

Lobo-TLC: A Proposal to Develop a Teaching and Learning Community Pilot Program at Monterey Peninsula College

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Community colleges have distinguished themselves within the ranks of higher education for the extraordinary level of academic support offered to students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Open admissions, small class sizes, easy access to instructors and counselors, a focus on teaching versus research, low fees, and a much higher level of personal attention and services all contribute to creating a learning environment where students thrive and attain a level of success that they may not have received previously, or experienced had they gone directly from high school to four-year colleges or universities. Here students are given an opportunity to develop academic skills, maturity and confidence, to sample from different disciplines and subject areas, to explore career paths, to experience the joy of learning in a friendly and supportive community environment. Yet, despite the opportunities for success offered by the community colleges, many students still languish and experience unacceptable levels of failure and attrition. Moreover, some feel unwelcome by higher education, or ill-prepared to meet the social challenges they anticipate encountering on the college campus; no matter the cause, failure to persist and succeed denies these students the opportunity to reap the benefits of a college education, and in turn, the chance to lead more productive lives.

In December of 2007, a cross-campus Presidential Task Force of faculty and staff was assembled to develop a pilot program addressing issues of college retention. The group was designated the Student Success Program Task Force (SSPTF). The primary directive set forth by Superintendent/President Dr. Douglas Garrison was to develop a pilot program for student success that included three components: a student cohort within the MPC community that could benefit from participation in a program aimed at academic success; a curriculum that delivers basic skills and entry-level coursework within the framework of a learning community model; and the establishing of a robust support network that functions to bring together students, instructors, and support staff in a manner that engages and inspires participants within a positive collegiate atmosphere that fosters academic success and a more productive future.

In response to this charge, the Task Force of eight to ten faculty, staff and administrators met weekly over the course of the past three months to review a sampling of existing programs, to consider who within our community might best be served by involvement in this type of program, and how we could best engage the talents and expertise of MPC faculty and staff to develop a sustainable and effective program that would make a discernable difference for entering students whose placement on exit exams puts them in a high-risk category for achieving success at the community college. Because a robust and successful basic skills program aimed at achieving similar goals already exists on the MPC campus, as well as other support programs such as TRIO and EOPS, it was tempting to build

a pilot program by simply coupling together elements of these programs. However, recognizing that our mandate was to extend the reach of such programs to include those students most at risk of failure, a concerted effort was made throughout the committee's discussions to resist that temptation, to try to think outside of the box, and to develop a more intensive program that could more directly serve the needs of this high risk student population.

Typically, programs based on a "learning community" model rely on two basic components: the establishment of a cohort of students who share challenges and learning experiences, and a framework of linked courses that are attended by these students. While the program presented in this report is preliminary, it has sought to go beyond this learning community model to include a highly articulated and integrated "teaching community." The overarching concept being promoted in this pilot model is that of a *Teaching and Learning Community*, a program that aims to meld the synergy and collaborative peer dynamics of a learning community with a hyper-articulated teaching network composed of instructional faculty, counselors, support staff, and community members. Going beyond the recognized benefits of student cohorts and a learning community, this approach will be founded on an unprecedented level of interdisciplinary collaboration, engaged planning and communication, and rapid intervention to form a dedicated and responsive teaching and learning community which will, at least for the purposes of this report, be referred to as *Lobo-TLC*.

Component 1: Recruitment

Rationale: The Task Force had to develop criteria to identify the at-risk population that will be targeted for participation in the program. Although recruitment efforts will attempt to reach out to all segments of the District's population, it is recognized that only a limited number of students can be served in this pilot program. Working with a modestly sized cohort enables participants to establish a stronger learning community. Furthermore, it is recognized that the size and composition of the cohort will impact our ability to develop a curriculum that can be monitored and evaluated for its success; this also favors a criterion where participants share a common level of background and experience.

Narrative: Recruitment for participation in this program involved two questions: how many students could be served effectively in a given year, and who those students would be. As will be more clearly defined in Component 3: Curriculum, the student cohort will function as a learning community in a hub course, and thus enrollment capacity would limit the number participating in the program to between 40 and 60 students. In view of the fact that this was a pilot project, this was considered a reasonable starting point.

The issue of identifying which at-risk students would be targeted for participation in this pilot program was predicated on data collected by the Office of Institutional Research. Dr. Rosaleen Ryan presented the committee with a variety of demographic data indicating student dropout and retention rates according to city of

residence, level of education, entry status (e.g., first-time, returning, continuing), educational goal, gender and ethnicity. In addition, success and failure rates were monitored across the curriculum to identify whether attrition was concentrated within a particular part of the academic curriculum, or uniformly throughout. These data are summarized in Appendix 1. At-risk issues of attrition and early failure cut across all demographic lines and include both first-year and returning students. Existing data do not reveal a clear picture of which students are most likely to be at risk of dropping out, but recent data based on enrollments and retention do not support that race-based criteria be applied. However, high levels of enrollment in basic skills and pre-collegiate basic skills courses suggest that weak preparation is a major contributor to early failure and attrition.

Given these observations, and the importance placed on the interaction of individuals in forming a learning community, it was recognized that for the sake of cohesion, we would define this at-risk population with a more narrowed focus. First-year students who recently graduated high school were identified as a clearly defined pool, one faced with specific issues of transitioning to college life. Recruitment will be directed toward recent high school graduates who place into English 301/302 and or Math 261/263. This will include students already planning to attend MPC, as well as those who may not have made that decision, but who, in light of the opportunity to participate in *Lobo-TLC*, will now choose to attend.

Activities: Recruitment activities will require a collaborative effort between MPC counselors and staff promoting the *Lobo-TLC* Program at the high schools, and MPUSD high school counselors and teachers recommending their students for participation in the program. As a part of recruitment activities, parents and community support members will receive letters of invitation to encourage student participation as well as describing the role they too might play in this program. Recruitment activities will occur in the fall and spring prior to matriculation and will not only focus on the proximate advantages of attending MPC, but also on the long-term benefits of degree completion and transfer ultimately available through program participation.

Outcomes: For the student, an invitation to participate in a program that provides support and improves one's chances of success can change an attitude of fear and anticipated failure, to one of hope and optimism. Students will discover that they now have a path to attaining their goals, and those whose dreams have been quenched by failure, can begin to envision a new and better future for themselves. For the institution, recruitment efforts into *Lobo-TLC* will form the basis of a new kind of partnership and collaboration with our counterparts at the high schools, erasing misconceptions of our campus, and strengthen the lines of communication.

Component 2: Orientation

Rationale: The success of learning communities rests in rapid buy-in by those participating in the program. An orientation program that introduces students to the campus environment, to the facilities and resources available to them at the college, to

key instructional and support staff, and particularly to one another is essential to developing the sense of support and community that will define *Lobo-TLC*, and provide the basis for their academic success.

Narrative: What is college life? Will I fit in? Can I succeed? These are the questions foremost in the minds of every student as they anticipate making the transition from high school to college. Whether a student is attending a major university or a small community college, the experiences they encounter as they navigate through their first few days on the campus can be overwhelming, and their consequences, profound. These include selecting and registering for classes, purchasing textbooks and supplies, becoming familiar with campus geography and room locations, finding a peer group with whom to socialize, discovering places to study, exercise and eat, meeting instructors, and the overall assimilation of the lifestyle change that all students face as they shift out of a high school and summer routine and into the campus-based activities of college life. Compounding these challenges, students are now for the first time facing the perceived contradiction that is higher education; that is, on the one hand, an environment where expectations are much higher than what they were accustomed to in high school, and on the other, the lack of structure and authority common to K-12, but largely absent in this new academic world of free choices and personal responsibility. In the absence of those customary routines and reminders it's easy for students to feel that nobody cares.

The students that thrive in college are those that form a community with their peers, where they participate in study groups, where their fear doesn't drive them to the back of the classroom, where they feel welcomed asking questions, participating in discussions, allowing themselves to be swept into the current of each new classroom experience. For students who have struggled in high school, whose failures left them doubting their ability and potential, finding a support system early on is critical. For students participating in *Lobo-TLC*, this begins with Orientation.

Activities: *Lobo-TLC* participants will spend two days on the MPC campus (prior to the beginning of classes) engaged in a series of social and structured activities designed to introduce them to campus life and convey the sense of caring. These will include the following:

- Getting acquainted activities where participants meet one another and begin the process of building a sense of trust and community.
- An introduction to the campus and its facilities.
- Becoming familiar with college expectations.
- Exposing students to effective learning practices such as collaborative learning, team-work, problem solving, etc.
- Becoming familiar with the *Lobo-TLC* support network both in terms of services and expectations.
- Providing an opportunity for parents, significant others, and community supporters to get a taste of the program and to recognize their vital role as a part of the academic support system.

- Breaking bread together, or better yet, enjoying a big barbeque where students celebrate their common identity as members of *Lobo-TLC*.
- Introducing students to some of the instructors they will encounter and demystifying the college experience with mini-lectures and a classroom-warm up.
- Introducing participants to the mentoring program and to their mentors.
- Providing an opportunity for frank discussion to address fears and concerns.
- Instilling a sense of hope and excitement in the possibilities of their MPC experience.
- Performing an interests inventory (e.g., Strengths Quest) to help students define strengths and potential areas of interest.
- Beginning to introduce students to career and discipline experts.
- Providing opportunities for working with counselors and a chance for informed course selection and registration.
- Providing an orientation to the Library and Technology Center and establishing email accounts.
- Providing opportunities for addressing financial aid issues, employment scheduling, parking, etc.
- Issuing a primer on surviving the first week of classes.
- Articulating the program with the activities and services available through other campus resources including the anticipated College Welcoming Center.

Outcomes: On the first day of classes, *Lobo-TLC* students should be ready to hit the ground running! They should have course materials in hand, a familiarity with their schedules, have already met their instructors, have some basic note-taking skills, begun to form friendships with their peers, and know where to go for assistance. The fear and uncertainty of the first day should be replaced by a sense of pride, confidence, and optimism ... after all, we are *Lobo-TLC*!

Component 3: Course Curriculum

Rationale: Data demonstrate that entering students that participate in basic skills suffer unacceptable levels of failure and attrition. Grouping students into a learning cohort can diminish their level of fear and frustration as a network of trust and mutual support is established among peers.

Narrative: There are numerous learning community models, ranging from those where the student cohort is together for a single daily class session, to a system of linked courses, where students stay together moving from one course to another, to a fully coordinated residential system where the cohort remains together well beyond the day's academic activities. Given our status as a non-residence campus, *Lobo-TLC* plans to develop a curriculum that concentrates on the first two models, but manages to incorporate elements of the third. A key component of the *Lobo-TLC* curriculum will be to extend

the concept of a learning community to include a teaching community. In this regard the faculty involved in these courses will be expected to develop their curricula in collaboration with one another so that knowledge and skills acquired in one course will find relevance and application in each of the other courses.

Activities: The Lobo-TLC Curriculum for the first year will include three components: The gateway course curriculum will be anchored by a hub-course in which all members of the cohort participate together. This course would resemble PERS 50 and will focus on building a sense of community, team oriented success, and academic skills that promote retention and persistence and help cohort members assimilate into the college environment. Other topics to be addressed in this course include: Life Skills, Student Success Strategies, Journaling, Interpersonal Communication, Library Usage, Building Self-Esteem, Wellness, and Career Planning. In addition, to complete a full 12-unit load, students will select from two other pools of gateway courses. The first, providing basic skills in Math and English, would include Eng 111 and 112, and Math 261. And second, students will select from a list of interdisciplinary elective courses, including Ethnic Studies, Health, and Creative Arts offerings, intended to begin to expose students to the regular curriculum.

The current proposed curriculum focuses on a single hub-course paired with a general education curriculum; however, as this program evolves the curriculum could be expanded to include other courses that aim to provide training in particular skill areas that will enable students to seek employment with an associates degree if they so desire. Other programs (e.g., Digital Bridge Academy at Cabrillo College) have adopted this strategy with great success, emphasizing Technology Skills that can be quickly put to use in a variety of industries and applications. In either case, the curriculum of courses, including the hub course, basic skills, and electives should all be designed collaboratively; instructors from each discipline will gather together to develop their course outlines enabling content and pedagogy to be linked together, and yielding an unprecedented level of academic coherence.

Outcomes: This linked curriculum would form the backbone of the *Lobo-TLC* Program and would aim to deliver early success for entering students. Positive outcomes of this component would include low absenteeism, eagerness to participate in the core academic mission, an appreciation and positive outlook toward learning, improved self-esteem, and an awareness of the value of the community of which they are now a part.

Component 4: Early Alert and Intervention Program

Rationale: The failure of students to progress and succeed does not happen in an instant; it is a gradual process, occurring over the course of days, weeks, or months. And while the challenges that lead to this decline may be varied, if left unattended, the result is always the same: failure and attrition. Having a system in place to monitor student progress and make that information available to the other members of the teaching

community will enable prompt action to be taken on the student's behalf, arresting their decline before it undermines their progress and success.

Narrative: If the shift from a *learning community* to a *teaching and learning community* begins with a linked curriculum where instructors share content ideas and teaching strategies, the circle of communication formed by this approach is completed when student progress is closely monitored, and problems and issues relating to student performance and behavior are addressed promptly. An Early Alert Program would serve to inform instructors and counselors at the first signs that a student is struggling. This in turn would enable any necessary intervention to occur before the problem can persist and will also inform and enable other members of that student's instructional and support network to be vigilant and respond appropriately.

Early alert and intervention software systems are now coupled with campus computer networks, and are used on college and university campuses to track student attendance and progress. They can form the basis for an early warning system, providing an unprecedented level of awareness of students' progress and performance. On the Baylor University campus the Student Success Center uses one such system to track student progress and disseminate that information to their intervention network; that network includes: Academic Support Programs and Faculty, Residence Life, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Judicial Affairs, Academic Advisement, Institutional Research, and other involved campus departments. The net impact of using this approach is that attendance, GPA, and retention are all improved, not to mention the students' quality of life, as the causes of academic decline are addressed and students are helped to flourish. Needless to say, this system is not meant to be punitive, rather to identify and relieve students of the hardships that stand in the way of success.

Activities: Implementation of an Early Alert and Intervention Program to track student performance would involve the installation of software within the campus intranet system that would provide a means of uniting the various departments of the campus community to form a coordinated and responsive safety network. Full-scale utilization of such a system would require training of all stakeholders and willingness to be attentive and responsive to maintaining the flow of information. In addition, given that the dissemination of student information including attendance records, supportive services information, grades, and behavioral assessments across campus is unprecedented, it would also be necessary to provide students with an understanding of the intended benefits of having such a system in place, as well as addressing their concerns regarding confidentiality.

Once in place, it would be incumbent upon members of the teaching community to use the system appropriately and effectively. If a student begins a pattern of absenteeism, then an alert can be sent out that would not only inform other instructors and counselors, but would trigger an email and/or phone call to the student to meet with their counselor to discuss, and hopefully resolve, any problems that they may be experiencing. Alternatively, when a student performs poorly on an exam, or fails to turn in an assignment, their other instructors can be on alert and ready to

provide any additional support or accommodations before the problem impacts their other studies.

Outcomes: The basic outcome of an Early Alert and Intervention Program would be to prevent students from falling through the cracks. As noted previously, the college campus, by its very nature, lacks the coordination and vigilance associated with K-12 education, and for many students this opens the door to the unchecked decline in performance that ultimately leads to failure and attrition. This system addresses that concern by making use of the existing infrastructure to link faculty, counselors, and support staff in a manner that can spur a quick response to problems, and promote persistence, retention and success. Other outcomes of this system would include the improvement of instruction and supportive services that comes with gaining an awareness of the challenges faced by our students and their impact on performance. Likewise, we could also anticipate a general improvement in the morale of *Lobo-TLC* participants as they appreciate the benefits of these outreach efforts on their academic success. Hence, the complete implementation of this program would enhance the overall effectiveness of all members of the *Lobo-Teaching and Learning Community*.

Component 5: Mentoring

Rationale: Positive role models provide voices that are able to engage students on a different level than the interactions they experience with their peers and instructors in the classroom. Mentors provide a living example that the challenges students face can be overcome, and a life of promise and prosperity is something that they too can achieve. Providing this kind of influence to students creates a positive and forward-looking learning environment.

Narrative: Positive role models in a Teaching and Learning Community serve to provide a link to students between their campus life and activities, and the life and future that awaits them once they complete their studies. A mentor's contribution to a student's life provides proximate benefits, as counselor and advisor help them navigate the hurdles of their daily lives, but also provides long-term value, as members of the community whose lives provide a window to the future. Because the primary function of the mentor is to exert a positive influence on the life of the student, mentors can take many forms, including: more advanced students, instructors and counselors, other members of the campus community, and off-campus community members and career professionals. Each of these may supply a different voice and level of support to the student, and in so doing, will address different concerns and challenges. *Lobo-TLC* will attempt to provide mentoring opportunities to the students from all three of these areas.

Activities: Student-to-student mentoring may be incorporated into the program in a variety of ways. Once the program has been established for a year, the returning cohort of students can serve as mentors to the entering first-year cohort. In addition, other students, drawn from other campus groups (such as Alpha Gamma Sigma) can be paired with students. In either case, the student mentor would be expected to maintain weekly contact with their mentee and provide advice and support relating to classroom

success. Student mentors would also be encouraged to participate in *Lobo-TLC* social activities.

Instructional faculty, counselors, and staff that are recruited to take part in the *Lobo-TLC* program would be expected to make themselves available to serve as mentors. Apart from the expectations and influence we exert on our students as part of our academic functions, we are the professionals with whom our students are in closest contact. The relationship that we forge in the classroom provides the basis for an extended mentoring relationship. Our own life experiences, and the challenges we have faced can often form the basis for a unique connection with our students; the opportunity this poses to touch our students' lives should not be squandered.

One of the early challenges program staff will encounter will be recruitment of community mentors. As community leaders and professionals, their contribution to many students' lives that have never experienced a similar relationship with a parent or close relative, can be invaluable. As with student mentors, the key is availability and regular interaction with program participants, both for the sake of making themselves available to respond to students' concerns, but also to help students to create a positive and achievable vision for their own future.

On all three levels, it should be recognized that while mentoring is about friendship and spending time together, it has the potential to exert a profound influence on the life of the mentee. Accordingly, mentors will be expected to participate in some kind of training that includes an understanding of the goals and objectives of the *Lobo-TLC* program as well as familiarizing them with some of the kinds of issues they may encounter and the appropriate responses to them.

Outcomes: Mentoring serves to extend the Teaching and Learning Community beyond the classroom and campus. It provides a bridge between academic life and off-campus life that supports and enlightens students, both in the present, and as they begin to envision and plan their futures. The positive outcomes generated by forming mentoring relationships can relieve students' anxiety via a "third party" support network, remind them of the value of their efforts, encourage their persistence, and help them shift their gaze from the obstacles and challenges of their past to the possibilities of their future.

Component 6: Assessment

Rationale: The development of a new program to address issues of attrition will draw resources, both human and budgetary, from other programs. The merits of committing time and resources to a pilot program can only be justified and properly allocated if the program is subject to ongoing evaluation and assessment.

Narrative: The fact that roughly one third of students fail to complete their first semester at MPC, and only half of first year entrants return for a second year is a dispiriting reality, and one whose roots are varied and complex. Demographic data suggest that

poor preparation for college is one of the causes for early failure. Data showing slightly higher rates of failure among some racial groups suggests that socioeconomic factors also contribute to this problem. The various components being developed in this pilot-program aim to confront the impact of these obstacles on student success and provide a safety net to address ongoing barriers to learning before they lead to failure. Determining which of these interventions serve to benefit students can only be determined by careful assessment.

Data collection and feedback components will be used to identify whether students' needs are being met, in what areas meaningful support is lacking or non-existent, whether faculty and staff training has been effective, and how these interventions compare with non-participants also enrolled in basic skills. In addition, assessment data will also guide the direction of current programs, inform budgetary decisions, and form the basis for refinement or the development of additional program components going forward.

Activities: The Office of Institutional Research will be tasked with carrying out program evaluation and assessment on an ongoing, semester by semester, basis. Areas to be surveyed and assessed will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Student satisfaction and perceived level of support/program effectiveness
- Academic performance
- Student attendance and participation
- Value of coursework and other support relating to study skills
- Counseling and advising issues
- Interaction with mentors
- Faculty and staff training
- Faculty and staff participation and satisfaction
- Early alert software
- Level of collaboration
- Value of orientation
- Evaluation of recruitment process (in hindsight)

Outcomes: The success of the *Lobo-TLC* Program will in large measure be determined by our ability to form a teaching and learning community that is responsive to students' needs, able to learn from past efforts, and adapt to new challenges. With an assessment component in place, the quality and effectiveness of the program can be monitored. In addition, program components can be refined, eliminated, or developed in accordance with feedback. Finally, assessment data will ensure that resources can be allocated to those areas that provide the greatest benefit to *Lobo-TLC* participants.

Component 7: Appreciative and Intrusive Advising

Rationale: When students are made to feel as though they are a part of the community, rather than intruders into it, they begin to discover an identity that connects them to

college life. And if first impressions mean anything at all, and they surely do, it is the initial interactions between students and their counselors that establish a pattern of nurturing, and a spirit of belonging and hope. For at-risk students, the sequential phases of that relationship are at the core of retention and success.

Narrative: Average students may check in with their counselors for course advising once or twice during their first year, and perhaps a few times in subsequent years as they resolve their concerns relating to degree completion and transfer eligibility. While this approach to advising may work for some students, counseling is an opportunity to engage the at-risk student and make up the difference between failure and success. Within the framework of a Teaching and Learning Community the value of counselors is amplified many times over as they take on a much more personal, student-centered role as advisor, concerned advocate, resource and career planning guide, and grade-neutral support system. The proactive advisor begins this unique relationship prior to the beginning of the term, applying the tools of Appreciative Advising, and then maintains a close presence throughout the semester by applying the techniques of Intrusive Advising.

In his/her role as Appreciative Advisor the counselor is still involved in course advising; however, this process is based upon counselors working closely with students to identify their strengths before they begin attending classes, and aligning their coursework accordingly. Here the counselor works closely with the student to identify personal strengths and sources of motivation and then places the student into an appropriate program of courses. Various programs have identified successful methods of helping the student to identify their strengths (e.g., Strengths Quest); this process forms the core of Appreciative Advising. The approach includes building rapport with the student through open questioning, facilitating a self-discovery that reveals the student's strengths and passions, and ultimately, helping the student begin to articulate his/her own aspirations. As these become clear, the advisor can then begin to develop a compatible pairing of courses. Subsequent monitoring provides an avenue to adjust and reassess this path, as the student has the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in the classroom. When compared with the more traditional deficit-based approach to scheduling courses that emphasizes the improvement of study skills, the student-centered course alignment that arises through Appreciative Advising methods delivers significantly higher retention rates and grade point averages. At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where this approach has been fully implemented, it has demonstrated tremendous success with at-risk students.

The relationship formed during the Appreciative Advising phase now forms the basis for the subsequent advising strategy: Intrusive Advising. Here the counselor takes a proactive role to maintain regular contact with the student throughout the academic year, building upon the trust established in the earlier phase, and reaffirming his/her role as the concerned representative of the institution. The connection that is formed between counselor and student serves to transform the student from outsider to cared-for member of the campus community. This not only generates personal motivation, but also provides a means of detecting or anticipating problems before they

impact performance. When problems do arise, the sense of belonging that has been now well established between the counselor and student can be used to address these problems honestly and successfully.

Activities: While the emphasis of this narrative has been on the importance of building a professional relationship with the student beginning with recruitment and orientation activities, and on-going as the “intrusive advisor,” it goes without saying that the advisor must also have a complete knowledge of the campus and its resources. As with all other faculty and staff forming the teaching arm of the Teaching and Learning Community, the *Lobo-TLC* advisor must be fully engaged and completely familiar with all of the curriculum elements of the program. It is likely that he or she will also be the hub of the Early Alert and Intervention network. And while the student advances through the curriculum, the *Lobo-TLC* advisor will be a constant (persistent) companion, transcending semesters. Working with at-risk students will entail additional training in both academic and non-academic areas. This is a non-traditional campus partnership that requires the maintenance of clear boundaries with the student, but at the same time, renders a level of attention and concern regarding each student’s wellbeing that is uncommon on the college campus.

Outcomes: The combined efforts and effects of Appreciative and Intrusive Advising will be the things that will remain foremost in the minds of students as they advance toward meeting their academic and professional goals. This component of the program will be the catalyst to bring students into the learning environment with an attitude and eagerness to succeed. And within this framework, the *Lobo-TLC* advisor will wear many hats, each enabling him or her to affirm the student’s rightful place within the institution.

Component 8: Staffing

Rationale: Careful planning, consistency, coordination and implementation of all aspects of this multifaceted program on a day-to-day basis require a dedicated staff person. Conversely, if left to run independently, a program that depends so entirely on the delicate articulation of so many entities and element will fail.

Narrative: The old adage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts will undoubtedly be the key to the success of the Lobo-Teaching and Learning Community. While the benefits posed by each individual component can be parsed out for the sake of developing the program itself, the success of this program lies in the coordinated implementation of all of the pieces. *Lobo-TLC* is a safety net, one whose many different strands can only offer support when they are successfully tied together. This will be the role of the *Lobo-TLC* Program Coordinator. While, by way of comparison, the teaching faculty may be acknowledged for the depth of their curricula, the coordinator will fulfill a role that is a mile wide and an inch deep, reaching out to all corners of the campus and surrounding community to bring the program’s participants together, beginning at recruitment, and ending at graduation. In practical terms, the

program coordinator is the “Alpha-Lobo”; he or she will oversee the administration of the program and ensure that all of the resources are being fully and effectively utilized.

Activities: Just as counselors will be the axis around which *Lobo-TLC* students revolve, the Program Coordinator will perform a similar function for campus faculty and staff involved in the program. In addition, the coordinator will be the connection to the high schools, community and student mentors, and campus and off-campus departments and services that are contributing to program activities. He or she will manage the program budget and be the clearinghouse for development and assessment activities and information. The coordinator will also be responsible for scheduling program activities and for keeping all levels of the *Lobo-TLC* program informed and aware of coming events, deadlines, opportunities, and the like.

Outcomes: The presence of a program coordinator can ensure that all participants, students, faculty, staff, mentors, service providers, and all other concerned parties have a point-person that can be relied upon to receive and disseminate information, respond to needs and challenges, and coordinate, develop and deliver program services promptly and effectively.

Component 9: Co-Curricular Activities

Rationale: Building a sense of a campus community and belonging, particularly on a commuter-campus like MPC, requires that students develop connections with one another and with the institution, both inside and outside of the context of the classroom environment.

Narrative: As noted above, much of the effort of the *Lobo-TLC* Program is to create a sense of community for the student cohort in and around the MPC campus. As with any *community*, it is not a single thread that binds its members together to form a contented and productive body; rather, community is what occurs when the social fabric is woven together by many different threads, criss-crossing one another from many directions. The program components described above would provide many of these threads, as trust and a team ethic are first initiated during orientation, and then gradually developed during classroom and advising activities, and through the mentoring relationships that are formed along the way.

Co-curricular activities between cohort members, with and without the presence of faculty and staff, are meant to draw students into the flow of campus life, to establish a sense of belonging, to nurture a sense of pride in being connected to something larger than themselves, and to generate healthy patterns and behaviors that are productive and serve to open students’ minds to the opportunities to learn. To enhance and augment these activities, and build upon their successes, a variety of co-curricular activities will be developed that invite and encourage students to interact outside of their classrooms. These activities are intended to be socially enriching, eye-opening, physically relaxing, thought provoking, conversation generating, stress relieving, and esteem building, and function to add a less formal, more student-driven and free spirited component to the *Lobo-TLC* participants’ campus lives.

Activities: A host of co-curricular activities can be imagined for *Lobo-TLC* members, each adding a different thread to the fabric of campus community life. This list simply is meant to provide some examples:

- Recreational activities such as evening beach barbeques with family members and mentors, attending campus sporting events, going bowling, skating, kayaking
- Attending speaking and theater events that will entertain and provide new perspectives on life such as Arts and Lecture Series events, Theatre Arts performances
- Traveling to various learning centers such as museums, science centers, the Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Attending university campus tours and visiting research centers to see what awaits them there
- Attending career events such as job fairs, tours of industries, job shadowing
- Volunteering and community service activities such as working at a shelter, beach cleanup, the MATE ROV Contest
- Having a lounge where they can gather to relax between classes
- Dining with faculty, mentors and community leaders (e.g., Dinner for Twelve Strangers)

Outcomes: Students' perceptions of the MPC campus will change from being a place that is foreign to their goals and experiences, to the nexus of how they see themselves and the vantage point that facilitates a view of their futures. As friendships and collegial relationships are born in the classroom, and strengthened through these co-curricular activities, students will not only look at the campus as central to their daily lives, but as the most promising path toward discovering their potential, and attaining the skills and attitude to seek productive and meaningful futures.

Component 10: Faculty/Staff Development

Rationale: While many students thrive among the diverse programs and activities that form our current campus community, a subset of first year students experience early failure and attrition. Either we as an open-admissions institution choose to accept that these students lack the skills and attitude to meet the challenges of higher education, and therefore recognize their failure as an acceptable loss, or we choose to address the limits of our current practices and develop novel approaches that shift the teaching dynamic toward one that enables us to meet the needs of these students in a manner that embraces their potential, preempts their failure, and charts a new course toward success.

Narrative: There are very few elements included in this proposal that do not already exist on the MPC campus: dedicated teachers and counselors abound, course offerings ranging from basic skills to transfer level already exist, and assessments and evaluations are done regularly. However, it would be presumptuous to assume that this program could succeed if we were to simply link these pieces together in their current

form. What is being proposed here is a shift in the campus culture away from one defined by independence and the absence of interdisciplinary structure, to one that is highly interdependent and structurally interconnected. Not everyone on the campus would be receptive to participating in this kind of cultural shift, but for those faculty and staff involved in *Lobo-TLC*, openness to meeting these demands would be essential. Without a considerable investment of time and resources in the training of staff and faculty participants in the skills that distinguish a typical college campus from a Teaching and Learning Community, *Lobo-TLC* will not meet the needs of our at-risk student cohort.

The quality and dedication that distinguishes MPC's current programs notwithstanding, two elements, in particular, would be required to earnestly implement the program that is being proposed here. First, the nature of the interactions between faculty/staff and the student participants is one that must be proactive and cognizant of the needs and challenges of at-risk students and the pedagogies that work best to maintain a forward looking attitude. Second, an unprecedented level of communication, collaboration, and cooperation is required, both interpersonally and with the aid of technology to create the network of people and services that will form the foundation for this teaching and learning community.

Activities: Faculty and staff development will be predicated on the fact that current teaching and advising strategies, while effective with most students, are often ineffective with members of the at-risk cohort. Within each discipline and service area, faculty and staff will be expected to attend conferences and workshops and engage in collaborative activities that are aimed at achieving success with the *Lobo-TLC* cohort. These activities will include the following:

- Gaining awareness of new pedagogical approaches and strategies
- Training in the development of linked courses within a basic skills curriculum
- Learning how to develop cohesion within a learning community
- Training in how to properly motivate and mentor at-risk students
- Exposure to the mechanics of Appreciative and Intrusive Advising
- Training in the use of Early Alert Software and its implementation
- Learning how to coordinate intervention activities in ways that best serve the student
- Gaining an understanding of program assessment and evaluation practices
- Learning more about how to identify and work with students in the early stages of failure

Outcomes: A well trained faculty and staff will be able to take a cohort of students prone to early failure and attrition and, through a collaborative effort, be expeditious in arresting their fall and returning them to a productive trajectory. If *Lobo-TLC* faculty and staff are prepared to work as a well-coordinated team, then an effective teaching community can emerge from all quarters of the campus to provide a consistent and comprehensive level of support to at-risk students. This approach does not imply that

these approaches are currently non-existent on the MPC campus, rather that the anticipated level of effectiveness within the *Lobo-TLC* Learning Community rests on these being amplified and coordinated to new levels through proper training, implementation and practice.

Summary Statement:

This document has sought to outline a pilot program to address the problems of early failure and attrition among a defined cohort of first-year MPC students. During these three months of weekly discussions, the Task Force focused on ways to address the challenges faced by these students as they attempt to assimilate into the academic community and college life. The strategies we discussed were also informed by a cursory survey of existing programs, both on the MPC campus and on other campuses, and by attending a variety of seminars at the First Year Experience Conference in San Francisco. While the ten components recommended above constitute the product of these efforts, the following summary statement has been added to address a few overarching concerns that emerged from these discussions and experiences. The committee offers them here because it was felt that, while not necessarily requested as part of our mission, or addressed directly in the proposal itself, their omission would leave out some relevant concerns and ideas that we all felt should be taken into consideration as the merits of committing to such a proposal are weighed.

According to the committee's assigned task, we were to develop a pilot program for implementation in 2008-2009, with the expectation that this include course curricula that would be posted in the fall 2008 class schedule and considered in the development of the 2008-2009 budget. Much to the surprise of the task force members, however, the program that we have recommended would require a considerable amount of training and preparation on the part of campus faculty and staff, and to be properly implemented would delay the admission of the first student cohort until fall 2009. Tempering this view was an awareness that most programs of a similar nature, when attempted on other community college and university campuses, tended to fail within four years of their initiation. It is our view that one way to increase the chances of the *Lobo-TLC* program's success, and secure its long-term future on the MPC campus, would be to invest the time necessary to properly plan and develop all aspects of the proposed program prior to recruiting the first student cohort.

The Task Force initially considered an alternative strategy to the one recommended above, that being, to implement certain elements of the program during the first year (fall 2008), including the recruitment of a student cohort, and scheduling a course curriculum, and then gradually incorporate the rest of the components in subsequent years. This view was abandoned by the committee for two reasons; first, it was recognized that even among those program elements that already existed in some form on the campus, their implementation in accordance with the proposed plan would still require additional levels of planning and training in order to address the objectives of the program. For example, existing basic skills and PERS course curricula would still need to undergo revisions in terms of content and pedagogy prior to implementation. Second, upon closer scrutiny, it was agreed that among the ten components of the program as conceived by the committee, there weren't any that

could easily stand alone, or conversely any that could be delayed for future implementation without weakening the overall design of the program.

One of the challenges of implementing a new program is that all levels and departments affected by the program are given the opportunity to buy into its mission and objectives. In the case of developing a Teaching and Learning Community, the program hinges on an unprecedented level of articulation and collaboration between departments that have heretofore functioned independently. As pointed out above, more than any single component, it is this element of the proposed program that will require a shift in the way that faculty and staff manage their affairs. Collaboration between individuals and departments, particularly at the level being proposed, is not endemic to the nature of higher education, and yet, this particular element *is* at the heart of *Lobo-TLC*. What is being proposed, above and beyond the particulars of any component, is a cultural shift in how we manage and conduct our interactions with students, and the program's success rests on whether we as a campus are willing and able to embody these changes. Hence, a delay in the formal implementation of the program will provide the time for buy-in to occur at all levels, and for all entities participating in the program to develop the intense level of interaction and collaboration required to deliver the kind of program being proposed.

One of the other challenges that was considered by task force members was how the proposed program, or its elements, would fit into, or be adopted by, existing programs. Taken in its totality, it will require a rather sizable investment of personnel and resources to implement. In addition to existing faculty and staff who are assigned to, or choose to, participate in the program, a staff coordinator will need to be hired, space will need to be allocated to accommodate the program, and resources will need to be available for faculty/staff development and to fund the various co-curricular activities being provided. Apart from making comparisons to other programs, such as the resources put forth in supporting an athletic team, it is difficult to find another example rivaling this scale of investment being put forward for the benefit of a limited number of students. Regardless, in the minds of task force members, implementation of *Lobo-TLC* would be a worthy investment.

In the Curriculum Component it was mentioned that various alternative models of learning communities already exist. One such model, which bears closer scrutiny, is the Digital Bridge Academy (DBA) at Cabrillo College. While the program being proposed here is intended to deliver basic skills with the aim of transitioning students into the college's existing programs, the DBA has developed an entirely separate approach, a curriculum with a focus toward training and job-readiness. And while career preparation is the proximate goal, and the curriculum is such that students are learning skills that provide them access into digital technology-based careers, more broadly, the program also serves to re-engage students into the practice of learning, and thereby opens up other academic avenues as well. While this task force did not explore this aspect of curriculum development, in part because the initial intention was to deliver a program that could be initiated in fall 2008, the recommendation being made here to delay implementation of the curriculum until fall 2009 now provides an opportunity to explore this important and successful approach.

In closing, several adages have been applied to help underscore the ideas presented within the context of this proposal, and this report will close with one more. The aim of this proposal was to develop a pilot program to address the needs of students who experience early failure and high attrition; however, if this program is adopted, the institution is not only making a statement that current rates of attrition are not an acceptable fact of life in higher education, but also, that we as an institution can, by adopting some new approaches, do things better. If we choose to reach out and demonstrate through the development of such a program that these students can succeed, we will be further opening the arms of inclusion and access to higher education, and this will affect all of us, faculty, staff, and students alike. The culture of caring, which is a big part of the MPC campus, will be magnified through these actions in ways that will impact all quarters of our campus, and all aspects of our academic mission. Indeed, the implementation of the Lobo Teaching and Learning Community on the Monterey Peninsula College campus will embody the phrase: *A rising tide lifts all boats.*

Appendix 1

Data provided by Office of Institutional Research

December 14, 2007

1. Retention and Withdrawal rates, by Ethnicity – This document showed retention and withdrawal rates for spring 2007, by ethnicity. The data indicate that Latino, African American, and Pacific Islander students have lower retention rates (and thus, higher withdrawal rates) than other groups. This analysis did not examine why certain groups had lower retention rates than others.
2. Persistence rates – The Enrollment Advisory Committee (EAC) established a goal to increase persistence rates during 2006-07. The EAC examined persistence rates, by ethnicity, for a “baseline” year (2005-06) and for the “intervention” year (2006-07). The *overall* fall-to-spring persistence rate did not change from the baseline year to the intervention year; however, the persistence rate for Latino students did increase from the baseline year to the invention year. Similarly, the fall-to-spring-to-fall persistence rate increased for Latino students from the baseline year to invention year.
3. Basic Skills Initiative data – The Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) taskforce examined a variety of data for basic skills students and courses, including number and percentage of courses that are basic skills, the number and percentage of students enrolled in basic skills courses, success and retention rates for basic skills courses, the percentage of basic skills students who eventually enroll in transfer level courses, and the percentage of basic skills courses taught by full-time faculty.

Summary of discussion: The data suggest that certain groups of students are at higher risk of not succeeding, but it is not clear why this is the case. The SSPTF asked for the following data to better understand which students are at higher risk:

- Unduplicated headcounts vs. enrollments, by ethnicity
- **Number of students who drop *all* courses (this was the priority data request)**
- Retention and success rates for first-time students vs. all students
- High school graduation rates
- Demographics of students who drop courses before 1st Census

December 21, 2007

1. Characteristics of Dropouts – This document compares the following characteristics for “dropouts” versus retained students: average age, city of residence, highest level of education, enrollment status, educational goal, gender, and ethnicity. The data suggest that dropouts tend to be younger, degree-seeking students, and reside in Marina.

2. Courses with the most drops – This document indicates that certain courses, those that are often referred to as “gateway” courses tend to have higher withdrawal rates than other courses.

Summary of discussion: The data do not yet reveal which students are most at risk for dropping out or withdrawing from courses. The Office of Institutional Research was asked to continue to analyze student demographic data and course completion data.

January 11, 2008

1. Characteristics of “at-risk” students – This analysis expanded on the previous analysis of “characteristics of dropouts”. In this new analysis, “at-risk” students were defined as those who either withdrew from a course or receive a “marginal” grade (D, F, or NC). The analysis revealed that at-risk students are more likely to be new (first-time), recent high school graduates, with an intent to transfer. Furthermore, they are more likely to be African-American or Latino and reside in the cities of Marina or Seaside.

Summary of discussion: There was a better understanding of the demographic characteristics of “at-risk” students; however, the SSPTF requested more information about these students’ course-taking patterns.

January 18, 2008

2. Course-taking of “at-risk” students – This analysis examined the course completion rates for the at-risk students identified the previous week. The data suggested that English 111 (English writing course one level below transfer level) and Math 261 (beginning Algebra) are courses that present challenges to the at-risk students.