan software has not been operational for three years, so student goal information is not available beyond the counselor's office. The Guidance Division will be implementing the new educational plan software, which will allow for better tracking of a student's success as compared to his or her stated educational plans. The Instructional Master Planning Committee (IMPC) has assumed the primary responsibility for defining, tracking, analyzing, and planning for student success at the institutional level. The Faculty Senate, which is by law responsible for curriculum, will monitor the IMPC's efforts. Final approval for all institutional goals lies with the Board of Trustees.

*A.1.a. The institution identifies and seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with their educational preparation and the diversity, demographics, and economy of its communities. The institution relies upon research and analysis to identify student learning needs and to assess progress toward achieving stated learning outcomes.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College is open to everyone. The college accepts any student over the age of 18 who demonstrates an ability to benefit from a college education. The target population includes students from a variety of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The County of Merced is depressed economically, with an average unemployment rate of 10.9%. 60% of our students require developmental studies prior to beginning college-level courses. The mission of the California's community colleges is to provide lifelong learning, transfer preparedness, general education, and vocational education. These varied educational needs are reflected in the programs offered at Merced College.

### **Self Evaluation**

*- Merced College 2004 Accreditation Self-Study -*

Merced College assesses its students' instructional needs through a variety of methods. These include a placement test and consultation with a placement counselor. Students are placed in math and English courses following the matriculation guidelines for the State of California. The instructional program review process allows programs to assess their courses and their students' progress while in the program. Student grades in each course provide the course instructor with information regarding student progress in attaining the stated learning outcomes for that course. Progression within a sequence of courses, such as those in the developmental area, also provide information on students. The developmental student population has been tracked through Partnership for Excellence (PFE) program data, and changes have been made to the curriculum and student support services as a result of the assessment of that data. PFE funds have provided increased tutorial support, special academic assistance for athletes, a model supplemental instruction program, and training for adjunct faculty. Merced College has also begun using the Learning and Studies Skills Inventory (LASSI) program for assessment of student learning styles and attitudes, in addition to the assessment tests administered for English and math placement. LASSI measures student readiness and preparation. The Academic Senate recommended in the fall of 2003 that all students on dismissal status be required to enroll in a Guidance 34 course. There were 300 students enrolled in this course during the spring semester of 2004. Analysis of the success of this course in retaining students and meeting their instructional needs will be conducted.

The campus contracted with Noel-Levitz in 2001 to study student retention (Noel-Levitz Report, 2001). The data gathered from that analysis has been used to strengthen instruction, as well as student services. The Student Success Committee chaired by faculty member Art Cardoza, focuses on integrating instructional and student services planning for student success. Our Teaching and Learning Academy, created in 2002-2003, offers training to all faculty on pedagogy, information competency, syllabus preparation, grading, and other topics pertinent to the classroom instructor.

The Academic Senate prepared a Student Equity Plan in 2000. This plan delineates an action plan for achieving goals in the area of access, retention, degree and certificate completion, basic skills course completion, and transfer goals. Monitoring of student progress is also included in the plan. The Academic Senate will be updating the plan and reporting on the goal outcomes in the spring of 2004.

Research on progression within a sequence of courses, transfer rates, and graduation and certificate completion is consistently available to the campus community. These statistics are used for a variety of planning purposes.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College revised its instructional program review process in the 2003-2004 academic year (instructional program review presentation, Fall of 2003). The most important change was to bring the instructional program review from a division-level review to a program-level review. This revised process will allow for greater analysis

and research within individual program areas and a greater emphasis on student learning outcomes. Merced College's Research Analyst will be participating in the evaluation, planning and improvement of the statistical analysis of the data for program review. Four division-level instructional program reviews have been completed since the mid-term Accreditation review (Art Division, Agriculture Division, Developmental Education Division, and Guidance Division). The dialogue, which occurred during the division instructional program review process, has allowed for a snapshot of each division. It is now essential that the recommendations from those reviews are evaluated and measurements for their success be planned, and necessary improvements are made. One program, the Business Program, has volunteered to pioneer the new program review process. The faculty in this area are setting student learning outcomes for their program, determining the measures that will be used for those outcomes, and beginning the dialogue for designing improvements. The college's goal is to conduct two or more instructional program reviews every year, with two beginning in the fall of 2004.

Merced College will work on analyzing and drawing conclusions from placement tests in order to better match our students with the proper level courses in math and English.

***A.1.b. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the current and future needs of its students.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

The curriculum development and review process at Merced College is the primary means by which instruction at the course and program level is determined. The Curriculum Committee is comprised primarily of faculty, with input from the Articulation/Matriculation Coordinator, Research Analyst, and Vice President and Deans of Instruction. The Past President of the Faculty Senate chairs the committee. All courses are scrutinized for compliance with Title V regulations, the Education Code, matriculation regulations, and articulation needs. The course description includes a description of the methods of instruction, as well as a course outline, required textbooks, assignments outside of class, and methods of evaluation. A focus recently on campus has been the addition of more technology in the classroom. Merced College has received Title III and Title V HSI grants, which have provided for additional instructional technology for classrooms and for training faculty in the use of that technology.

### **Self Evaluation**

During Curriculum Committee meetings, the college carries out an ongoing dialogue regarding methods of instructional delivery. All instructors teaching distance learning courses must answer a questionnaire regarding method of instructional delivery, rationale for teaching the course via distance learning, pedagogical benefits, challenges

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anticipated, method of evaluation of student learning, and technological expertise. The Distance Learning Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee reviews the answers and forwards a recommendation for the course to the Curriculum Committee. All distance learning courses are separately reviewed. Concern for the lack of technical support for students has been expressed by the faculty teaching distance learning courses. Currently there is no technical support for students, only for faculty. Faculty believes that the level of technical support has not been sufficient to meet their needs. There is no support in the evenings or on weekends for the distance education faculty or students. Students are advised in the catalog and schedule of courses of the required technology skills and the hardware and software requirements for online classes.

Many faculty have adopted technology in their curriculum. The number of classrooms that provide access to the college network and have multimedia capability has increased substantially. This technology allows for instructors to use a wide variety of multimedia approaches in their courses. Thirty-five classrooms now provide multimedia projectors, and thirty-eight classrooms have Internet access on the Merced Campus. The Los Banos Campus has four classrooms equipped with multimedia projectors and four that have Internet access. The Los Banos Campus also has three computer labs and one electronics lab. For many courses, Power Point slides can be provided for discussion in the classroom, as well as posted to the instructor's website for later consultation by the student. The Biology 1 teachers have made a concerted effort to link students to the class material in a variety of formats. During the hiring process, potential new faculty are asked about their ability to utilize instructional technology as part of the interview process.

Norton Grubb, Professor of Education at U.C. Berkeley and author of *Honored but Invisible*, was hired as a consultant for Merced College during the 2001-2002 school year. As a result of the dialogue he facilitated, faculty created a Teaching and Learning Academy. This Academy offers training in instructional methods, assessment, and pedagogy. All new instructors hired by Merced College are required to attend the series of training sessions offered through the Academy. The Academy courses are also offered to all regular faculty as well.

Faculty are also teaching linked courses, thereby creating learning communities. These linked courses allow for multiple methods of delivery of instruction on coordinated topics. One example is our Political Science 1 and English 1A pairing that focuses on American government. Patricia Schade, instructor of the English 1A class, states, "The student learning outcomes for these linked courses have been determined, analysis of the student learning compiled, and the faculty have reevaluated their courses every semester." Faculty are pursuing grant opportunities to better support learning communities on campus with training and release time for collaborative curriculum development and student collaboration.

The Biology 1 faculty revised the delivery of instruction for their course effective fall 2003. The faculty changed the format of delivery for the content of the course, changed

the type and order of classroom presentations, adopted a new textbook and a new lab book, and have added daily study groups and study sessions before each exam. In addition, each faculty member prepares presentations on the topics in his or her area of expertise, which is then shared among other faculty so that all the information presented to the students is consistent. The Biology 1 group has also prepared a pre and post lab exam, and quizzes and exams are jointly written. At the end of the Fall, 2003, semester, faculty met and reviewed course content and evaluated the success of students based on their exam and quiz scores compared to previous years. Adjustments were made for the spring, 2004, semester to course content to improve comprehension and the flow of material in the course. The faculty, as a goal, also wanted to retain students long enough for them to feel comfortable in the course and be willing to give it a try. Therefore, they started with ecology, something that the students are more familiar with and then moved toward the more complex subjects in the middle of the course. This required several group assessments to be certain that information needed in a particular area had been previously covered.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College is doing an effective job of maintaining a dialogue regarding methods of instruction and delivery. Evaluation methods in this area need to be determined.

*A.1.c. The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

The curriculum process at Merced College is the primary means by which student learning outcomes at the course and program level are determined. The Curriculum Committee is comprised primarily of faculty, with input from the Articulation/Matriculation Coordinator, Research Analyst, and Vice President of Instruction, and Instructional Deans. The Past President of the Faculty Senate chairs the committee. All courses are scrutinized for compliance with Title V regulations, Education Code, Matriculation regulations, and articulation needs. The course description includes the student learning outcomes and a description of the methods of instruction, as well as a course outline, required textbooks, assignments outside of class, and methods of evaluation.

### **Self Evaluation**

All courses at Merced College require student learning outcomes. These are articulated clearly in the course proposals and course changes brought to the Curriculum Committee. However, in many cases we do not currently measure the success or failure of these

course outcomes. Courses are reviewed on a six-year cycle. In addition, the Faculty Senate established a Student Learning Outcomes Task Force in the spring of 2003. This task force surveyed the current student learning outcomes practices on our campus.

The faculty at Merced College have a varied level of expertise in this area. The Allied Health faculty regularly use student learning outcomes, assessing the student's progress at the course and program level (Merced College Registered Nursing Faculty, Board of Registered Nursing Self Study Report, 2003). Other vocational faculty, especially those in the ToyoTech and CISCO Academies, have a process of determining student learning outcomes, assessment of those outcomes, and planning for improvement of the outcomes. One course in the developmental area, the reading lab, conducts a diagnostic test at the beginning and end of the semester. Results, however, are not compiled for evaluation by the instructional faculty. The English faculty are discussing the creation of a grading rubric, as well as resurrecting the exit test used in years past. In the English A and A Lab, student learning outcomes are done on a program level. The lab identified those areas with which students needed more assistance. These were items covered in the class, but not extensively enough. For example, they cover MLA formatting in English A and then have them create "Works Cited" sheets of their own based on the pattern and presentation they have learned. Student grades for English A and A Lab are almost the same, even though they are two separate classes, graded on different rubrics, by different people (comments of Delores Cabezut-Ortiz, Division Chair).

The campus has begun a systematic dialogue on outcomes, beginning with the attendance of fifteen faculty and administrators at the March 2003, RP Group Student Learning Outcomes workshop. The Convocation of Fall, 2003, included a presentation by Dr. Bill Scroggins to the entire faculty on student learning outcomes. Flex Days for January 2004, included a workshop on course-level outcomes and division break out sessions for each discipline. The Flex Day on March 19, 2004, offered a workshop on institutional-level outcomes facilitated by Dr. Bill Scroggins. Members of the Instructional Master Planning Committee (IMPC) attended that workshop, as well as other interested faculty, staff and administrators. IMPC has begun a dialogue on institutional-level student learning outcomes as a result of that workshop.

### **Planning Agenda**

Student learning outcomes for Merced College will be developed at the course, program and institutional level through a five-year plan adopted by the Instructional Master Planning Committee (IMPC) in Spring, 2004. The IMPC has been given the charge of coordinating the Student Learning Outcomes process on campus. The Student Learning Outcomes Director will facilitate the development of course-level and program-level outcomes with the discipline faculty. Program-level outcomes will be developed in coordination with the Program Review process. Institutional-level outcomes will be developed, adopted and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee, in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, the Superintendent/President, and the Board of Trustees.

The course-level student learning outcomes plan allows for a graduated process, beginning with dialogue on course-level outcomes with discipline faculty, choosing a measuring tool and standards for levels of performance for each outcome, moving to norming sessions to assure acceptable inter-rater reliability, and cumulating with an evaluation of student performance, data collection and assessment of the process. The Director of Student Learning Outcomes, a campus faculty member, will oversee the process.

*A.2. The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Curriculum for Merced College is determined according to the regulations of the State of California. All courses and programs are developed by discipline faculty based on recommendations from sources such as the administration, the public, staff, instructors and students. The appropriateness of each course is determined by content experts in relation to the mission of the college. Merced College offers different levels of courses, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs. In addition, the college has a large WorkPlace Learning Program that offers credit and non-credit courses to the business community. The Non Credit Program also provides courses for the community. International Students are enrolled in our courses as regular students. We do not offer a study abroad program. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for evaluating every course and program developed by faculty, based upon the guidelines established by the Chancellors Office, Title V regulations, the Education Code, and transfer institutions. The Board of Trustees of Merced College approves all curriculum.

### **Self Evaluation**

Development of excellent curriculum and programs are a strength of Merced College. Each division has the ability to develop new offerings, based upon faculty interest, perceived student need, or community/business needs. The proposed courses are discussed with peers and revised if needed. Breadth and transfer equivalents must be researched. The Curriculum Committee evaluates the appropriateness of the course, including credits and delivery mode. A separate course outline is now included for all lab courses as a result of changes made during the 2003-2004 year.

Vocational programs have advisory committees and accrediting processes separate from the regular Merced College procedures. For example, the Agriculture Division has a very active advisory committee that meets twice a year. This Advisory Committee is comprised of agribusiness people, agriculture educators, and agricultural leaders that reside within the area. The development of curriculum is discussed by the advisory committee. Industry partners such as Case and New Holland also provide advice on curriculum development. The Agriculture Division is also actively involved in curriculum development through the California Postsecondary Agriculture Articulation Collaborative (CPACC), which is a joint project between community colleges, California state universities and the University of California.

Another example is the college's Radiologic Technology Program, which has an extensive quality assurance model. The Radiography Program has voluntarily chosen to maintain its accreditation through the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology. This external peer review grants public recognition that indicates we have met certain established qualifications and educational standards, as determined through initial and subsequent periodic evaluations. The goals of this accreditation process are to protect the student and the public, identify outcomes by which the radiography program is measured, evaluate its assessment policies and procedures, and stimulate programmatic self-improvement.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College intends to continue to use its process for the establishment of quality curriculum and programs through an organizational procedure that includes faculty development, curriculum committee scrutiny and approval, and Board of Trustees review and adoption.

*A.2.a. The institution uses established procedures to design, identify learning outcomes for, approve, administer, deliver, and evaluate courses and programs. The institution recognizes the central role of its faculty for establishing quality and improving instructional courses and programs.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Faculty develops all courses. The faculty are responsible for determining the learning outcomes at the course and program level. Programs are developed through the Instructional Master Planning Process, in coordination with the Curriculum Committee. These procedures are documented in the Curriculum Committee Procedures Manual. The evaluation of courses is conducted through the Title V review process on a six-year cycle.

### **Self Evaluation**

*- Merced College 2004 Accreditation Self-Study -*

The quality of courses and programs is determined in various ways. Many of our courses are articulated with the California State University system and the University of California system. Data on the performance of transfer students is one determinant of the success of the college's curriculum. Merced College students perform at a higher level compared with native students at the local state university, California State University at Stanislaus (based on CSU Transfer Data).

Merced College faculty are entirely responsible for establishing learning outcomes. These are discussed during the Curriculum Committee review process. In addition, many discipline faculty regularly evaluate the success of the courses and the students enrolled. Biology 1 curriculum delivery was recently revised as a result of faculty dialogue (see report). The Los Banos Campus faculty conduct an annual retreat to review their students progress. The Developmental Studies Program conducts pre and post tests for all students enrolled in the reading and writing courses. Special programs, such as GOAL and PUENTE, provide paired courses to support and track at-risk students.

Development of courses and programs is professionally performed by discipline faculty. Delivery of the courses and programs is professionally conducted. However, in many cases evaluation of courses has not been conducted in a research-based model using student learning outcomes. The English faculty have begun a dialogue to develop this model for their courses. Faculty will be completing a survey based on Patricia Cross' and Thomas Angelo's Teaching Goals Inventory, which will calculate student learning outcomes essential for English 1A. After the survey is completed, the appropriate student learning outcomes will be evaluated, and a rubric will be designed for the English 1A essays.

Programs are evaluated through the campus Instructional program review process. This process, in conjunction with the Instructional Master Planning Committee 5-Year Plans, is designed to review the effectiveness of programs on campus. The instructional program review process has not been as successful as we would have hoped during the past six years. Conducting a review at the division level proved to be an overwhelming task, resulting in almost no follow-up to the recommendations. The Guidance Division Instructional program review took four years to proceed through the old process, and was not relevant by the time the Academic Senate and President received the executive summary. The Arts Division and Agriculture Division faced the same dilemma – a process that took too long, covered too much and was not a working document. Student learning outcomes were not a part of this process.

The most recent instructional program review of the Developmental Education Program was a massive undertaking. The disciplines of developmental mathematics, writing, reading and tutorial were studied as part of this review. The findings were very important in the light of our emphasis on student success, and the faculty are currently evaluating the recommendations. However, the broad coverage of the report makes it difficult to implement the changes in a timely manner.

In response to this problem, the Academic Senate, Instructional Program Review Chairperson, and the President of the college have designed a new procedure for instructional program review. Faculty attended a workshop in the fall of 2002 conducted by specialists on program review from California State University at Fresno. As a result of this workshop and ensuing dialogue, the new process was designed and is now being implemented. This new process will bring the analysis down to the program level, thereby making it more effective and relevant to individual courses within the program. A more effective cycle of review, analysis, and revision will be possible with this change. The Business Program will be the first on campus to follow this new process.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College faculty are gearing up to refine, implement, evaluate and revise student learning outcomes at the course and program level. Student learning outcomes for Merced College will be developed at the course, program and institutional level through a five-year plan adopted by the Instructional Master Planning Committee in the Spring of 2004. The IMPC has been given the charge of coordinating the Student Learning Outcomes process on campus. The Student Learning Outcomes Director will facilitate the development of course-level and program-level outcomes with the discipline faculty. Program-level outcomes will be developed in coordination with the program review process. Institutional-level outcomes will be developed, adopted and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee, in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, Superintendent/President, and the Board of Trustees.

The course-level student learning outcomes plan allows for a graduated process, beginning with dialogue on course-level outcomes with discipline faculty, choosing a measuring tool and standards for levels of performance for each outcome, moving to norming sessions to assure acceptable inter-rater reliability, and cumulating with an evaluation of student performance, data collection and assessment of the process. The campus Director of Student Learning Outcomes will provide oversight for the process.

*A.2.b. The institution relies on faculty expertise and the assistance of advisory committees when appropriate to identify competency levels and measurable student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution regularly assesses student progress towards achieving those outcomes.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Faculty are primarily relied upon for the student learning outcomes for all courses at Merced College. These outcomes are determined as part of the course proposal and course revision curriculum process. In addition, faculty work with professionals in their fields of expertise to determine competencies necessary for that discipline. The Research

Analyst conducts annual reviews of retention, successful course completion, progress within a program, and degree and certificate statistics. All vocational programs have advisory committees for advice and review of competencies required for students in those programs. Many have state-level boards and other outside accrediting bodies for review of their programs.

### **Self Evaluation**

Merced College is effective in designing the competencies required for mastery in individual courses. Learning outcomes are determined by lecture examinations, quizzes, and lab practicals written by the faculty. Merced College has determined competency levels and learning outcomes for vocational programs and certificates. The Registered Nursing program, for example, conducts a student self-evaluation and a faculty evaluation at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. Program success is reported through NCLCX exam results. Students are prepared from the beginning of the program with the knowledge of the outcomes they will be responsible for at the end of the two-year course of study. In addition, the local advisory committee provides input regarding the outcomes needed for the program.

One area that Merced College needs to improve in is the area of assessing student progress towards outcomes at the course, program and institutional level in non-vocational areas. Dialogue does occur regularly on the design of outcomes and delivery of material. However, follow up discussion on the effectiveness of these is not part of the present organizational structure.

### **Planning Agenda**

Student learning outcomes at Merced College will be developed at the course, program and institutional level through a five-year plan adopted by the Instructional Master Planning Committee in the Spring of 2004. The IMPC has been given the charge of coordinating the Student Learning Outcomes process on campus. The Student Learning Outcomes Director will facilitate the development of course-level and program-level outcomes with the discipline faculty. Program-level outcomes will be developed in coordination with the Program Review process. Institutional-level outcomes will be developed, adopted and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, Superintendent/President and the Board of Trustees.

The course-level student learning outcomes plan allows for a graduated process, beginning with dialogue on course-level outcomes with discipline faculty, choosing a measuring tool and standards for levels of performance for each outcome, moving to norming sessions to assure acceptable inter-rater reliability, and cumulating with an evaluation of student performance, data collection and assessment of the process. The faculty Director of Student Learning Outcomes will provide oversight of the process.

***A.2.c. High-quality instruction and appropriate breadth, depth, rigor, sequencing, time to completion, and synthesis of learning characterize all programs.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

All programs offered at Merced College are approved through the campus curriculum review process, as well as by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges. Instruction is provided by qualified faculty who meet the minimum qualifications as determined by the Board of Governors for the California Community Colleges. Completion of a program requires a clearly defined sequence of courses, with emphasis on the discipline as well as general educational requirements.

### **Self Evaluation**

High quality instruction begins with selecting instructors that have a high degree of expertise within their discipline. Merced College has many qualified full-time instructors in all programs. In hiring new full-time instructors, the college selects individuals with breadth and depth of knowledge who value the importance of good teaching and effective learning. College faculty set high expectations for their students, ensuring rigor in their classes. Selection of adjunct faculty, however, depends upon having a pool of qualified instructors. This has been a challenge for the college for many years, and some faculty express a concern regarding this weakness. The equivalency committee reviews all applications for instructors to verify that they meet the minimum qualifications. Instructors are allowed to meet the minimum qualifications course by course rather than for the entire discipline. Some faculty believe this contributes to a lack of coherence of instruction within a sequence of programs, such as in the mathematics area.

Breadth, depth and rigor of programs are determined by the faculty within each discipline. Outcomes are discussed as curriculum is written, and all course proposals and programs require the signature of discipline faculty, the division chair and the Vice President of Instruction. The Developmental Education program is responsible for designing the pre-collegiate level programs, determining this by the sequence of outcomes for each course.

Faculty participate in professional development activities that ensure that they stay current in all aspects of their instructional fields. The statewide IMPAC (Intersegmental Major Preparation Articulated Curriculum) project has provided an opportunity for discipline faculty to discuss student learning outcomes with peers from CSU, UC and other community colleges. Funding for travel has been severely restricted in recent years for non-vocational faculty, which has made it a challenge to continue to attend conferences.

Separate accreditation of vocational programs is another method of ensuring the quality of offerings. The Radiography Program has voluntarily chosen to maintain its accreditation through the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology. This external peer review grants public recognition that we have met certain established qualifications and educational standards, as determined through initial and subsequent periodic evaluations. The goals of this accreditation process are to protect students and the public, identify outcomes by which the radiography program is measured, evaluate its assessment policies and procedures, and stimulate programmatic self-improvement.

The Registered Nursing Program accreditation was re-certified in the fall of 2003. The Merced College Auto Program received certification from the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) in the spring of 2004.

### **Planning Agenda**

Programs will continue to be evaluated on a regular six-year cycle using the college's instructional program review process, and curriculum matriculation review process, which is also on a six-year cycle. Merced College administration and faculty are enthusiastic about the opening of UC Merced in the fall of 2005. The proximity of this campus will, we anticipate, provide a more highly qualified pool of adjunct instructors in our community and also create a closer articulation with a neighboring research university. In addition, as budgets improve, we plan to restore faculty travel budgets for staff development.

*A.2.d. The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College supports a multitude of delivery modes and teaching methodologies in its curricular offerings. Instructors are permitted to determine which mode to use based upon the content of the material being taught. Methods of instruction are defined in course proposals as part of the curriculum process.

### **Self Evaluation**

Merced College has integrated various teaching methodologies into its courses to address different learning styles. These include teacher-led discussion, study guides, videos related to the subject matter, internet sites that relate to the subject matter, hands on laboratory activities, student-led group discussions, power point presentations, and online courses for distance learning students. The Reading Lab does a learning style assessment during lab orientation in order to better serve the students. Presentation of the lab material

focuses on visual learners, the predominate strength for most students as determined through assessment.

Assessment of student learning is also determined by the course outline and the teacher of the course. Methodologies include multiple choice questions, essay questions, practicums, portfolio grading, and oral examinations.

Many community college students live fragmented lives, and faculty have made every effort to assist with their learning needs: Math faculty provide a homework lab, tutorial support for all courses is available through the Tutorial Center, and the Disabled Student Services Center supports the learning accommodations of its clientele. Poor study habits and many demands on their time are the challenge that many of our students face, according to assessment of students using the LASSI program and student surveys. Merced College is partnering in a new grant-funded effort to increase success in math courses using Supplemental Instruction (SI.) This technique provides a facilitator in the classroom who leads a study session to teach students in that class strategies and methods for successfully learning the curriculum. This grant also supports research on student success for those students enrolled in the classes. English faculty are also utilizing SI instruction in three sections during the spring 2004 semester but not in conjunction with the grant. Some faculty provide review sessions outside of class prior to exams. Dr. Krista Wilson, chemistry instructor, Dr. Carmen Rexach, biology instructor, and Richard Randall, instructor of political science, regularly meet with their classes in study sessions.

Faculty have been offered workshops on learning styles, learning disabilities awareness, and classroom assessment of student learning during staff in-service training.

### **Planning Agenda**

Measuring the effectiveness of various methods of presenting course information has not been consistently done across the campus. Some faculty solicit specific feedback regarding the use of multimedia in the classroom, using a supplemental questionnaire at the time of their faculty evaluation. The college, through its student learning outcomes processes, will evaluate faculty teaching methodologies to measure their effectiveness.

*A.2.e. The institution evaluates all courses and programs through an ongoing systematic review of their relevance, appropriateness, achievement of learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College evaluates all courses and programs on a six-year cycle. Courses follow Title V regulations for review through the Curriculum Committee process. Programs are reviewed through the instructional program review process on a six-year cycle as well.

In addition to the six-year cycle, the Instructional Master Planning Committee collects five-year plans for every program on campus on an annual basis so that programs can maintain and demonstrate currency in their area. The IMPC plans are shared through the Educational Master Planning process to facilitate institutional dialogue on program development.

### **Self Evaluation**

Courses at Merced College do not exist in isolation. The effectiveness of most courses is determined by the courses that follow them. Most learning trends build upon prior knowledge and understanding of the particulars of each field. One method to determine how effective a course has been is to reflect on how prepared students are to tackle the next class level. Progression within a sequence of developmental-level courses has been tracked and assessed on an annual basis for the Partnerships for Excellence program. Faculty teaching courses above the developmental level have not systematically reviewed the data on student progression from one course to the next.

Graduation rates and certificates are also a measure of the effectiveness of the programs Merced College provides. Analysis of these for specific programs is conducted as part of the instructional program review cycle. The revision of the instructional program review process will allow for analysis of the data at the program level, with more emphasis placed on teaching and learning rather than budgets and facilities.

The college's vocational programs have advisory committees who provide feedback on courses and programs. In addition, many vocational programs follow state or national guidelines regarding the content of the curriculum for their programs. For example, the Early Childhood Education program coordinates with the California State Department of Education Child Development Division.

The Agricultural program has established a high quality sheep flock that is utilized within the program to illustrate the principals taught in Nutrition, Animal Health, Selection and Evaluation, Sheep Production, Reproductive Physiology, and Basic Animal Science. The Agriculture Business Management Program has developed an Agriculture Leadership Ambassador program. All of these course elements are the result of the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of course offerings, and how Merced College can better meet the needs of its very diverse student population.

The Los Banos Campus will be undergoing an organizational review during the coming year to determine needed staffing levels, including faculty. There has been uncertainty about how to evaluate the Los Banos Campus in the past, since the faculty to some extent are considered part of the Merced Divisions. For example, they attend Division meetings, use common textbooks, and follow the same curriculum.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College has developed a new methodology for instructional program review. This will involve a more program-specific analysis of courses and program outcomes. The initial requirement for each program will be to develop mission and vision statements and specific objectives for each subject area based on learning outcomes students are required to meet. Course evaluations, as they relate to the program mission, objectives and student learning outcomes, will then be analyzed on a regular cycle.

*A.2.f. The institution engages in ongoing, systematic evaluation and integrated planning to assure currency and measure achievement of its stated student learning outcomes for courses, certificates, programs including general and vocational education, and degrees. The institution systematically strives to improve those outcomes and makes the results available to appropriate constituencies.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Curricular planning proceeds through the Curriculum Committee. All courses are reviewed on a six-year cycle according to Title 5 standards. The Board of Trustees approves all curriculum proposals, revisions and transfer breadth requests. Programs are reviewed through a six-year process that enables us to meet matriculation regulations. Changes to degrees are approved by the Curriculum Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Planning at the overall institutional level uses the Merced College planning process, originally approved in December of 1998 when the Board adopted the Merced College Planning Handbook. The handbook describes the planning model of six Master Planning Committees, the relationship between the committees, the composition of the broad-based committee membership, and how the process of planning operates. The Planning Handbook was widely distributed to Division Chairs, Faculty Senators, MCFA and CSEA Boards, and the Management Team. Copies of the handbook are housed in the Offices of Instruction, Student Personnel, Administrative Services, the President's Office and the Library.

### **Self Evaluation**

Ongoing planning is an integral part of the organizational structure of Merced College. Curriculum is reviewed on a six-year cycle. Programs are reviewed on a six-year cycle as part of the Instructional program review process. In addition, the Instructional Master Planning Committee addresses each program's annual plan for budgetary consideration. The Committee for Budget Review and Recommendation (CBRR) receives recommendations for expenditures following lengthy planning by the master planning committees, who report to the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC). EMPC then reports on budgetary priorities to the chair of CBRR. The CBRR Committee does

not determine priorities for funding; they allocate funds based upon the recommendations from EMPC, the Superintendent/President, and area Vice Presidents.

Data for planning is received from the Research Analyst upon request by the faculty. Budgetary data is made available for the CBRR committee by the Director of Fiscal Services. Merced College needs to improve its ability to analyze and interpret data for easy understanding. The data can be retrieved from our information management system if one wishes to receive it, but the analysis has not been conducted on a regular basis for planning purposes. New processes of researching and disseminating findings will need to be created

### **Planning Agenda**

An intranet site with data on courses and programs is being created. This will enable campus staff involved in planning to have easier access to pertinent planning data and information. Faculty must first determine which learning outcomes for courses and programs are appropriate and how each outcome will be measured, and then determine how to collect that data. Training faculty on data use and management will need to be implemented.

A grant to work with three math courses (Math 80, Math A and Math C) has been received, and will be implemented in the spring of 2004. This will allow for greater tracking of data on student outcomes at the individual student and course level, which in turn will be used to improve the overall math program at Merced College.

*A.2.g. If an institution uses departmental course and/or program examinations, it validates their effectiveness in measuring student learning and minimizes test biases.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College uses very few departmental course examinations and no institutional program level examinations. Program level examinations are performed by outside testing agencies, such as the RN NCLEX exam and the Cisco Academy examinations.

### **Self Evaluation**

The departmental course examinations that are conducted are final exams in English 84, (a developmental level writing course,) Math A (beginning algebra), Biology 1 and Chemistry 2A. The exams are written specifically to test for the content to be delivered in the course. Regular norming sessions are held for the English 84 exam in conjunction with blind grading in an attempt to eliminate test bias.

Learning outcomes for all courses are agreed upon by faculty as curriculum is designed. Content, scope of the course, methods of instruction, and methods of evaluation are determined by the faculty and approved by the Curriculum Committee and the Board of Trustees.

### **Planning Agenda**

Departments who wish to use departmental examinations should include this as one option within the larger discussion of student learning outcomes.

*A.2.h. The institution awards credit based on student achievement of the course's stated learning outcomes. Units of credit awarded are consistent with institutional policies that reflect generally accepted norms or equivalencies in higher education.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Units of credit awarded for courses at Merced College are based upon the hours in class. This is in accordance with the Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH) guidelines. Merced College also articulates its curriculum with four-year colleges and other two-year colleges.

### **Self Evaluation**

The credit given in each course is based on course outcomes identified in the course outline. All outcomes at Merced College are consistent with accepted norms. For example, the Early Childhood Education program uses the California State Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing Child Development Permit matrix in determining course outcomes and units.

### **Planning Agenda**

No changes are planned at this time.

*A.2.i. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

All degrees and certificates are certified by the Admissions and Records department. Successful completion of the series of courses within the program or certificate determines a student's right to obtain the degree or certificate. Requirements for degrees and certificates are listed in the college catalog.

## **Self Evaluation**

All student learning outcomes for degrees and certificates at Merced College are determined by the faculty as part of the curriculum review process. Dialogue occurs during curriculum meetings regarding learning outcomes for degrees and certificates as they appear before the committee. A new transfer degree is being proposed by the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHECC). This must be approved by the college, and will follow the organizational structure already in place.

The expected outcomes are clearly stated for each course. Learning outcomes for the vocational programs are determined in cooperation with the program advisory committees, national and/or state certification requirements, and consultation with the four-year colleges and universities. Learning outcomes for the general degree requirements adhere to statewide standards determined by Title 5 regulations and the four-year colleges and universities' requirements for undergraduate education.

## **Planning Agenda**

Student learning outcomes for Merced College will be developed at the course, program and institutional level through a five-year plan adopted by the Instructional Master Planning Committee in the Spring of 2004. The IMPC has been given the charge of coordinating the student learning outcomes process on the campus. The Student Learning Outcomes Director will facilitate the development of course-level and program-level outcomes with the discipline faculty. Program-level outcomes will be developed in coordination with the Program Review process. Institutional-level outcomes will be developed, adopted, and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, the Superintendent/President and the Board of Trustees.

The course-level student learning outcomes plan allows for a graduated process, beginning with dialogue on course-level outcomes with discipline faculty, choosing a measuring tool and standards for levels of performance for each objective, moving to norming sessions to assure acceptable inter-rater reliability, and cumulating with an evaluation of student performance, data collection and assessment of the process. The faculty Director of Student Learning Outcomes will oversee the process.

***A.3. The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course.***

***General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:***

### **Descriptive Summary**

The Merced College catalog clearly states, under the section “Associate Degree Breadth Requirements,” the philosophy of the college with regard to general education.

### **Self Evaluation**

The philosophy, vision, mission, and core values of Merced College are outlined in the college catalog. The breadth of courses required for graduation meet the state of California standards for the Associate Degree. All content, including student learning outcomes, are determined via curricular review. This review includes faculty input, peer review by the Curriculum Committee, adherence to state standards, and Board of Trustees approval.

### **Planning Agenda**

The Merced College Instructional Master Planning Committee has developed an organizational structure to design and implement student learning outcomes for the institution. This process will allow for dialogue among all constituent groups. As courses are developed or modified for curricular review, they will be reflective of the institutional-level student learning outcomes, as they are determined.

***A.3.a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Students at Merced College are required to demonstrate competency by completing a sequence of courses in the areas of "Language and Rationality", "Natural Sciences", "Humanities", "Social and Behavioral Sciences", "Lifelong Understanding", and "Self Development."

### **Self Evaluation**

The breadth of classes required for graduation from Merced College meet the state of California standards. Faculty may apply for a course to meet these requirements through the curriculum process. Our new “Computer and Information Literacy” competency, first instituted in the 2000 catalog, is an example of the process by which faculty determine if a course will meet graduation requirements. A subcommittee comprised of faculty and representatives from the Office of Instruction and the Admissions and Records Office,

discussed the competencies students needed to demonstrate. The Curriculum Committee approved the list of competencies, as well as the initial courses that met that competency. The faculty Senate then approved the list and forwarded it to the Board of Trustees for final approval. Now, faculty may submit courses to the curriculum committee, demonstrating within the course content and course outline which competency is being taught as part of the class. If approved, the course is then added to the catalog for the next year as meeting one or more of the competencies in this area.

Student application of these competencies in all areas varies. The graduate of Merced College is expected to employ critical thinking, reading, writing, computer skills, information literacy, and computational skills to many areas of life. Merced College does not at this time have a methodology for tracking student's success beyond college graduation in a consistent manner. During our 35th anniversary celebration, we solicited "success stories" of our alumni and honored them at a banquet. Students required to pass national or state examinations for licensure demonstrate the competencies within their fields of expertise.

### **Planning Agenda**

Faculty will continue to review curriculum and programs on a six-year cycle. This consistent process assures a high level of excellence within our courses and programs.

*A.3.b. A capability to be a productive individual and life long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College maintains competency requirements for reading, writing, math, as well as computer and information literacy. All these requirements are clearly stated in the Merced College catalog. In addition, students must complete a series of courses that includes a course in Communication studies and analytical thinking and a course in either physical or life science.

### **Self Evaluation**

Standards to determine if students have met these competencies are determined by successful completion of the courses themselves. The courses are part of a consistent process that is regularly reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. All courses are scrutinized for critical thinking skills within the list of expected student outcomes. The Curriculum Committee is working on a standard for writing within General Education Breadth courses. Measures of student skills currently exist only as a part of course and

program completion. The determination of institutional-level student learning outcomes will be part of our planning process.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College must first determine measurable student learning outcomes at the institutional level. Once these have been decided upon through the Instructional Master Planning Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees, plans will be made to apply the measures to insure that general education outcomes are being met.

*A.3.c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical and aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

The catalog description for the Associate Degree Breadth Requirements includes the statement "...recognizes the student's right to an education that will meet his/her needs as a 'whole person' and enable him/her to meet the needs of society. Students receiving our degrees should be able to better understand themselves and function more effectively in the modern world."

### **Self Evaluation**

Faculty determine where to include, within the curriculum, the topics of ethics and citizenship when a course is first proposed to the Curriculum Committee. Writing courses include these topics within the reading and writing assignments given to students, as do the agricultural courses. The "Global Learning for All" project currently being coordinated by Dr. Caroline Kreide, professor of Spanish, and Mr. Brent Saich, sociology instructor, will offer to faculty the opportunity to broaden curriculum to include global issues.

The Board of Trustees has adopted an Academic Honesty policy that addresses the topic of ethics in the classroom (BP 5540). Faculty are encouraged to include information in their syllabus on the topic of academic honesty. This policy is available in the college catalog and on the campus website.

The human potential for creative thinking and innovation is an element not listed in the accreditation standards. All human progress comes from creative thinking. One does not develop new science, new technologies, new philosophies, etc. by memory, exposure,

and analysis alone but through a creative act greater than the sum of all of these. This is what faculty at Merced College attempt to teach.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College will continue to insure that ethics, cultural diversity, civic responsibility, and other related values are part of its general education outcomes. In addition, Merced College will specifically explore global topics through our “Global Learning for All” initiative.

*A.4. All degree programs include focused study in at least one area of inquiry or in an established interdisciplinary core.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

The Merced College catalog lists all courses required for an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree. All programs that are offered by the college require a focus of study in order to earn the degree. The emphasis is on lower division courses for preparation for transfer to a four-year institution or on vocational preparation.

### **Self Evaluation**

Students at the college are well prepared for their transfer majors. Merced College students that transfer to CSU are successful at a higher rate than native CSU students. One area that is being addressed currently is the Liberal Studies major, an interdisciplinary core of courses for teacher preparation. The CSU campuses must first determine their lower division requirements before Merced College can complete this proposal.

The college has a “University Studies” degree for students who wish to transfer to a four-year college and also want to earn an associate degree. The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHECC) is discussing a similar degree to be applied universally among its member community colleges.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College will continue to insure focused study or an interdisciplinary core that is a part of every degree program. It will also pursue the continued development of the Liberal Studies major.

***A.5. Students completing vocational and occupational certificates and degrees demonstrate technical and professional competencies that meet employment and other applicable standards and are prepared for external licensure and certification.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College offers vocational programs that require external licensure, as well as certificate programs that provide the opportunity to test for national examinations in the field of study. These include licensed vocational nursing, registered nursing, radiologic technology, CISCO networking, ToyoTech certification, and the ASE exam for automotive technology.

Contract education classes offer occupational certification that meets employment competencies. Merced College Contract Education in the Not-for-Credit mode offers industry certification in subjects such as the ServSafe Essentials Program. This program is from the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation and, if passed, meets the requirements for the California Retail Food Facilities Law Section 113716. In addition, Merced College Contract Education offers Hazardous Materials training in the Not-for-Credit mode. The OSHA 8-hour HazMat Refresher Training and the OSHA 40-hour Hazardous Materials Training Course are offered to local businesses. The course meets requirement in the OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standards.

The vocational advisory committees play a pivotal role in determining and evaluating the employment requirements and success of the college's vocational students. Experts within the appropriate areas review the core competencies of the vocational programs in conjunction with the faculty and provide feedback regarding the students they have employed locally.

In addition to the above, many of our courses are articulated with the University of California and the California State Universities.

### **Self Evaluation**

Merced College does an excellent job with its vocational programs. Students pass the national and state licensing exams at a very high rate. Many of the students we educate come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. For example, one registered nursing class had twelve primary languages other than English spoken in the homes of its students. The majority of students in that class passed the NCLEX exam on their first attempt.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College does not have a formal method for tracking our alumni as they enter employment. This is a key element in assessing student learning outcomes that will need to be developed.

The Los Banos Campus will be evaluating which vocational programs will be most needed when the new campus opens in 2007.

***A.6. The institution assures that students and prospective students receive clear and accurate information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies. The institution describes its degrees and certificates in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected student learning outcomes. In every class section students receive a course syllabus that specifies learning objectives consistent with those in the institution's officially approved course outline.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

The Merced College catalog lists information about educational courses and programs and transfer policies. In addition, the college web site provides transfer center links, the schedule of courses, and other pertinent data. The schedule of classes is mailed to all households in our service area.

Faculty members provide the division chair with a copy of the syllabus for the course. Division chairs verify the syllabus and course objectives contained therein. The opportunity to review the syllabus is also provided during faculty evaluations.

Every division reviews their catalog entries annually. The curriculum approval process for new courses and for the six-year update of curriculum includes the catalog description for the courses as well. The ASSIST database is available to all students through the transfer center website and is widely advertised to enrolled students who are interested in transferring.

### **Self Evaluation**

Merced College does not consistently verify that the faculty provides students with specific learning objectives in the course syllabus. Those objectives are provided within the course outline of record, but are not always transferred to the syllabus. Faculty in-service training opportunities have provided instruction in student learning outcomes and in syllabus creation, but these are optional for faculty. *The Faculty Handbook* encourages faculty to provide a thorough syllabus to every student that includes clearly stated, measurable course objectives that are directly related to learning activities.

Learning objectives for the degree and certificate level are presently determined by the individual course objectives that comprise the program or certificate for most of our offerings.

Students need to understand the importance of the placement test, and they need to read the catalog more clearly. Frustration occurs when students are not careful in their examination of course descriptions, requirements for degrees or certificates, and transfer. Merced College counselors and faculty have expressed frustration over the students' lack of understanding regarding the importance of the placement test. In addition, the college catalog offers a great deal of pertinent information that some students appear to ignore, including requirements for degrees or certificates, transfer requirements, and course prerequisites and advisories.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College must provide an opportunity for dialogue on program and certificate learning outcomes and objectives. The plan adopted by IMPC for course and program-level student learning objectives will provide an opportunity for this to occur. In addition, the instructional program review process is planned to reach all programs over a six-year cycle. Continued efforts will need to be made to provide students with information on student learning objectives.

*A.6. a. The institution makes available to its students clearly stated transfer-of-credit policies in order to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the expected learning outcomes for transferred courses are comparable to the learning outcomes of its own courses. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements as appropriate to its mission.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College provides transfer of credit information in the college catalog. The college lists the CAN course numbers in the college catalog with each course description. Merced College participates in the ASSIST program for articulation with CSU and UC, as well as other colleges and universities in California. All courses are reviewed by the articulation officers of CSU and UC in order to determine comparable learning outcomes for the courses. Merced College faculty also participate in the IMPAC project in order to coordinate learning outcomes for introductory level courses in all disciplines.

The Higher Education Consortium of Central California (HECCC) is a collaborative regional effort that addresses seamless curriculum and articulation among member colleges. The HECCC members are: California State University at Stanislaus; Merced

College; San Joaquin Delta College; the University of California, Merced; and the Yosemite Community College District.

### **Self Evaluation**

Merced College is actively involved in developing and maintaining coursework that is articulated with UC's and CSU's, as well as with other community colleges in California. This is accomplished by involvement with curriculum development through IMPAC, through professional associations such as the California Postsecondary Agriculture Articulation Collaborative (CPACC), and through participation with ASSIST.

The Evaluations Officer reviews incoming student's transcripts to determine transfer credits from other institutions, as well as any "pass along" certification of CSU GE Breadth and IGTEC. Official transcripts are available at no charge to students for the first two requested; additional copies are 5.00 each.

The Articulation Officer, Ann Andersen, and Transfer counselor, Michelle Stanford, participate fully in professional associations. The Articulation Officer sits as a voting member of the Curriculum Committee, and signs off as Matriculation coordinator on all curriculum. The Board of Trustees has approved the Transfer Center Plan, with goals developed by the Transfer Advisory Committee.

### **Planning Agenda**

The college needs to continue exploring other transfer-of-credit policies to facilitate the mobility of students without penalty by utilizing transfer credits. The college will continue to maintain clearly stated transfer of credit policies and procedures.

***A.6.b. When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College maintains catalog rights in the selection of regulations determining graduation requirements. These requirements include general education/breadth requirements, major or certificate requirements, competency requirements, and other requirements within the purview of the college. Students are entitled to catalog rights by maintaining continuous enrollment, providing any absence does not exceed two years. If the catalog outlines an earlier version of an associate degree or certificate program in which the division has discontinued or modified required courses, the division may authorize appropriate substitutions.

## **Self Evaluation**

Merced College insures that, when programs are eliminated or changed, students can complete their education in a timely manner. For example, Merced College recently discontinued the Dental Laboratory Technology program (effective 2002-2003) with the retirement of the only full-time instructor in that program. The discontinuance was planned to be effective at the end of the program of classes for the students enrolled.

Program changes adhere to the catalog rights for students. Division chairs make every effort to substitute current coursework if requested by students.

## **Planning Agenda**

The Merced College Faculty Senate needs to address a program discontinuance plan in cooperation with the Administration and Board of Trustees. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges through Senate Resolution 9.04 (Spring, 2003) encourages all local senates to prepare plans for program discontinuance. Title 5 §51022 states that colleges should have policies for the establishment, modification, or discontinuance of courses.

*A.6.c. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to prospective and current students, the public, and its personnel through its catalogs, statements, and publications, including those presented in electronic formats. It regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.*

## **Descriptive Summary**

The Merced College catalog presents information to the public, students, and personnel in clearly stated English. The catalog is reviewed annually by the divisions for accuracy in course descriptions and certificate and degree requirements. In addition, the college provides a regularly printed schedules of classes, with information relevant to the student in a clear, user-friendly language and format. The Merced College website has been redesigned for the 2003-2004 year to reflect a consistent presentation of information to the public.

## **Self Evaluation**

The staff and faculty at Merced College attempt to review the college's print publications on an annual basis for accuracy. On occasion, errors do occur and are corrected as quickly as possible with an errata sheet if necessary or a reprinting of the document.

Merced College has defined what is acceptable use of electronic communications systems used throughout the district (Board Policy 3140, revised 6-1-97). The Technology Master Planning Committee (TMPC) is developing a "Process for Maintenance of Web Pages on mccd.edu" to be used by persons posting information on the Merced College website. Persons wishing to create a web page must complete the "Merced College Web Page Request Form."

### **Planning Agenda**

Print publications will continue to be reviewed annually. The website will be evaluated following the procedures outlined in the TMPC document after they are adopted by the Board of Trustees.

*A.7. In order to assure the academic integrity of the teaching-learning process, the institution uses and makes public governing board-adopted policies on academic freedom and responsibility, student academic honesty, and specific institutional beliefs or worldviews. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College Board Policy 4030, "Academic Freedom," addresses the topic of academic freedom and responsibility. The policy states, in part, "... the Merced Community College District is committed to free discussion and open inquiry. We recognize that the freedom to think, to read, to speak, and to question is necessary for the development of an informed citizenry."

The Merced College catalog under "College Policies, Regulations and Procedures" includes a section on "Academic Honesty." Board Policy 5500, "Standards of Conduct," specifically addresses cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, forgery, and other forms of academic dishonesty.

### **Self Evaluation**

The Faculty Senate, in May 2002, adopted the "Academic Honesty Procedure" to support BP 5500. This procedure details faculty responsibilities for encouraging academic honesty in their classrooms. The procedure also explains student and administrative responsibilities.

The procedure was developed collegially through a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate. Copies are available in the Faculty Handbook, which is given to all full-time and adjunct faculty. Students are informed by individual faculty members on this topic through the syllabus, through handbooks for students in programs such as Registered Nursing, and via specific assignments on the topic.

The student grievance procedure (Administrative Procedure 5530 – Student Rights and Grievances) provides an outlet for students who may have a conflict with a faculty member.

Some faculty have expressed concern regarding the implied lack of ability for non-tenured faculty to freely discuss their ideas on campus, in division meetings, and in the classroom. In addition, concern has been expressed through the Accreditation Self Study process that critical thinking courses have not been assigned equally among the qualified faculty within the division.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College will continue to support the Board policies and procedures. Individual faculty concerns regarding assignment of classes and the role of non-tenured faculty will be addressed through the Office of Instruction, the Instructional Council, and the Faculty Senate.

*A.7.a. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

Academic freedom allows faculty to present information in the classroom, which they deem appropriate. The Board Policy 4030, “Academic Freedom,” clearly states that “as a responsibility, it obligates members of the college community to present, discuss, and interpret ideas, knowledgeable, fairly, and objectively, with openness to the ideas of others, with the intention to stimulate independent thinking, and with a sensitivity to the special situations of students.” Faculty at Merced College adhere to this policy.

### **Self Evaluation**

What happens in a classroom is difficult to evaluate. If a faculty member should present information with a personal bias, students have the right to disagree. The student grievance procedure provides students the right to address any concerns on this topic. In addition, students evaluate faculty anonymously as part of the faculty evaluation process.

### **Planning Agenda**

The faculty at Merced College support Board Policy 4030 and adhere to the philosophy of academic freedom.

*A.7.b. The institution establishes and publishes clear expectations concerning student academic honesty and consequences for dishonesty.*

## **Descriptive Summary**

The Merced College catalog under “College Policies, Regulations and Procedures” includes a section on “Academic Honesty.” Board Policy 5500, “Standards of Conduct,” specifically addresses cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, forgery and other forms of academic dishonesty.

The Faculty Senate, in May 2002, adopted the “Academic Honesty Procedure” to support BP 5500. This procedure details faculty responsibilities for encouraging academic honesty in their classrooms. The procedure also explains student and administrative responsibilities.

## **Self Evaluation**

The “Academic Honesty Procedure” was developed collegially through a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate. Copies of the procedure have been provided to all faculty, and the information is also available in the Faculty Handbook, which is given to all full-time and adjunct faculty.

Students are informed by individual faculty members on this topic through the syllabus, through handbooks for students in programs such as Registered Nursing, and via specific assignments on the topic.

## **Planning Agenda**

Merced College meets this standard.

*A.7.c. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or worldviews, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty or student handbooks.*

Not applicable to Merced College

*A.8. Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with standards and applicable Commission policies.*

Not applicable to Merced College.

## **B. Student Support Services**

*The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.*

*B.1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.*

### **Descriptive Summary**

The college is committed to providing high quality student support services regardless of location. A broad-based integrated system of research, evaluation and planning allow the college to systematically assess and objectively validate the quality of these services. The institution provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students consistent with its mission and purpose. It is sensitive to the nonacademic needs of its students and recognizes that their educational experience consists of an academic component and interrelated developmental opportunities provided through a co-curricular program of student services. These services are guided by a philosophy, disseminated and reviewed on a regular basis that is conducive to the development of a collaborative learning community and that prepares students to become responsible members of society

The college is mandated by a variety of external regulatory agencies to provide annual information regarding students, including their enrollment patterns and characteristics. These agencies include the federal government, the Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and the college's accrediting bodies (institutional and program level). The college's governing board and its shared governance committees periodically review the effectiveness of college in this area.

As part of the institution's evaluation of the quality of student support services, the college has a comprehensive program review and evaluation process conducted by the Program Review Committee. Additionally, there are six master planning committees organized under the principles of shared governance that provide input into the institution's mission and overall performance.

The Student Services Master Planning committee regularly reviews information related to the identified needs of students in relation to ease of access, progress, learning, and success. The other planning committees report their recommendations to the Educational Master Planning Committee (EMPC) prior to making major planning decisions. The Committee on Budget Review and Recommendations (CBRR) addresses and, as

appropriate, forwards EMPC recommendations to the college President and the Board of Trustees for approval.

Student support services (available to students on both the Merced and Los Banos campuses) are designed and delivered under the administrative oversight of the Vice President of Student Personnel Services. These services include: Admission and Records, Matriculation, Counseling, Financial Aid, Scholarships, Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S), Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOP&S), Student Health Services, Veteran's Services, CalWORKs, Student government and Activities (ASMC), Transfer/Career Center, CalSOAP, and Title V HSI grant activities. Coordination and problem solving are accomplished through regularly scheduled Student Personnel Advisory Committee (SPEC) and Student Services Administrative Managers (SPAM) meetings.

The college's Director of Research and Development and the Research Analyst both provide ongoing support to institutional planning and evaluation by designing research projects and collecting data to assist in assessing the quality of student support services. One critical research tool has been the Student Opinion Survey. The ACT Student Opinion Survey is administered every two years and explores enrolled students' satisfaction with programs, services, and other aspects of their college experience. Survey findings allow statistical comparisons between local survey results, other comparable institutions, and national user norms. Information obtained from this survey provides useful information in evaluating the impact of college programs and services designed to support student learning.

### **Self Evaluation**

Defining and measuring student learning outcomes is a difficult endeavor that requires the institution to work collaboratively and collectively to specify the desired learning objectives and their expected outcomes.

While the shared governance structure of research, evaluation and planning allows for addressing student needs in relation to a supportive learning environment, there seems to be a need to focus more on providing additional data and analyses when comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations, including those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from a knowledge of the students' own goals.

### **Planning Agenda**

The Academic Senate recently requested that master planning committees discuss and provide a recommendation regarding their respective roles in student learning outcomes. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the Student Services Master Planning Committee (SSMPC) adopted the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Model described by Drs. Rudmann and Gabriner in their "Learning Outcomes Assessment in Student Services" series. A March

25th SPEC retreat has been scheduled to include discussion of the steps each unit in Student Services must take in defining, establishing and evaluating student learning outcomes.

## **Contributors**

### Student Personnel Executive Committee (SPEC)

Dr. Grimsby, Bob Lenz, Harry Gossett, Ann Andersen, Diana Butts, Sharon Reinhardt, Michelle Stanford, Richard Marashlian, Francis Steindorf, Jonas Vangay, Donya Avila, Art Cardoza, Norma Lamb, Wendy McMillan

### Student Personnel Administrative Managers (SPAM)

Dr. Grimsby, Bob Lenz, Richard Marashlian, Francis Steindorf, Ann Andersen, Art Cardoza, Sharon Reinhardt, Jonas Vangay

### Student Services Master Planning Committee (SSMPC)

Dr. Grimsby, Michelle Stanford, Bob Lenz, Art Cardoza, Lois Cordova, Lee Anne Hobbs, Anne Newins, Wilma Prine, Richard Marashlian, Robin Shepard, Francis Steindorf, Ann Andersen, Ron Chesley, Lyle Davis, Sharon Reinhardt, Jonas Vangay  
Jim Bonstein, Program Review Committee chair

***B.2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:***

#### ***B.2.a. General Information***

- ***Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site***  
*Address of the Institution*
- ***Educational Mission***
- ***Course, Program, and Degree Offerings***
- ***Academic Calendar and Program Length***
- ***Academic Freedom Statement***
- ***Available Student Financial Aid***
- ***Available Learning Resources***
- ***Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty***
- ***Names of Governing Board***

#### ***B.2.b. Requirements***

- ***Admissions***
- ***Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations***
- ***Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer***

#### ***B.2.c. Major Policies Affecting Students***

- ***Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty***
- ***Nondiscrimination***
- ***Acceptance of Transfer Credits***
- ***Grievance and Complaint Procedures***
- ***Sexual Harassment***
- ***Refund of Fees***

***B.2.d. Location or publications where other policies may be found.***

**Descriptive Summary**

Merced College is identified in its catalog as a public two-year community college accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The addresses and phone numbers of the college's main campus are provided on the first page of the catalog. The address of the college's web site, along with the college's physical address, is also located on the outside back cover of the catalog.

The catalog is reviewed and updated annually and includes a calendar that outlines each term of the academic year, as well as significant dates relating to each term. Accurate descriptions are provided of the educational mission; course, program, and degree offerings; admission and records procedures; programs, certificate, and degree requirements; services to students; and the names of the faculty, administration and governing board. The requirements for admission, degrees, certificates, graduation, and transfer are also provided. Student fees, financial obligations, and available financial aid services are outlined, as well as the procedure for refund of fees.

The catalog includes the college policy of nondiscrimination. Specific references to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, are printed in English, Spanish, and Hmong. Likewise, the catalog informs students of their rights and responsibilities and the academic regulations of the college, including its policy for academic honesty. Grievance and complaint procedures, including a Sexual Harassment policy, are also outlined.

In addition to the college catalog, a Student Handbook is published annually. This handbook contains information on admission, rights and responsibilities of students and staff members, important dates, and tips for student success. The handbook is available to all students at no cost. The handbook is readily available to students at the switchboard, Counseling Division, and at the registration counter in Admissions and Records.

Each Merced College Schedule of Credit Classes also contains information on enrollment policies, procedures, matriculation, testing, and additional student information. The schedule is mailed free of charge to each household in the district service area and is available at the switchboard on the Merced Campus and on the Los Banos Campus.

The Board of Trustees Policies and Administrative Regulations are available on the Merced College Intranet.

**Self Evaluation**

The college meets the standard. A question addressing student satisfaction with the college catalog is included as part of the ACT Student Opinion Survey identified earlier. In the most recent survey, this question received an average score of 4.01 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being very satisfied.

### **Planning Agenda**

Additional information about the Los Banos Campus needs to be included in the catalog and on the district web site. This should parallel the information available for the Merced Campus.

The Student Handbook should be available in the Merced and Los Banos Campus bookstores as well as in PDF form on the web site.

The Catalog as well as the Student Handbook should include the district policy regarding Academic Freedom.

### **Contributors**

1. Betsy Donovan
2. Richard Marashlian
3. Robert Lenz
4. De Merino
5. Norma Lamb
6. Norman Davis

***B.3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.***

***B.3.a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

The college assesses student needs and provides access to services using numerous methods and media. With a multitude of computer workstations in the college's service area (located at the Merced and Los Banos campuses, as well as at several high school campuses), students are easily able to take the Accuplacer and Ability-to-Benefit tests that assess their academic and financial needs.

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Categorical programs such as Disabled Student Services and Extended Opportunity Programs & Services are evaluated through a rigorous program review by a committee of peer colleges who review compliance to the Education Code's Title V requirements and other performance standards. Students who qualify for these programs are able to access additional assessments and have their needs met through a collaboration of services from these and other offices and programs on the Los Banos and Merced campuses. Counselors, classified staff, and faculty are available at both campuses to assist students in making effective academic, personal, and career decisions. Classified staff schedule individual appointments, group orientations, and workshops for students, and coordinate classroom visits to enhance student learning. Counselors assist students with their educational plans, majors, course selection, transfer preparation, graduation planning, career search, referrals to other services, personal and crisis counseling, study skills, and retention.

The EOPS and CARE programs have recently incorporated a student evaluation survey that is administered every semester and covers all aspects of these programs. Feedback from students is used to adjust and change program services and goals in current and future semesters. This direct survey feedback is a valuable part of the program improvements that provides the means for researching and identifying the learning support needs of EOPS and CARE-qualified students. Given that EOPS and CARE both work in conjunction and collaboration with Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, the Transfer Center, DSS, and many other programs and offices on campus, we believe the EOPS and CARE student survey questions are just one example of how Merced College researches and responds to student learning needs.

Survey results have shown a very high approval rating of 90 plus percent for EOPS and CARE services provided to students in the current academic year. Required reports to the Community Colleges Chancellor's Office have always met with an approval of our program plan, our program services, and our program review process, which includes the student survey results.

Annual reports from these and other program offices are prime evidence that student services programs provide effective assessment and services to eligible students. Students in special programs such as EOPS and DSS provide feedback on surveys that has been very positive for the most part. Staff and faculty are scheduled for individual evaluations by their peers and supervisors. These evaluations provide an overall, positive response from students, supervisors, and peers.

Presently, the only location offering regular online services is located at the Los Banos Campus, although distance counseling and online assessment are available, as needed, at several high schools in the area. Student services are offered on a limited basis at area high school sites, particularly to assist with assessment, outreach, and, occasionally, registration.

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Students in Los Banos have most of the same services available to them that are available to students at the Merced campus. They are able to complete registration, pay fees, access student records, complete educational plans, etc. A variety of student services are available, including EOPS, Financial Aid, CalWORKs, Counseling, DSS, and tutoring. The Los Banos staff are dedicated and are strong advocates for our off-campus students.

A new center was opened at the Delhi Education Park in January of 2003, and about ten classes each semester are now being offered there. The new center includes an 8,000 square foot classroom building that is being used to offer lecture and art classes. High school labs are currently being used to offer computer and biology classes. These last two classes could be offered in the new building, but there are currently no funds available to purchase the necessary lab equipment. An excellent partnership has developed between the college and Delhi USD, and a site coordinator has been identified to oversee the facility and the classes. The school district is providing assistance in assessing students and with outreach to the community.

A number of classes have been offered in Dos Palos for many years, and a site coordinator there provides registration, assessment, and other forms of assistance to students. Classes in Chowchilla, Atwater, Livingston, and LeGrand were curtailed due to budget limitations. Classes in Mariposa recently resumed due to the advocacy and financial support of the Mariposa County USD. A site coordinator in Mariposa assists with counseling, registration, book sales, and assessment.

### **Self Evaluation**

There is no formal mechanism for evaluating services at off-campus centers. This is likely to change in the coming year, as the current organization will not be sufficient for the new Los Banos Campus.

There have been problems with the delivery of technology-based services of any kind at the Los Banos campus, although numerous efforts have been made to make service delivery as equitable and accessible as possible. The primary problem is the inadequacy of the facilities, which should be relieved when the new Los Banos campus opens in 2007. There is also limited staffing, with only one technician available to serve the entire campus. Because of the distance from the Merced Campus, it can be difficult to make repairs or improvements quickly.

Expansion of student services in Los Banos is limited by a lack of space and budget. There is a need to expand tutorial services and provide more counseling assistance for disabled students. There is little space or funding to support the Transfer/Career Center. Technology delivery probably will remain problematic until the campus moves and more staffing is available.

Off-campus student services have been gradually improving, especially in Delhi and Los Banos. It is anticipated that there will be significant improvements in the next few years.

The new campus will provide more space for student services. There will be a highly visible Transfer/Career Center. The technology will be much more modern and efficient.

There will need to be more student services and technical staffing made available in order to support a growing student body and a much larger facility. Off-campus staffing and organization needs should be reviewed and evaluated in order to improve efficiency and set an appropriate level of staffing.

### **Planning Agenda**

In response to the new accreditation standards' focus on student learning outcomes, the institution will be working on developing specific learning standards to ensure equitable access and comprehensive reliable services, regardless of location. The March 25, 2004, student services SPEC retreat discussed developing student learning outcomes and appropriate assessment measures as a means of evaluating programs and improving accountability. During the next several semesters, each unit in student services will reevaluate their mission and develop student learning outcomes that best measure and contribute to equitable access and student learning.

Planning for the new Los Banos Campus has determined that three more technical support staff will be needed for the new facility. Planning for additional classified staff to support technology use on all on-campus and off-campus sites will continue in anticipation of additional funding.

### **Contributors**

Dr. Anne Newins, Dean, Off-Campus Centers  
Robert Lenz, Dean, Student Services  
Student Personnel Executive Committee (SPEC)

***B.3.b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

The institution provides numerous avenues for students to develop and demonstrate personal and civic responsibility outside of the classroom. The Associated Students of Merced College (ASMC) encourages students to become involved in student government, clubs, honorary societies, and a peer support group called Students Supporting Students. The Students Supporting Students Program originated from a grant provided through the Merced County Drug and Alcohol Program. No longer tied to this grant, it is now a part of Student Activities. This peer support program is grounded in the

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belief that the best form of help is to teach individuals how to help themselves. Peer support volunteers receive training in a variety of areas encompassing campus and community resources, procedures, processes, and knowing what staff to contact for specific services. They are also trained in effective communication skills and how to deal with dependency and co-dependency.

There are currently 17 official clubs and 2 advisory clubs that include approximately 200 students in their membership. This is a significant increase over the 9 clubs that were active two years ago. The Student Activities Office, in collaboration with the club advisors (who donate many hours of their free time to assist their clubs), student club representatives, and the ASMC officers, has made a concerted effort to re-establish club activities. The following clubs are currently active: Alpha Gamma Sigma, Anthropology Club, Black Student Union, Blue Devil Aggies, Campus Crusade for Christ, EOPS Club, Future Teachers, International Club, Leo Club, MCTA, Phi Theta Kappa, Pre-Med Club, RN Club Spring '04, RN Club Fall '04, RN Club Spring '05, RN Club Fall '05, Spirit Leaders, and Students for Social Justice. Those clubs in advisory status are: ANIME Club and MECHA.

Students are involved in a number of social and socially responsible activities in the community, including: The Student to Student Book Exchange, Homecoming, Spring Fling, and the preparation of food baskets at both Thanksgiving and Christmas. The community at large benefits from Project Christmas where a holiday meal and gifts are given to both needy children and senior citizens. Voter apathy continues to be a problem in student elections. In last spring's election, 249 students voted. Students who serve on the Associated Student Body (ASB) Executive Board must be enrolled in the Student Government class, which is taught by a full-time faculty member. The purpose of the course is to provide students with leadership skills. Additional training is offered at a yearly retreat to those students who are currently on the Board. Another retreat is planned for club members later in the year. There is a full-time faculty person with release time who acts as the Advisor to the Associated Student Body. While students are encouraged to be self-sufficient in many of these activities, the Student Fees Office does oversee the ASMC budget lines, and the ASMC Treasurer also assists with club accounts. The Student Activities Coordinator, a full-time classified staff member, provides clerical support to ASMC

The college has a student-produced newspaper, the "Blue Devils' Advocate," that is published four times a semester. The newspaper is a product of the Journalism 32 class. Each area of Student Services also contributes an article for "At Your Service," a publication made available to students each semester. The newspaper hopes to deliver information that is time sensitive concerning upcoming events and also highlights and encourages students to access the many student services available at the college.

The Student Ambassador Program provides many services related to the college's outreach function. There are currently 10 Ambassadors who have been hired to act as liaisons to the local high schools. In this capacity, Ambassadors share general

information, as well as financial aid information. Ambassadors deliver the Matriculation Orientation, both on the high school campuses and on our own campus. Students are employed as tutors in the Tutorial Center and as supplemental instructional assistants in grant-driven activities in selected science and math courses. Through programs such as Puente and GOAL, students receive additional support to improve retention and transfer readiness.

As part of the college shared governance model, there are established student positions on most institutional committees, including Faculty Senate, the master planning committees, and CBRR. While these positions are available to students, it is difficult to find students who are willing and able to serve in this capacity on a regular basis. Class schedules and transportation problems have been mentioned as obstacles.

The Educational Master Planning Committee engages in an ongoing dialogue regarding the quality of the learning environment at Merced College. In monthly meetings, representatives from the various planning committees - Instructional Master Planning Committee, Student Services Master Planning Committee, Technology Master Planning Committee, Administrative Services Master Planning Committee, and Facilities Master Planning Committee - gather to discuss goals and objectives for the coming year and for the next five years and to make budget recommendations to be considered by CBRR, the President, Administrators (principally, the three Vice Presidents), and the Board of Trustees.

In 2001, Merced College hired Noel-Levitz to conduct a Retention Opportunities Analysis for the college. The summary of recommendations led to the creation of a retention committee, later named the Student Success Committee. This group, which is chaired by counselor and Title V Activity I Coordinator, Art Cardoza, is comprised of faculty, administration, and classified staff. The group has had a number of active discussions concerning ways to reduce student attrition. Recent meetings have focused on the advisability of a re-entry or student lounge, and new curriculum that provides further support for student success. There have been information sessions updating the members on student-focused programs such as the Learning Instruction Network Center (LINC), GOAL and the CalWORKs Program. This committee convenes on a monthly basis.

Another important committee was formed in 2001 after the college hired W. Norton Grubb, the author of *Honored but Invisible*, to act as a training facilitator. With the support of PFE, the Vice President of Instruction, Dr. John Spevak, worked through the Curriculum Committee, Instructional Council, Faculty Senate, and MCFA to encourage a representative group of faculty to address student learning issues. Dr. Grubb was the facilitator of these discussions and activities for one year. During that time, faculty members met on a monthly basis. Characteristics of “good teaching” were discussed, and four working groups were created: the Learning Assistance Network (later to become LINC), the Teaching and Learning Academy, Learning Communities, and Visiting

Classes/Sharing What Works. These groups became the foundation of ongoing faculty involvement.

The LINC group continues to meet. Through the efforts of LINC and Learning Communities, linked classes were formed and instructors were (and still are) welcomed to other faculty members' classes to observe and share techniques. The LINC Committee pointed out that there are numerous tutorial programs on campus. Committee members felt that these programs could be more effective in improving student learning by establishing common training program for the tutors in all tutorial programs. They have also established the availability of course credit for tutoring through the Cooperative Education Program. In 1999, the Vice President of Student Personnel Services established Process Improvement Teams (PIT) to study areas that had been identified by student services personnel as needing improvement. This input came as a result of student services retreat activities, and the team members were selected to ensure broad representation. The groups met over the course of two years and, through the gathering of data and its evaluation, implemented a number of changes in the areas of simplifying registration steps, coordinating the hours of the various departments, distribution of information to students and staff, and customer service. Specific outcomes included:

- \* A printed step-by step registration guide that simplified the process for new students. The original product was pocket sized; the current product is a standard handout.
- \* The establishment of common hours for all student services departments, to include Wednesday night hours.
- \* In an effort to provide better customer service, Student Personnel Services staff attended the Merced College "Customer Service Academy" in 2001-2002. It was recommended that each staff member attend a minimum of four sessions.
- \* The construction of a bulletin board placed in the cafeteria to use for posting current events and activities.
- \* Theme days, or days devoted to certain activities or instructional programs, were proposed as a means of broadening students' understanding of the college's instructional programs, student services, and other available services. The Spring Fling is an effort to present the various student service areas in a fun, carnival-like atmosphere.
- \* The development of a pocket sized guide to programs and services available to students. While not pocket sized, a guide was developed through CalWORKs called Student Opportunities and Services (SOS). This publication is also available at the Merced College Web site.
- \* An increase in the utilization of media to promote the college. Through some TV spots, screen ads at the movie theater, and the development of the college web site, a variety of strategies are employed. The Vice President of Student Personnel Services continues to discuss this issue with the Director of Institutional Advancement.

Other recommendations that are being considered for future implementation are:

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- \* Use a weekly WEB update to students and staff to keep them informed on topics of interest. To do so, the PIT recommended hiring or designating a staff person to serve as a WEB Master. (The college has since employed a WEB Master, but a weekly update mechanism is still being evaluated.)
- \* Office Networking, or the opportunity to cross train and/or job shadow staff in other offices, was also identified as an important training option. (There has been some informal job shadowing activities with staff visiting other areas to gain a better appreciation of others' functions.)
- \* The use of large electronic bulletin boards located in strategic places within the community to inform the public of events and activities at the college. (At this point, the cost is prohibitive.)
- \* On-line registration services were identified as very important in terms of enhancing customer service. As telephone registration was implemented in 2001, computer-based (WEB) access for registration and other student information has become the focus.
- \* Open forums as a means for facilitating communication between students, faculty, staff, and the administration, were recommended. (This suggestion was passed along to other administrators for their consideration).
- \* Develop and distribute a monthly current event handout. (The Vice President of Student Personnel Services believes that other strategies would be more effective.)

Student Services management meets with the Vice President of Student Personnel Services, Dr. Allan Grimsby, on a regular basis. The Student Personnel Executive Committee (SPEC) shares departmental activities information, establishes goals and objectives, and joins in problem solving. There are retreats for staff for the purpose of long-term planning; these are held in both the fall and the spring. The Student Personnel Administrators and Managers (SPAM) also meets to address common concerns.

### **Self Evaluation**

The college administers the ACT Student Opinion Survey every other year. The Survey evaluates the satisfaction of students with the quality of student services. It also surveys their opinion of the college environment as a whole and of the attitude of college staff and faculty. These results are summarized and presented to the Student Services classified staff, faculty, and managers in a general meeting, as well as in their own sub-groups.

The most recent survey was performed in the fall of 2003. Results were made available and distributed to the college community in October of 2003. In the evaluation of services using the scale of 5 for very satisfied, 4 for satisfied, 3 for neutral, 2 for dissatisfied, and 1 for very dissatisfied, the listed items were ranked as follows:

1. Veterans Services: 4.75 AVG

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2. Day Care Services:	4.75
3. Library/Learning Resources:	4.26
4. Student Health Services:	4.18
5. Computer Services:	4.16
6. Financial Aid Services:	4.06
7. Personal Counseling Services:	4.04
8. College-Sponsored Tutorial Services:	4.03
9. Vocational Guidance/Career Planning Services:	4.03
10. Credit by Examination Program:	4.00
11. Cultural Programs and Activities:	3.91
12. Academic Advising/Course Planning Services:	3.88
13. College Orientation Program:	3.85
14. College-Sponsored Social Activities:	3.84
15. Recreational & Intramural Programs & Svcs.:	3.77
16. Job Placement Services:	3.76
17. Student Employment Services:	3.74
18. Resident Hall Programs and Services:	3.56
19. Cafeteria/Food Services:	3.50
20. Parking Facilities and Services:	3.07

It appears from these results that the general level of satisfaction is good. Since Merced College does not have resident halls, it is not surprising that the item for Resident Hall Programs and Services is ranked at the lower end. Students complain about the price of the cafeteria food, and finding a parking place is a challenge at the start of each semester.

The Vice President of Student Personnel Services shares the results of the survey with the members of the staff in a general meeting, and, if there is an area of concern, it is addressed. Areas about which the Vice President is concerned are ASMC/Student Government and the Guidance Division. As a result of a personnel conflict in the Student Activities Office, the Administration is currently evaluating the area's leadership structure. For the spring 2004 semester, a counselor from the Guidance Division has been assigned for ten hours per week as an Interim Advisor to ASMC. The Guidance Division, and more specifically counselors, is concerned due to the shortage of counseling hours available for registration and outreach. This is due to the fiscal constraints placed on the college as a whole. Possible actions to alleviate this problem are mentioned in the area of this report that addresses counseling.

### **Planning Agenda**

The Student Services Master Planning Committee has participated in a dialogue concerning the new accreditation standards. At the March 4, 2004 meeting, the group adopted the framework presented by Dr. Jerry Rudman and Dr. Robert Gabriner in the RP Group's SLO Workshop titled, "Learning Outcomes Assessment in Student Services" (Parts I and II). Prior to this, most information made available pertained to instruction, specifically course-related student learning outcomes. Rudman's and Gabriner's

presentation outlines, in a step-by-step process, an SLO plan that Student Services can begin implementing. This spring semester each unit will start by examining the Board's mission and goals. Members have been encouraged to attend the institutional student learning outcomes information workshop, which will be offered during a flex day on March 19, 2004. With this foundation, the individual programs will begin moving forward in discussing their unit's mission statement, objectives, and goals. In the upcoming semesters, they will continue to evaluate their programs following the steps described in the works of Rudman and Gabriner.

***B.3.c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Through the college's Program Review process, each division or department is evaluated every six years. The Counseling Division participated in a self-study and prepared a comprehensive report that was presented to the Program Review Committee in 2001. In this review process, both students and faculty were surveyed. The evaluation addresses areas of student and faculty dissatisfaction. In addition, Standards of Practice for California Community College Counseling Programs (produced and adopted by both the State and our local Academic Senate) was used as the standard by which activities were measured.

The student survey measured six (6) unique aspects of the counseling process. Five hundred forty-eight surveys were evaluated. The grade, based on the traditional 4.0 grade point system (an A = 4 points, a B is 3 points, etc.), was a "B-" for each question. While the student response was not overwhelmingly supportive, it was within an acceptable range. The faculty survey rated the effectiveness of activities directly related to division goals. Again, the 4.0 grade point system was used to assign a grade to each activity. Activities graded "B" and above were identified as strengths, and those graded "D" and below as weaknesses.

#### Strengths:

- \* Provide individual academic counseling and educational program planning for students on an appointment basis.
- \* Provide available drop-in academic counseling for students.
- \* Assist in selecting courses for the associate degree, certificate, and/or vocational programs.
- \* Provide guidance courses that help students to explore their skills, interests, and career information.
- \* Provide extended orientation programs through Guidance 40 & 80.

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- \* Provide basic guidance courses in college orientation and career/educational planning.

Weaknesses:

- \* Provide an “Early Academic Alert System” involving instructional faculty and students, i.e., send periodic letters to students who may be at risk or follow-up with faculty regarding students designated as “at risk”.
- \* Counsel students who completely withdraw from the college.
- \* Provide formal orientation and training for all new counseling faculty, full or part-time, temporary or permanent, to ensure that they possess the essential knowledge to perform their jobs.
- \* Identify, by means of name badges or office nameplates, staff and faculty to avoid confusion on the part of the students.
- \* Track and follow-up referrals from counseling to other student services areas.
- \* Maintain a comprehensive “Intranet” web site that allows students and members of the community access to information concerning counseling services and programs.
- \* Provide institution-specific “Town Meetings” targeted toward potential students and parents.

Whereas the Program Review was completed and submitted to the Program Review Committee in the spring semester of 2001, the Guidance Division did not receive any feedback on its report for two years, receiving an acknowledgment from the chairman in the spring semester of 2003. It seemed to fall victim to a change in the program review procedure and the installation of a new chair. As the report did not meet the new format requirements, no specific recommendations were made by the institution.

Since the completion of the Program Review, the Guidance Division has directed its efforts toward the development of new curriculum designed to more effectively address specialized population needs. In addition to Guidance 40, College Success; Guidance 48, Life and Career Planning; and Guidance 80, College Survival; there are five new courses: Guidance 30, Foundations for College Success; Guidance 31, Foundations and Strategies for Transfer; Guidance 32, Foundations and College Success Strategies for Student Athletes; Guidance 33, Foundations and Success Strategies for Re-entry Students; Guidance 34, Foundations and Academic Recovery Strategies; Guidance 35, Foundations and Strategies for the Undecided/Undeclared Student.

The college has purchased new educational plan software for counselors to use when outlining a program of courses for students. It is called “Action Plan It”, and counselors are currently being trained in its use. It should be fully implemented in the spring of 2004. This is a significant change as the former electronic educational plan and degree audit program has been unavailable for the past three years.

### **Self Evaluation**

As the number of counselors decreases due to attrition, reassignment to other projects, and lack of funds for part-time or hourly counselors, there is increased pressure on those working with students to “do more in less time.” Merced College has not created positions for “academic advisors,” and it would be advisable for the institution to revisit this decision. A shortage of counselor hours has led to limited service to the feeder high schools. In place of counselors being assigned to designated high schools in a continuing liaison relationship, a one-day registration on the high school campus was provided for incoming freshmen in the fall of 2003. It is the counselors’ opinion that this is not an effective form of outreach, and enrollment figures support that perspective.

The need for training counselors has become a great challenge. In order to provide accurate information to students regarding transfer requirements to the CSU and UC systems, frequent in-service education is required. Ever-changing technology requires counselors to be trained on an ongoing basis just to remain current. It is recommended that the Guidance Division develop a “self-test” that would cover knowledge and skill in core functions, crisis intervention, and cultural awareness.

According to the Standards of Counseling, a minimum requirement for in-service for the purpose of recency is 20 hours per year for each counselor. To that end, the Counseling Division meets each week for an hour to be updated on pertinent information that is required to work effectively as a counselor. Recently, the Division reinforced this stand by requiring attendance at meetings for anyone wishing to work in the role of Counselor at Merced College.

It was also a recommendation of this last Program Review that a Counselor Handbook be developed and distributed. Such a handbook would provide information regarding degree requirements, transfer information, use of technology, and resources available on campus and in the community. This would be a training tool for new counselors, as well as providing a more consistent approach for veteran counselors. This handbook has not yet been developed.

Due to the lack of travel funds, participation at conferences and off-campus training sessions has been minimal.

### **Planning Agenda**

Like other divisions, the Guidance Division is aware of the necessity to develop student learning outcomes. As one of the units represented in the Student Services Master Planning Committee, it will also adopt the process presented by Dr. Jerry Rudman and Dr. Robert Gabriner.

On Wednesday, March 10, 2004, the Guidance Division met to discuss how, given current budget constraints, we could appropriately respond to the needs of our students and provide services which would increase the likelihood of their college retention and success. The college has determined that new students will be able to register without

counselor approval if the student accepts the placements recommended by the Accuplacer assessment test. With this in mind, the division brainstormed alternative delivery models. A letter was sent to the Vice President of Student Personnel with a specific recommendation that the college hire bachelor-level paraprofessionals as Merced College Reps to provide informational sessions to groups of students at the high schools and on our own campus. They would assist students in the registration process. If a student wished to discuss their course placement or simply desired more information, they would be directed to a counselor on campus. Other suggestions to be considered were:

- \* Hire schedulers to be available during the entire registration time
- \* Increase the use of technology (on-line/video counseling, e-mail, instant message contacts, upgrading web page information, and teleconferencing).
- \* Develop a cadre of instructional division academic advisors consistent with the four-year school model.
- \* Identify all “counselors” as “generalists”
- \* Improve communications with the administration.
- \* Make counseling presentations in classrooms/divisions.
- \* Establish a “Dear Abby” counselor to help prevent students from dropping.
- \* Develop a plan for counselor-initiated follow-up on progress reports.
- \* Explore the possibility of mini workshops on retention-related issues.
- \* Re-establish counselor liaison with and attendance at other divisions’ meetings.
- \* Provide drop-in services only during the early weeks; thereafter require appointments.
- \* Assign “drop-in” counselor duties on a rotating basis to provide “short answer” services.

Initial response to these suggestions to the administration has been favorable, and they will continue to explore their viability.

### **Contributors**

1. Betsy Donovan
2. Dr. Allan Grimsby
3. Robert Lenz
4. Dr. Jonas Vangay
5. Pat Mathews
6. Norma Lamb
7. Patty Davis

***B.3.d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College has a strong tradition of maintaining a commitment to diversity. The Office of Admission and Records keeps track of student diversity annually. The Student Activities Office provides students with diverse activities, events, information, and resources. Student programs that support the college's diversity include 19 different clubs serving the needs of students and the greater community. The ASMC also sponsored race and gender-specific programming for the overall campus, with guest speakers/performers that give students and staff an opportunity to interact with people of different professions and cultures. For example, academic and cultural activities through the college's multicultural week include: Black Heritage Celebration, Cinco de Mayo, Southeast Asian Ethnic Dancing, Phi Theta Kappa, community partnership alliance, Puente Project, Summer Bridge, and the International Student Office. Hiring of ethnic faculty and staff promotes student understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Merced College has a long tradition of support for special programs such as Disabled Student Services and Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. For example, the EOPS program actively recruits underrepresented students and provides cultural programming and role models through faculty, staff, and visiting lecturers.

The Title V/HSI Program has enhanced student understanding and appreciation of diversity through the use of presenters such as Hispanic playwright Luis Valdez, math wizard Jaime Escalante, ABC national news correspondent John Quiñones, Southeast Asian studies writer Ann Fadiman, leading Hispanic author Victor Villaseñor, scholar of ethnic women's history Joann Levy, Hispanic writer Juan Felipe Herrera, and Buffalo Soldier Shelton Johnson. Others that have made important contributions are the Roosevelt Marimba Band and the California State University at Fresno Ballet Folklorico.

The Office of Relations with Schools also targets underrepresented populations at our high schools. Our Student Ambassadors represent the college at fairs and college nights at various feeder schools. The college also set up four video interactive, distance counseling sites at our rural feeder high schools that have a high concentration of ethnic and underrepresented students.

Our International Student Office provides academic and personal counseling, enrollment assistance, home stays, and housing assistance to non-immigrant F-1 visa students from all over the world. The Merced College Learning Institute helps students, for whom English is a second language, learn English and prepares for the TOFEL exam. The International Student Club gets students involved with college life, along with college and community education activities and programs.

Merced College's Disabled Student Program and EOP&S work collaboratively to provide priority counseling services to underrepresented students. These two programs serve over 250 DSS and EOP&S students and provide a link to support services so that these students can receive assistance and benefits.

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The college's academic and student service program staff are keenly aware of the gender, race, and other diversity factors that exist within our student population. Programs and events held on campus indicate that students and staff are interested in promoting diversity at the college.

Merced College's Office of Research and Development is responsible for reporting and analyzing comparative statistics for the college's student population and for the college's service area. For example, the Research and Development Office compares the percentage of underrepresented students at the college to the percentage of underrepresented groups in the college's service area. The college's enrollment analysis provides up-to-date information on gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics of students attending the college. The EOP&S program, Office of Relations with Schools, the Title V/HSI Program, and other similar programs provide additional support in the college's efforts to recruit and retain these students.

The Office of Research and Development has been working with the Student Success Committee to monitor underrepresented groups and their progress at the college. Evaluations for the various support activities are systematic, broad based, and comprehensive. Consequently, programs such as Goal Oriented Academic Learning (GOAL), the Early Start Program (ESP), PUENTE, Learning Communities, and EOP&S tutorial services can now demonstrate significant gains in retention effectiveness. Standardized student progress reports measure academic progress to date. This reporting provides information for analyzing student achievement over the course of the semester.

Analysis indicates that student recruitment and retention efforts are meeting the standard. With the support provided from the programs noted above and others like them, we find that more students are staying in their classes. We are finding that grade point averages don't necessarily increase but retention does improve in a measurable way among underrepresented students. We are also finding that proper student placement can be achieved through the use of placement tests (Accuplacer, etc.) in conjunction with LASSI. This provides students with an even better chance of obtaining success.

### **Self Evaluation**

Programs and events appear to be well designed and are used to attract and introduce students to culturally diverse experiences. High levels of participation at college-sponsored cultural events suggest interest and support from the campus community. Results from the 2003 ACT Student Opinion Survey indicate satisfaction with cultural programs and activities (3.91 on a 5 point scale)

### **Planning Agenda**

The college plans to review and revise its Board-approved Student Equity Plan in 2004-2005.

***B.3.e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.***

### **Descriptive Summary**

Assessment testing using the College Board's ACCUPLACER ONLINE system is administered on the Merced and Los Banos campuses, district off-campus sites, and in high schools throughout the Merced College service area. The Research Analyst works closely with the Assessment Coordinator, the Matriculation Officer, the Office of Relations with Schools, and appropriate faculty to establish assessment tools, and management and administration procedures. All tests are on the State Chancellor's 'List of Approved Assessment Instruments,' and have been validated locally by the Research Analyst.

The Assessment Center administers the following testing instruments:

- \* Accuplacer Computer Placement Test for placement in English and Math for credit course skills assessment,
- \* CELSA (Combined English Language Skills Assessment for English as a second language testing),
- \* ATB (Ability To Benefit) testing for federal financial aid and educational and personal profile surveys.

Testing accommodations for all assessment instruments are individually determined based upon the nature of the student's disability. The Assessment Coordinator works closely with Disabled Student Services in those situations where accommodations are required for interpreters for the hearing impaired, or accommodations for visually or physically disabled students are required.

Information gathered through assessment is a critical component of the matriculation process and helps individual students facilitate their success in college by ensuring they begin their educational experience at the appropriate placement level.

The Research Analyst continually performs statistical analysis on student scores to create local normative data, which can be used to establish appropriate placement ranges for math and English courses. Accuplacer has excellent value for the more developmental levels of English and math. Disproportionate impact studies are conducted every three years (in accordance with the Model District Policy of Title V of the State Education Code) to evaluate any undue cultural and linguistic bias of placement rates due to assessment methods or instruments.

Another assessment instrument available to the student population is LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory). LASSI is a 10 scale, 77 item assessment of students' awareness of the use of learning and study strategies related to skill, will and self-regulation components of strategic learning. These factors contribute significantly to success in college and can be learned or enhanced through educational interventions such as learning and study skills courses. LASSI provides standardized scores (percentile score equivalents) and national norms for ten different scales. The LASSI is both diagnostic and prescriptive and provides students with a diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, compared to other college students. It also provides feedback about areas where students may be weak and need to improve their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and skills.

### **Self Evaluation**

The college has developed an assessment process that utilizes multiple measures to compare educational performance with educational purposes and expectations. Assessment measures leading to successful course placement would benefit from more input from faculty regarding course design and desired student learning outcomes. Admissions and placement instruments are most effective when there is clarity about what standards and course goals will be taught and learned. A more accurate interpretation of terminology and the establishment of guidelines and standards to ensure the quality and consistency of learning outcomes at the college should also be considered.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College's Matriculation Advisory Committee (MAC) functions as a governance committee and reviews all areas and functions required under matriculation regulations. The MAC should serve as the college body that assures regular evaluation of admissions and placement instruments and practices in order to validate their effectiveness and minimize bias. The MAC should also continue to work toward continuous improvement by helping create a clearer understanding of the importance of admissions and placement instruments as they relate to the learning outcomes approach.

### **Contributors**

Bob Bauer, Research Analyst  
Ann Andersen, Director, Office of Relations with Schools  
Bob Lenz, Dean of Students

***B.3.f. Student records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained.***

## **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College makes provisions for the security of student admissions and progress reporting records. Student records, including transcripts, are private, accurate, complete, and permanent. They are protected by fireproof and otherwise safe storage and are backed up by duplicate files. Data and records maintained in computing systems are protected by adequate security and by backup provisions for disaster recovery. Student records are maintained in several formats. Student class records prior to the fall of 1986 are kept on microfilm and on the original hard copy. The microfilm copy is stored in a fireproof vault, while the original hard copy records are stored in another building on campus. A few years ago, the college began utilizing a document imaging system to provide for permanent, secure, and easy access to stored student records. The servers for this system are located on the network and are routinely backed up as part of the district network system.

## **Self Evaluation**

The district meets the standard.

## **Planning Agenda**

The college should investigate the feasibility of transferring its old microfilm images to the current document imaging system.

## **Contributors**

Don Peterson, Director, Information Technology Services

***B.4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.***

## **Descriptive Summary**

The fundamental mission of student services is to provide programs and services that support student learning in the classroom and beyond and, in addition, creates a campus experience that encourages critical thinking, promotes the development of life skills, respects and embraces cultural and human diversity, and empowers students to take responsibility for their lives.

The Vice President of Student Personnel provides administrative oversight for all student support services. Coordination and evaluation of services is accomplished through

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regularly scheduled meetings of the Student Personnel Executive Committee (SPEC) and the Student Personnel Administrative Managers (SPAM) group. All areas of student services are represented at these meetings to ensure that student needs are provided in an effective manner through program coordination, evaluation and continuous improvement strategies.

As noted earlier, the Student Services Master Planning Committee (SSMPC) meets throughout the year to address elements of its annual and five-year plans. Goals are developed each year to make the most effective use of limited resources to deliver counseling and other related student services that can positively impact student retention and achievement, while enhancing the overall accountability of services.

Year-end reviews are developed for each student services program, which address program accomplishments and performance issues related to serving students. The Vice President of Student Personnel compiles all reports into one document for review and comment by the Board of Trustees.

Merced College's Office of Research and Development collects institutional data and provides research reports to assist administrators, faculty and staff in evaluating programs and services that support the mission of the district and contribute to the continuing improvement of student learning and success. Throughout the year, the college's Research Analyst collects data on area demographics, student enrollments, assessment scores, course placements, program completions, retention, and degrees and certificates awarded to assist the college in evaluating its academic and student services programs, as well as supply the information required by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The data and information collected is reviewed and evaluated at the committee and task force levels to determine how student support services, in particular, contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. In addition to the above, some student services areas, including EOPS, DSP&S, and Student Activities, develop and administer student surveys, often times in conjunction with the Research Analyst, to determine student levels of satisfaction and provide input for improving services.

Another source of information used to evaluate student services is the ACT Student Opinion Survey. This survey, performed every two years, explores students' satisfaction with programs, services, and other aspects of their college experience. Information obtained from this survey is used to evaluate the impact of those student services that are designed to support student learning. Survey results are reviewed to determine levels of student satisfaction with support services, as well as to look for ideas or information that might be helpful in addressing unmet needs or improving services.

In 2001, Merced College contracted with Noel-Levitz to perform an on-site consultation to evaluate the needs of students and improve student retention. Analysis of institutional data, along with individual and group interviews of faculty and staff, yielded a detailed report of recommendations. Several recommendations from the findings have been implemented or are in the process of being considered for implementation and include the

following: 1) instituting supplemental instruction as a key learning strategy for high-risk courses, 2) developing a comprehensive student success center that integrates the various student support services offered at Merced College, and 3) enhancing the teacher/learning process.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, Merced College hired Professor Norton Grubb as a consultant to meet with faculty and staff throughout the year to explore strategies for Merced College to become more of a "teaching institution" as outlined in Dr. Grubb's book, *Honored But Invisible*. Professor Grubb served as a catalyst to encourage faculty to think about how they could focus on teaching and learning. Among the results at the end of the year was the creation of four ongoing groups of faculty who would work to institutionalize the ideas generated during the year. These included: 1) encouraging faculty to visit their colleague's classes and share ideas, 2) developing a Teaching and Learning Academy through which new and continuing faculty would learn new techniques in pedagogy, 3) creating a learning/instruction network where all the various activities that the college provides in support of instruction and student learning would be connected, and 4) creating and implementing learning communities.

### **Self Evaluation**

Generally speaking, Merced College appears to be responsive to the education support needs of its students. The college acknowledges it can no longer just provide programs and services that require students to fit previously established structures using conventional teaching techniques and having similar contents for all learners. While institutional research does a good job in surveying students to identify their characteristics, learning and counseling needs, and degree of satisfaction with available student services, there needs to be more of a focus upon implementing a college-wide definition of student success and clear service strategies that can evaluate key systems and processes in order to better assess how student support services contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes.

### **Planning Agenda**

There is currently discussion in some of the master planning committees and the Faculty Senate that is focused on additional planning, evaluation, and improvement of student learning outcomes as they relate to student success. At their meeting in early March of 2004, the Student Services Master Planning committee adopted the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Model described by Drs. Rudmann and Gabriner in their "Learning Outcomes Assessment in Student Services" series. A SPEC retreat has been scheduled for March 25th, which would include discussion of the steps each unit in Student Services must take in defining, establishing and evaluating student learning outcomes for the institution.

### **Contributors**

Bob Bauer, Research Analyst

Bob Lenz, Dean of Student

Student Personnel Executive Committee (SPEC)

Dr. Grimsby, Bob Lenz, Harry Gossett, Ann Andersen, Diana Butts, Sharon Reinhardt, Michelle Stanford, Richard Marashlian, Francis Steindorf, Jonas Vangay, Donya Avila, Art Cardoza, Norma Lamb, Wendy McMillan

Student Personnel Administrative Managers (SPAM)

Dr. Grimsby, Bob Lenz, Richard Marashlian, Francis Steindorf, Ann Andersen, Art Cardoza, Sharon Reinhardt, Jonas Vangay

Student Services Master Planning Committee (SSMPC)

Dr. Grimsby, Michelle Stanford, Bob Lenz, Art Cardoza, Lois Cordova, Lee Anne Hobbs, Anne Newins, Wilma Prine, Richard Marashlian, Robin Shepard, Francis Steindorf, Ann Andersen, Ron Chesley, Lyle Davis, Sharon Reinhardt, Jonas Vangay

### ***C: Library and Learning Support Services***

***Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered. Such services include library services and collections, tutoring, learning centers, computer laboratories, and learning technology development and training. The institution provides access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently. The institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.***

***C.1. The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.***

#### **Library**

The Leshner Library, completed in 1972, is situated at the center of the Merced College campus. In addition, there is a branch library at the Los Banos campus of Merced College. Current Merced College students, staff and faculty members have over 40,000 books available in the library and access to 4,000 books online. The library subscribes to over 250 print magazines and journals and provides access to several proprietary electronic databases containing full text articles from several thousand additional magazines, journals, newspapers, and government documents. Inter-library loan service is available and students are encouraged to approach library staff for aid in locating information and materials. Faculty librarians are available to assist and instruct students over 85% of the time the library is open. The library currently has a seating capacity of

350. Students have the choice of studying at carrels, study tables, or in conference rooms.

A new Learning Resource Center has been in the planning stages for several years. Recent passage of both local and state bond issues has accelerated this process, and preliminary architectural drawings have been completed. At this point it is anticipated that construction will be complete within four years, giving Merced College a state-of-the-art learning resource facility.

### **Learning Support Services**

In May 2002, the Merced College Faculty Senate approved an ongoing committee, the Learning Instruction Network Committee (LINC), as a response to the decentralization of different kinds of learning support services, including tutoring, supplemental instruction facilitators, mentor programs, reading and writing labs, math lab, and biology lab. Components of LINC would include tutorial (in the broadest sense) on campus, labs (Math, Biology, Computers), special programs (EOPS, Puente, Bridges Program, Athletic Monitors), learning instruction training, and study groups. While the supplemental instruction facilitators and the reading and writing labs are connected to specific courses, tutoring – including general tutoring, VTEA, EOPS, the math lab, and the biology lab - is designed to support students at whatever level they are currently at, in whatever class they are currently enrolled in. LINC is comprised of faculty and staff who are connected to each of these learning support services so they can discuss issues of learning support and student learning outcomes.

*C.I.a. Relying on appropriate expertise of faculty, including librarians and other learning support services professionals, the institution selects and maintains educational equipment and materials to support student learning and enhance the achievement of the mission of the institution.*

### **Library**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

The selection and maintenance of library educational equipment and materials in support of student learning and the achievement of the mission of Merced College is currently accomplished through:

1) Direct input of faculty: Every year for the past decade, instructional faculty have been encouraged to recommend purchase of specific materials through their respective divisions. To date, funds have been available to obtain nearly all of the requested materials.

2) Course outlines and syllabi: As course outlines are developed for new courses, and as they are reviewed for Title V, they must also be reviewed by the library's certificated personnel to determine the availability of adequate resources to support the requirements of the curriculum. If further materials are needed, they are purchased as funds allow.

3) Written library assignments: Instructor-generated assignments are brought to the attention of the faculty librarians, either by direct notification from the instructor or the student in search of information. If the faculty librarian feels the currently available resources are in some way inadequate, the instructor is notified and attempts are made to identify and purchase those items that will aid in successful completion of the assignments.

Resources are purchased to specifically address curriculum needs and to respond to course assignments, research questions, and reading requirements developed by Merced College faculty. Whenever possible, materials are purchased with the aid of reviews presented in academic and/or professional journals as a quality control measure. In addition, all electronic resources have been selected from those evaluated by the Electronic Resources Committee of the Council of Chief Librarians of the California Community Colleges.

### **Self Evaluation**

Currently there is no formal mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the library collection in terms of quantity, quality, depth and variety. Eight years ago, through the Master Planning Process at Merced College, the library collection was evaluated as being less than effective in terms of quantity, quality, depth and variety of available materials. This assessment was based on Title V Library Standards and the anecdotal experiences of faculty and students. This documentation included letters from faculty, comments of Division Chairpersons in Instructional Council meetings, discussions of the Instructional Master Planning Committee, and institutional student surveys. A Five-Year Plan was developed to address these issues but was never fully funded due to budget constraints. The institution set as its goal meeting the Title V standards for quantity and quality of library materials. These goals have grown to include electronic resources not specifically mentioned in Title V, but documented as a standard by the Chancellor's Office Advisory Committee on Libraries and Learning Resources Centers.

The depth and variety of library materials is primarily dependent on faculty librarian interaction with instructional faculty and students. While faculty are encouraged to recommend specific materials that will guarantee successful student completion of course work, they also have the opportunity to request library faculty assistance in developing appropriate assignments that can both ensure student success and meet the desired outcomes of the course. Faculty librarians also work with the instructional faculty as part of the curriculum review process. Librarians discuss with instructional faculty the resources necessary for student success as courses are proposed and reviewed. Faculty librarians also derive student input on the depth and variety of materials as they assist

them with their information needs. Finally, the Merced College Library belongs to a cooperative library system that guarantees access to a much broader resource base, including the resources of state university and private university libraries, as well as other community college libraries and large public libraries in the Central Valley. Another indicator that the library is developing sufficient depth and variety of materials is the statistical decline in requests for interlibrary loan over the last four years, despite enrollment increases.

### **Planning Agenda**

While there has been no formal measurable assessment of quantity, quality, depth, and variety of the library collection, there are policies and processes active to remove old and unused materials on an ongoing basis. To improve our evaluation of the quantity, currency, depth, and variety of library services, an ongoing statistical study will be implemented using the report-generating function of our online catalog system. SIRSI will allow for gathering of data, including number of materials held by subject area, number of various types of material held (e.g., video recordings, audio tapes, reserve books, etc.), frequency of use of materials by subject area, and age of materials by copyright date. This will allow for a closer monitoring of quantity, usage, and quality of the collection to better inform future collection development decisions.

### **Learning Support Services**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

Because the LINC committee is comprised of faculty and learning support professionals from each of the different learning support services, the collaboration of the group helps the college update and refine educational materials and equipment in order to best meet the needs of students.

Merced College provides textbooks, etc., in alternate formats for print-disabled and learning-disabled students to guarantee equal access to educational sources for this population. The college employs an access specialist and an access technician to advise staff and students and provide the media needed. In addition, the college is updating all video resources to ensure accessibility for deaf/HOH students.

#### **Self Evaluation**

What we know about ourselves is that the LINC committee members are an intrinsic part of the learning support service that they represent. In most cases, the learning support service exists because a faculty or staff member on the LINC committee observed a student disconnection with the institution or the material and developed the learning support service to provide the students a helping hand.

Biology Lab: The Biology Lab provides support for Biology 1 students. All of the 36 computers have Internet access, as well as word processing software. Half of the computers are for the use of the audio tutorial component of Biology 1. There is an instructor present along with a lab tech. Instructors can assist with their discipline, but may not be able to assist with all classes supported by the lab.

Cooperative Education: The LINC committee has begun to utilize Cooperative Education as a way to support students through Tutor Training and Class Assistants.

Tutor Training: In response to the increased faculty concern that students who were tutoring were not receiving consistent training in the art of tutoring, LINC has made a concerted effort to find ways to compensate student tutors to engage in tutor training. When there was funding, a single training session at the beginning of the semester was well attended. However, when the funding stopped, so did the training. In the fall of 2003, Cooperative Education became a possible way to provide ongoing training to student tutors while giving them two units of transferable credit.

Class Assistants: At the Los Banos Campus of Merced College, Susan Kimoto saw a distinct need for students in the Developmental English and Math courses to get continued support. She saw that the students most at risk were the students who worked hard and struggled with the material, but yet hadn't quite mastered it. In an effort to address this issue (without costing any extra money), LINC and the Los Banos Campus implemented a class assistant program in the fall of 2003, where a C student from Spring 2003 would assist the instructor of the same class by attending all the sessions of the class. The hope was to retain the C student by creating a personal instructor/student link, while giving the student the opportunity to learn the material of that course even better. The student would receive two units of cooperative education credit for eight hours of work in the classroom.

EOPS (Extended Opportunity Program and Services) Tutoring: A Student Support Coordinator, four (4) Instructional Aides, and four (4) Work Study students, also known as tutors, operate the EOPS Tutorial Services Center to provide tutoring and peer support services to EOPS students who are enrolled in Developmental English and Math. EOPS tutorial staff help students resolve school and personal problems. EOPS students meet with EOPS tutorial staff in one-on-one scheduled sessions or on a walk-in basis during the course of the semester. Staff members visit classes where tutees are enrolled and acquaint themselves with instructors so that they can better assist tutees in their assignments and personal problems. Tutorial staff use a variety of styles and techniques to facilitate learning for EOPS students. EOPS tutorial staff use detailed examples to provide clarity, the chalkboard to explain concepts, and also demonstrate study techniques.

The EOPS program maintains a library of the most-often-used textbooks that students are able to check out for a period of two weeks. The books are renewable if other students do not reserve them.

AlphaSmart Keyboards are also available for note taking purposes. Students may sign up with EOPS tutorial services to use the keyboards. Notes can be transmitted, edited, and printed at EOPS student stations free of charge. These keyboards can be connected to computers in the computer lab to download the notes to a word processing program. (DSS also provides AlphaSmart Keyboards for students who qualify, as well.)

Computers and typewriters are available for student use to complete class assignments. Computers are equipped with Internet access, Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, and Eureka career search. EOPS also offers a free typing service for students, meaning that staff can type a student's essays. To utilize this service, students must bring their written work (with format instructions) to the EOPS Clerk three (3) days prior to the due date.

Math Lab: Desmond D. Navares began the Math Lab in 1994 by making himself available two to three times per week in the late afternoon for one to two hours each day. He utilized empty classrooms in the Science Building, which at times were not available for use because various meetings were scheduled in them. Oftentimes he had none or just one or two students come in for assistance.

After a semester or two he convinced other (adjunct) instructors to volunteer their time as Math Lab tutors. They kept sign-in records of how many students came in (still very few).

After 2 or 3 years of this, the math chairperson, Dr. Terry Eyrich, managed to get them into the old Language Lab, which is the current site for the Math Lab. At that time the Language Lab had carrels with speakers and microphones, so the students really didn't have much of a writing space to work on. The Math Lab had to schedule their hours around the Language Lab schedule, but this location was a great improvement for the Math Lab. Once a couple more instructors volunteered their time, they were able to offer more hours, 10-15 per week, and they now had a permanent location.

After a couple of years in the Language Lab, Dr. Eyrich secured the Math Lab their own "room" in the old Communications Building. The "room" was actually an old reception/secretary area that opened up to several offices still in use at that time. They squeezed in 2-3 tables and now were able to offer 15-20 hours per week. Navares still had difficulty "convincing" instructors to volunteer their time. However, this was another big step for the Math Lab.

Finally, Dr. Eyrich used the Math Lab's sign-in sheets to convince the administration that it was, "money-wise," worthwhile. They moved back to the now no-longer-in-use Language Lab in the Science Building. Dr. Eyrich secured funds to pay the instructors. All of a sudden, Navares had more instructors willing to work than he had hours available. Through VTEA and other sources, Dr. Eyrich equipped the Math Lab with computers, VCR/TV monitors, and storage cabinets. Over the years, the Math Lab has expanded its hours to over 60 per week.

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For the spring semester of 2004, the Math Lab is open for 58 hours, Monday through Friday. Each hour is staffed by a Merced College math instructor who is there to assist any Merced College math student. With money from a Title V HSI grant, the Math Lab is now able to provide coverage with two instructors during peak morning hours.

Nursing Mentor Program: As the Nurse Ambassador Manager, Sandy Goodwin coordinates Registered Nursing Student Ambassadors to do recruiting for the RN and Allied Health Programs. The Nurse Ambassador Program is funded through a California Wellness Foundation grant. She also coordinates and presents training for RN Mentors and Tutors through the Governor's Grant. The mentors and tutors are funded through a separate nursing diversity grant. Currently there are six mentors and one tutor. Other nursing faculty members are currently working on a grant to increase RN diversity. The Allied Health Division has also developed an Open Skills Lab that is open 18 hours a week to assist nursing students in the practical application of skills.

Reading Lab: In 1987, a reading lab existed which was very restricted in terms of hours, scope, materials, and vision. It was a very dark and gloomy area with heavy, dark cabinets and shelves that housed SRA kits, old newspapers, and some books. The reading program at Merced College was basically a dying program, with fewer and fewer students each semester. Margie Glazier rewrote the reading program and developed a computerized lab that used computer programs, current reading texts, the Internet, and skill tests. Today the reading lab has between 1,400 and 1,700 students enrolled each semester. The lab itself changes as instructors see things that need to be changed. It is no longer the stagnant lab it once was but a growing, ever changing entity.

Supplemental Instruction: In 2001, Ann Cozzi and Eileen Tanioka modeled this program on the University of Kansas program, using PFE grant money. Eileen trained "model student/facilitators" who attended the classes (in the Fall of 2001, English 41, Math A and Math C, and later English A in Spring, 2002) which had been identified as part of the program. The facilitators then met with interested classmates in study sessions, where they reviewed how to take notes, solve problems, and learn general strategies for being successful in the class. They did not specifically provide tutoring for the class material.

Title V HSI Cooperative Grant (HECCC): This is a grant Merced College is carrying out in partnership with CSU Stanislaus and Modesto Junior College which started in October of 2003. The focus is on increasing the transfer rate of Hispanic and other low-income students by providing assistance in the form of Supplemental Instruction (SI) in math courses, along with intensive mentoring to help with the transfer process. Student Supplemental Instruction Leaders, who have completed the target math class with a grade of A or B, attend the classes and then conduct study sessions outside of class for the students in that class. An intensive eight-hour training is given to the SI Leaders prior to the beginning of the semester.

Transfer mentoring, a component of the Title V/HECCC grant, is currently in the recruiting stage. Mentor job announcement flyers have been distributed to faculty and posted around campus. The program requires that seven mentors be hired to work with student participants. Mentors will provide approved services, act as positive role models, and encourage students to seek campus services to be successful. As mentors, these Merced College students will work closely with program participants, pinpoint difficulties students may be experiencing, inform the Activity Coordinator and, in unison, seek resources to assist the student in attaining transfer readiness.

Tutoring: Before Margie Glazier was hired, tutoring on campus had been offered through two tutorial areas - what was called developmental tutorial and academic tutorial. Bob Smith was in charge of the developmental area, and the late Tom McDaniel, who had been a classified employee and later became a certificated employee, was in charge of the academic tutorial. In 1987, the developmental tutorial became the EOPS tutorial and the academic tutorial became the tutorial center, serving the needs of all students. Margie Glazier was given the overall responsibility for the tutorial center. Since those early days, the scope of the center has been expanded to meet the needs of instructors and students in whatever course the student or instructor requests tutorial assistance. Today, tutors are in labs, classrooms, and at the Tutorial Center itself.

Writing Lab: At Merced College, all students who enroll in English A must also enroll in the English A Lab. The English A Lab covers writing skills that the English Program feels all English A students must have: quoting; MLA formatting (creating their own MLA works cited sheet); knowledge of plagiarism; summarizing; and essay creation through a four-step process that includes drafting, deep revision, surface revision, and final crafting. In addition, English A Lab students complete grammar modules from Writer's Resources in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.

### **Planning Agenda**

In the future, the college would like all learning support services to work together to provide the same level and consistency of training, access, and support for students. In addition, the college needs to develop a plan to analyze and evaluate the success of these services in relation to student learning outcomes. As part of this plan, LINC will devise a way to measure and track results in terms of Student Learning Outcomes and in conjunction with the district-wide efforts related to SLO's.

***C.1.b. The institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency.***

### **Library**

## **Descriptive Summary**

The institution has adopted the following information competencies as part of an overall Computer and Information Literacy requirement for graduation.

- 1) Understand the difference between information and knowledge;
- 2) Understand the links among information centers and the access points available through technology and reference sources;
- 3) Understand the basic structure of electronic databases and the strategies used to access them;
- 4) Recognize the different levels, types, and formats of information including but not limited to primary vs. secondary and popular vs. scholarly.

These information competencies were based on ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) draft guidelines and recommendations at the time of adoption. These competencies are published both in the college catalog and the class schedule. They are accompanied by a chart that delineates which approved classes or combination of classes enable the student to meet the requirement. For specific courses to claim to meet one or more of the required competencies, those competencies must be included in the student outcomes of the course outline that is approved by the Curriculum Committee.

## **Self Evaluation**

Currently there is no uniform testing mechanism or other form of explicit evidence that the competencies are being taught or met. Successful completion of a course assumes achievement of the competencies approved for that course. Merced College does not currently evaluate its teaching effectiveness in terms of teaching information competencies. While instructors are evaluated by their peers on a regular basis and given feedback on their overall performance, there is no procedure in place to ensure that the competencies are being adequately covered in specific courses or that students have demonstrated uniform mastery of the required concepts and abilities. Instruction in these information competency skills is achieved on an institutional level by instructors of various classes, embedding the competencies within their courses as part of evaluated student learning outcomes. The course is then certified through the curriculum approval process as meeting one or more of the competencies. The library director and faculty librarians support this process by being available to work with the individual instructors as needed to advise on how the competencies might best be integrated into the various disciplines.

In addition to the process of embedding competencies within individual classes, the library faculty teach these skills in various ways on a program level. Recently, a research methods class, LR30, was revised from a one unit to a three unit offering and approved by the Curriculum Committee. It now meets all of the Computer and Information Literacy requirements. This course will be offered for the first time in the fall of 2004. Library faculty also continue to impart information competency skills via the traditional

library orientations and tours and, most effectively, through one-on-one tutoring at the reference desk.

### **Planning Agenda**

The new three unit LR30 research methods course, upon implementation in the Fall of 2004, will have new information competency exit skills which will align with those standards which have been issued by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. In addition, a pre and post test has been devised to measure student outcomes in library orientation classes. This quiz is currently being beta tested in selected key classes, particularly those meeting most or all of the required information competencies for graduation.

The next step on the institutional level would involve revising the campus-wide information competency skills so that they also reflect the current Community College standards. The Curriculum Committee would be responsible for this institutional-level implementation. Currently, student learning outcomes for Merced College will be developed at the course, program and institutional level through a five-year plan adopted by the Instructional Master Planning Committee in the Spring of 2004. The IMPC has been given the charge of coordinating the Student Learning Outcomes process on the campus. The Student Learning Outcomes Director will facilitate the development of course-level and program-level outcomes with the discipline faculty. Program-level outcomes will be developed in coordination with the Program Review process. Institutional-level outcomes will be developed, adopted, and evaluated under the direction of the Instructional Master Planning Committee in cooperation with the Faculty Senate, Superintendent/President and the Board of Trustees.

### **Learning Support Services**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

At Merced College all the tutorials and labs are ongoing, meaning that any student at any time can use the services available. The workload of the Class Assistants in Cooperative Education, Supplemental Instruction, and the Reading and Writing Labs is affected by the number of students enrolled in each specific course.

#### **Self Evaluation**

Everything that is ongoing has either a full-time staff member or a faculty member, as in the case of the Math and Biology Labs, providing instruction on how to use the services. Class Assistants at the Los Banos Campus have an orientation at the end of the current semester, meeting with both the instructor for Cooperative Education and with the Supervising Instructor. Supplemental Instruction, the Reading Lab, and the Writing Lab are all instructor driven.

## **Planning Agenda**

LINC believes that the more faculty that are involved in Learning Support Services, the stronger those services will be. Faculty can identify student difficulties and develop programs that directly support the specific needs of the students. We would like to encourage more faculty involvement with tutor training, study groups, and other programs that will give the students the skills needed for success.

*C.1c. The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.*

## **Library**

### **Descriptive Summary**

The hours of operation of the library are: Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to noon. These hours have been reduced by six hours per week (or 10%) in the last two semesters due to staffing cuts. There are two different types of electronic access to library materials. The first is electronic access available to library materials is the library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog). The OPAC lists all materials held by the Merced College Library and its partner in the automated library system, the Merced County Library. The OPAC indicates what materials are owned, as well as their status (reference, on shelf, checked out, lost). It is available through the Internet 24/7. The second type of electronic access to library materials includes actual materials available online. The library subscribes to the following references sources on line: EbscoHost Masterfile, Cinhal, SIRS, Lexis Nexis Academic Universe, Matter of Fact, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Ethnic News Watch, Newsbank, Books in Print, and NetLibrary. All of these resources are available at the Merced Campus Library and the Los Banos Campus Library through networked computer stations. In addition, two of these resources, NetLibrary and EbscoHost, are available by password through the Internet to students at remote locations.

### **Self Evaluation**

Not all campus locations, students, or instructional programs are equally supported by library services and accessibility. As mentioned above, the large majority of electronic resources can only be accessed on the college campuses because of a lack of availability of remote access through the college's computer system. Students at remote sites do not have access to these materials. Students do, however, have the ability, through the shared online public access catalog, to identify and request that the circulating books from the Merced College Library be delivered to any of the nineteen county branch libraries. In addition, students and faculty at the Merced campus have faculty librarians and their help

and expertise available about 80% of the open hours, while at the Los Banos Campus there is an adjunct librarian available only about 20% of the open hours. Distance Education students or students at remote sites have no access to faculty librarians. These students do, however, have the availability of Ask Now, the California virtual reference desk, which can help with straightforward information requests. Further, library print reference materials are only available at the campus libraries (not to remote users), and the Merced Campus has a much larger library and collection than does the Los Banos Campus Library. Instructor reserves are also available only at the campus libraries. No digital instructor reserves are available. In terms of accessibility, the Merced College Library technical staff have worked with the Accessibility Specialist on campus to make sure its web page is ADA accessible. One of the reasons that the SIRSI automated library system was chosen for use by the college was its high standard of accessible features. All but one of the electronic resources purchased by the library are ADA accessible. The remaining one will be accessible by summer of 2004 or the library will discontinue its subscription.

### **Planning Agenda**

Due to financial constraints there are no plans to increase access through either more open hours or more staff or equipment. The primary goal at this time is to make more of the databases accessible from remote (off campus) locations.

### **Learning Support Services**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College strives to define adequate access not just in the availability of learning support services in total hours but also in terms of ADA and Section 508 compliance. We provide alternate print media for print-disabled students; assistive technology, including screen reading programs like JAWS or Kurzweil; voice recognition software like Dragon Naturally Speaking; and screen enlargement software like Zoomtext CCTV (Closed Circuit Television), which will magnify print text onto a television screen. This assistance is provided across the institution for all students. The college keeps the learning support services open as many hours as is fiscally possible. The hours for the various support services are shown below.

The Biology Lab hours:

- 9 a.m. – 10 p.m. Monday
- 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday
- 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Fridays

EOPS hours:

- 8 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday
- 8 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Wednesday.

Class Assistant Study Hall hours - Los Banos Campus  
10 a.m. – 11 a.m. Monday – Friday

The Math Lab hours (effective spring semester 2004):

At the Merced Campus:

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m. Mondays

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday

8:30 a.m. – 1:00 pm. Fridays

At the Los Banos Campus:

4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., Mondays and Wednesdays (Fall 2003)

The Open Skills Nursing hours:

4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Mondays

3 p.m. – 6 p.m. Tuesdays

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Wednesday

3 p.m. – 6 p.m. Thursday

9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Fridays

The Reading Lab hours:

8 a.m. – 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday

8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fridays

The Tutorial Center hours:

At the Merced Campus:

8 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday

8 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays

At the Los Banos Campus:

8 a.m. – 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday

8 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays

## **Self Evaluation**

LINC believes that, for those programs with established hours, the time is sufficient to meet student needs. However, what we recognize as a problem is how the students use the hours. With the labs in particular, students crowd in during “crunch times” right before exams. The same happens with tutoring, where the students want to meet with a tutor to help them prepare for a specific task (a paper due the next day, a homework assignment due in the next period) rather than for the general skills being taught by the course. LINC is very committed to changing the students’ perception of learning support programs from a “triage,” emergency band-aid kind of support to a “preventative

medicine” kind of support. We encourage ongoing participation in the labs and tutorials rather than one time, last minute (panicked) visits.

### **Planning Agenda**

LINC’s plan is to use multiple strategies to change this perception, so that more students utilize the learning support services before they get into academic difficulty. The most immediate strategy will be to develop a common mission statement for the programs represented in LINC and distribute this message consistently to all students.

*C.1.d. The institution provides effective maintenance and security for its library and other learning support services.*

### **Library**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College provides for effective maintenance of the library and learning resource center facility. Staff are specifically assigned from the custodial area to care for the facility. The maintenance staff are assigned to tasks and projects as needed. The campus security staff make a great effort to see that the library is secure and that activities in and around it are appropriate for a college environment. The audio-visual department is responsible for technical support and maintenance regarding the computer equipment and any software employed in the library. Library materials are secured by alarm system checkpoints at all entrances and exits to the library. Personal student data is protected by firewalls within the SIRSI system and by log-in procedures for the electronic databases.

#### **Self Evaluation**

Extensive efforts are being made to secure and maintain resources and equipment and the integrity of staff and student data in the library. In addition, the personal security of staff and students is a primary concern. Procedures exist and are prominently posted on how to deal with various emergency situations. One noticeable problem is with the architectural design of the current library, which allows materials to be handed between students over stair railings thereby bypassing the security alarm checkpoint.

#### **Planning Agenda**

1. Increase staff vigilance in out of sight areas and near stairwells.
2. Ensure that plans for the new Learning Resources Center help diminish these security issues.

### **Learning Support Services**

## **Descriptive Summary**

Over the last few years there have been unfortunate intrusions and theft from computer labs on both the Merced and Los Banos campuses. Because there is always a faculty or full-time staff member on the premises of the instructional resource labs, the personal security of our students is protected at most times. We advise students to keep track of their belongings while in the labs so they don't have to worry about missing items. Sometimes technology breaks down. The reading lab and tutorial labs have all experienced power outages that have hampered efficiency and student learning, as well as a shortage of technical support for the maintenance and repair of lab computers.

## **Self Evaluation**

In an effort to prevent further loss and interference with instruction, a campus-wide committee (the Campus Security Committee) has been formed to research and recommend security strategies. Another difficulty we have with technical support is that all learning support services do not have full-time technical support staff. Those labs that do are much more efficient at repairing and maintaining lab equipment than those that have technical support "on loan" from other areas. For example, the Reading Lab (56 computers), the Job Skills Lab (30 computers), the Tutorial (12 computers) and Adult Basic Education Lab (30 computers), all share five hours a week of technical support, which is not enough to maintain all 128 computers. This means that the efficiency of the lab is compromised when all computers are not working at peak condition.

## **Planning Agenda**

Recommendations for strategies to address the issues of intrusions and theft of our instructional support equipment are being developed by the Campus Security Committee and will be presented in May of 2004. In terms of technical support for the specific areas that have to share technical support hours, we will seek administration approval of a nineteen-hour a week position for a technical support person specifically for these areas.

*C.1.e. When the institution relies on or collaborates with other institutions or other sources for library and other learning support services for its instructional programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate for the institution's intended purposes, are easily accessible and utilized. The performance of these services is evaluated on a regular basis. The institution takes responsibility for and assures the reliability of all services provided either directly or through contractual arrangement.*

## **Library**

## **Descriptive Summary**

Merced College has joined with other institutions to share resources to support its instructional programs. It has a formal agreement with Merced County to jointly fund and operate an automated library system that lists the library resources for the entire county. Through this agreement, resources are also shared between the county library and the college library. This contractual relationship has proved to be mutually beneficial in terms of sharing resources and expertise and continues to be a very cost-saving association. The college library also has a formal agreement and long-standing relationship with public, private, and academic libraries in the counties to the north and east of Merced County. The formal association is the 49-99 / Central Association of Libraries. This cooperative library system provides access for Merced College students to the public library collections of Stanislaus County and Stockton-San Joaquin County and to the academic library collections of the CSU Stanislaus Library and the University of the Pacific Library, through interlibrary loan. Access to these materials is provided through daily delivery and through faxed copies of appropriate materials. Another benefit of 49/99 membership is access to Ask Now, which is California's virtual reference desk program. Merced College Students can link to the Ask Now web site and be connected with a live reference librarian somewhere in the state. Many factual questions can be answered in minutes at any time of day or night. The Merced College Library also contracts with OCLC, the largest bibliographic and interlibrary loan service in the world, for cataloguing services and interlibrary loan services. In addition, the library also belongs to the California Community College Council of Chief Librarians, a collaborative group that provides for cooperative purchases of electronic resources and collaborative research of community college library needs.

## **Self Evaluation**

No formal process exists to evaluate these collaborative and cooperative associations. However, the library director participates on the governing councils of 49-99/CAL and the Council of Chief Librarians. She has the opportunity to help shape policy and services, as well as to evaluate activities of these organizations. The library also has the annual option of withdrawing from 49-99/CAL and the Council of Chief Librarians if the relationships no longer serve the needs of the college.

## **Planning Agenda**

No plans at this time.

## **Learning Support Services**

### **Descriptive Summary**

Aside from the new U.S. Department of Education, Title V HSI partnership grant with CSU Stanislaus and Modesto Junior College, much of the funding for collaborations with other programs on other college campuses has dwindled. We had until recently worked with Smart Thinking, which is an on-line tutorial service.

### **Self Evaluation**

Our success with Smart Thinking was mixed. While it offered some excellent support services for students, we recognized that the students who most needed the support were the least likely to use the technology. The program was piloted in several developmental English and math courses, with little success. The science instructor at the Los Banos Campus had considerable success with the program for her Astronomy class, where she required that her students use the essay evaluation portion of Smart Thinking for their term papers. Our connection with Smart Thinking has been terminated.

### **Planning Agenda**

While utilizing outside sources is always a good idea, part of the problem LINC recognizes is that many support services are idiosyncratic to the faculty or staff member who develops them. Since funding for many of these programs or projects is mercurial, it would serve the best interests of students and the college to concentrate on developing the overall mission of learning services. This will allow all existing learning support services, as well as new services, to build toward a common goal – student success. When PFE funds were available, we were like popcorn, everyone popping in whichever direction they felt could help, with no overall plan to see how all the programs could best work together. Now that LINC has established itself as a cooperative effort among learning support service staff, we can join together to create a mission statement that meets all our needs.

*C.2. The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations at the basis for improvement.*

### **Library**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

There is no formal evaluation instrument that Merced College uses to evaluate library and audio-visual services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. There are, however, many informal methods that are in place. The first is individual feedback from faculty members on issues ranging from the adequacy of the collection to the open hours of the library. Division chairs, individually and through the Instructional Council,

also specifically address service, hours, the collection, and technology needs. Students also provide feedback individually and through the Associated Students of Merced College. All of the feedback, informal though it may be, focuses on student learning and student success. Another aspect of evaluating library services lies in the evaluation of faculty librarians and their professional responsibilities. Peer faculty are asked to participate in this evaluation process, as are student users of librarian services. The student satisfaction survey taken every two years provides some measure of the ability of the library to meet their needs.

### **Self Evaluation**

The library is rated very highly by the biannual student survey, scoring 4.26 out of a possible 5 (Very satisfied). The survey also indicated that the library was one of the most heavily used college services, with 57% of the respondents reporting use of this service. However, while evaluation of library services exists, it is limited in scope, measurability, and statistical validity. In addition, there is no evidence that existing evaluative methods contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes.

### **Planning Agenda**

Merced College is currently beginning the process of implementing student learning outcomes campus-wide. The LRC director and faculty librarians will continue to play active roles in this process. The entrance/exit examination, currently in beta testing, will be refined and expanded to include a larger cross-section of orientation classes. Outcomes have already been incorporated into the learning resources curriculum, and planning is underway to determine how best to evaluate and track the outcome testing results. The ultimate objective is to develop a uniform, valid, and reliable testing instrument to measure achievement and teaching effectiveness and provide feedback to aid in improving the performance of instructors and students.

### **Learning Support Services**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

We have not yet developed a uniform way to evaluate these very unique programs. However, each faculty or staff member running each program does continually evaluate what they offer to improve their services. The faculty and staff frequently investigate different or new programs, techniques, or software, which can enhance student success. We intuitively feel that these programs meet students' needs, but we don't have anything that provides evidence that if students attend a tutorial weekly, they will achieve their academic goals.

The Title V HSI Cooperative (HECCC) grant includes a strong research component that will evaluate the success of the Supplemental Instruction program utilized in Math Classes.

### **Self Evaluation**

We have not developed a uniform system to evaluate the effectiveness of learning support services. Because individual faculty members are personally vested in the helpfulness of their programs, revision is an integral part of the evolution of all learning support programs. If something doesn't work or is not being utilized properly, we edit, change, add, or tweak until something clicks and things improve.

### **Planning Agenda**

LINC has a plan to document the evolution of college learning support programs so that staff will be able to develop a uniform system to evaluate the effectiveness of learning support services. The college wants to develop an evaluation system that addresses and maintains a consistent level of services for our students, but allows each program its own unique way of addressing student learning outcomes.

Note: Electronic and paper documentation for each standard can be found in the last section of the Accreditation Self-Study, "A List of Documents Used to Prepare the Self-Study."