

MPC BSI Committee Self-Assessment/Action Plan Summary

The Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) is a statewide project that provides 33.1 million dollars annually to all California community colleges (of which MPC currently receives \$115,655) in order to establish, enhance, and support programs and instruction related to student success at the developmental level. Below is an excerpt from the state BSI Steering Committee:

The Basic Skills Professional Development Initiative—Academic Fundamentals is being proposed out of the need to provide basic skills, and by extension English as a Second Language (ESL), education to students underprepared for college-level work, including those unable to pass the California High School Exit Exam; address the unmet needs of the California Community College System in the area of basic skills education as noted in the 2006 System Office Strategic Plan; and attend to the professional development needs of community college faculty as they seek to provide basic skills courses/programs in their efforts to ensure student success.

In Spring 2007, MPC formed the college's BSI Committee, an ad-hoc task force, which was charged with two responsibilities: to conduct a comprehensive self-assessment, an internal document designed to ascertain whether or not MPC currently meets stated best practices according to the state's guidelines (see Appendix I) and, based on our findings, to submit an Action Plan and Expenditure Plan to the Chancellor's Office.

In order to prepare each institution for the self-assessment process, a partnership of the Academic Senate and the statewide organizations of the Chief Instructional Officers, the Chief Student Services Officers, the Center for Student Success, and the System Office APG (Action Plan Group) conducted statewide training sessions and conferences. These meetings educated MPC's BSI members about the process, the standards, and the objectives.

In Fall 2007, the BSI Committee completed the institutional self-assessment (see Appendix II), which included a statistical data report (see Appendix III). The following BSI committee members conducted the self-assessment: John Gonzalez, Michael Gilmartin, Susan Steele, Karen Engelsen, Andres Durstenfeld, Debbie Anthony, Hazel Ross, Jeannie Kim, Kathleen Rozman, Laurie Buchholz, Linda Bruno, Lynn Iwamoto, Marilyn Wilcox, Merry Dennehy, Paola Gilbert, Paula Norton, Penny Partch, and Terria Odom-Wolfer. Rosaleen Ryan completed the statistical data report.

In Spring 2008, the BSI Committee authored MPC's BSI Action Plan, which we now submit for your review and approval. This document communicates MPC's long-term goals and details the institution's 2007-2008 planned actions to enhance basic skills education as accorded by the BSI Committee and based on data, experiential assessment, input from a wide range of campus stakeholders, and the rubric distributed by the Chancellor's Office.

Self-Assessment Findings

Strengths and Commendations

The self-assessment indicates a number of achievements and strengths. It is clear that supporting basic skills is an implicit goal at our institution. Basic skills English and math courses appear to receive a level of funding and support in line with other courses/programs on campus.

The self-assessment also details a number of remarkable accomplishments, efforts, and programs that truly do evidence that basic skills is an important focus in many areas across campus. It appears that areas where there exists some form of coordination/communication, either by a coordinator, team leader, or director, tend to provide the most successful, sustained and perceptible results.

From institutional policy, to counseling, to staff development, to classroom instruction, and support/learning centers, it is clear that student success and awareness of student challenges and needs are important priorities institution-wide.

Lastly, perhaps the most significant strength lies in our strong foundation of existing support/learning centers and resources. A wide breadth of on-campus resources exists for students, whether basic skills or otherwise, to receive assistance, aid, instruction, and counseling.

Challenges

Though support of basic skills is an implicit institutional goal, it is clear that it needs to be an institutional priority that is sought more explicitly, actively, and broadly.

In all areas of the self-assessment, there exists a sense of fragmentation with little or no regular or formal coordination between individual areas, which has resulted in a significant communication gap and a limit to the effectiveness of individual program efforts. Along similar lines, the self-assessment indicates disconnection between student services and academic affairs and the need for stronger interaction: faculty-to-faculty, between faculty and counseling, and from program to program. There is lack of comprehensive student education/orientation about available college resources; again the issue stems from fragmentation and the need for more effective communication.

The self-assessment shows a lack of funds to adequately support and enhance staff, training, coordination, and counseling specifically related to basic skills. There are not enough counselors or counseling hours to offer timely, consistent, and ongoing support to students placed in basic skills courses. Moreover, assessment of all academic/learning support centers illustrates a lack of adequate funding for staff hours and training, particularly in light of growing student numbers in basic skills courses and the change in graduation requirement.

Currently, the concept of basic skills and the challenges, needs, and opportunities that are connected to it are not highly promoted, and there exists some preconceived and incorrect assumptions that basic skills students represent a small and separate population from “regular” (transfer-level) students. Though it appears the perceptions are changing for the better, a type of cultural resistance to basic skills awareness among faculty remains.

Action Plan Summary

Goals

For each section of the Action Plan, the BSI Committee has stated long-term goals, overarching principles that guide and will continue to guide each planned action for this and subsequent years through 2013. The goals are as follows:

Establish an organizational structure that incorporates foundational skills development into all aspects of the campus culture and coordinates support college-wide for basic skills.

Strengthen assessment, placement, orientation, counseling, and advisement service structures and processes; promote ongoing, structured follow-up activities and collaboration between counseling and developmental English, ESL, study skills, and math instruction.

In collaboration with the existing Staff Development Committee, establish and sustain ongoing, coordinated opportunities for both adjunct and full-time faculty to enhance basic skills instructional methods and practices in order to provide high-level, relevant, and current instruction to students.

Sustain and enhance sound, learning-centered pedagogical practices in developmental courses and programs; actively support the enhancement of academic learning/support centers, the interconnectivity between classroom and lab instruction, and the interrelationship between basic skills and student success across disciplines and through all other levels of course offerings.

Proposed Actions/Recommendations

The BSI Committee recommends that the strongest emphasis this year be placed on improving college-wide coordination efforts, enhancing counseling services and the communication and collaboration among counseling and instruction, establishing ongoing opportunities and sufficient time for training and staff development related to basic skills instruction for both adjunct and full-time faculty, and enhancing staff/tutor availability and training in existing college learning/support centers.

Through all planned efforts, it is critical to keep in mind that there is a need to garner greater understanding of the concept of foundational skills development and its inherent interrelationship with student retention and success in every other skill, course, and program; as well, it is equally critical to maintain a balance between considering basic skills as a specific, distinct priority and preventing basic skills from becoming a separate, isolated segment of campus culture.