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PROMISING PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES



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AT



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Promising Practices

CALIFORNIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community colleges and their faculty and administrators are used to critiques of their missions and complaints about their outcomes. Since the early 1900s, two-year colleges and community colleges have been berated by policymakers, scholars, and others for focusing too much on practical skills rather than rigorous academic preparation; for watering down their academic curriculum; for allowing themselves to be subject to the whims of business and industry; for failing to transfer more than one-quarter of entering students who state an intention to transfer; for perpetuating gaps between the haves and the have-nots; and for many other offenses (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Dougherty, 1994; Frye, 1994; Grubb, 1999; Levin, 2001; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Meier, 2004; Pincus, 1994; Shaw, Rhoads, & Valadez, 1999; Valadez, 1996; Weis, 1985). Recent reports by research groups have followed suit, and in the first decade of the 21st century community colleges continue to be the subject of unfavorable scrutiny (e.g., Shulock & Moore, 2007).

While examining community college outcomes and demanding better performance are no doubt a noble endeavor, such reports and scholarly inquiries are frequently greeted by community college faculty and administrators with one of two common refrains: (1) that research reports provide general findings that are not relevant to individual campuses or (2) that researchers have little understanding of community college students, who include those who are part-time attenders of college, part-time and full-time workers, low income individuals, and academically underprepared students. As a result, these critiques—which make up a significant portion of all published material pertaining to community colleges—have limited impact on actual practice in community colleges.

Furthermore, these reports fail to recognize what particular community college campuses may be doing well, often ignoring the context in which community college education takes place (e.g., low per-student funding, open-door policies, students with an extremely wide range of goals and abilities, a large workforce of part-time faculty). While critiques and outcomes reports have their place, it seems to us that to make substantial improvements to community college outcomes, we need to identify and examine programs and practices currently taking place on community college campuses that have demonstrated positive results in raising student achievement. Furthermore, we need to share this information with other colleges and discuss specific ways that these promising practices may be transferred to and institutionalized on other campuses.

There is, of course, an abundance of “best practice” studies; discipline-specific journals are full of them, as are publications such as *New Directions for Community Colleges* that are written for community college scholars and practitioners. Nonetheless, the vast majority of these best practice publications focus on the features of a particular program; few discuss if and how the practices and processes that have made the program successful may be transferred to another college, which may differ dramatically in student population, political context, and institutional history (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Levin, 2007).

Across California, community colleges are creating and redesigning instructional programs in order to improve student learning and close the achievement gap between Latino, African American, Native American, and low-income students and their white, Asian, or more affluent peers. These programs exist in all areas of the community college—including transfer education, workforce preparation,

basic skills training, English as a Second Language, and community education—and have the potential to improve the quality of student learning at community colleges.

In spite of these promising programmatic developments, there is little sharing among community colleges in California of those practices, with few notable exceptions (see Alssid et al., 2002; Center for Student Success, 2007). Thus, there is a crucial need to identify and examine these promising programs, as well as the practices that ensure their success, and to share this information with other colleges throughout the state. The sharing of promising practices must take into account institutional context and history, and must explore if and how the practices and processes that have made the program successful may be transferred to another college, which may differ dramatically in student population, social context, and institutional history.

Project Summary

Transferring Promising Practices is a two part project. The first part involved a field investigation of community college programs that demonstrated promise to close the achievement/opportunity gap in student outcomes. The purpose of this investigation was to reveal which behaviors and characteristics of these programs constituted promising and effective practice. The second part of this project involved identifying ways in which these effective principles of practice could be transferred to other community colleges. We found in five California community colleges programs practices that were noteworthy of emulation. The programs included: English as a Second Language Program (City College of San Francisco); Basic Skills Transformation (Chaffey College); Adelante Program and Latino Center (Santa Monica College); Accelerated Careers in Technology—ACT—Program (Modesto Junior

College); Fashion Program (Los Angeles Trade-Technical College).

After the identification of programs to investigate (including one other program not listed above¹) we began with a review of the literature, first in subject relevant areas: Basic Skills, English as a Second Language, Counseling, Transfer, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Transfer Education, and Vocational Education. As well, we reviewed literature on practice, promising practice, and the transfer of practice, particularly related to educational settings. We then developed analytical frameworks prior to data collection and refined these frameworks subsequent to data collection so that our collected data could be analyzed systematically and coherently.

We used a purposeful sampling method in order to select six promising² community college instructional programs to participate in our case studies. Beginning in October 2007 we initiated our field research investigation using in-depth qualitative case study analyses of our promising programs. Following case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994), data collection consisted primarily of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with faculty, staff, and students involved in the six instructional programs, focus groups (primarily with students), participant observation, and document analysis. Relevant faculty, administrators, students, and staff were identified through partnership documents, as well as via a snowballing technique (Merriam; Mason, 2002) in which

¹ In our reporting of outcomes, we deleted those for Foothill/De Anza Colleges for various reasons. Principally, the goals and the functioning of this program made it incomparable to other promising practices that we encountered in the other five programs.

² We define a “promising” instructional program as one that has demonstrably improved student learning and has closed the achievement gap, as measured by course pass rates, certificate or degree attainment rates, and so forth.

each interviewee or focus group participant referred us to other appropriate participants.

After fieldwork was completed all of the data were transcribed and coding and analysis completed with the software program ATLAS.ti. Data were coded initially around themes that scholarly literature has identified as a best practice. Ultimately, we coded data using the three dimensions of organizational effectiveness: ecological, historical-cultural, and organizational. Data analysis was within site not an across site operation. That is, coding and analysis were specific to each program. Across site analysis arose in the final phase in order to identify transferable properties and practices that were not program-specific.

This project discovered four main attributes of programs of promise that we refer to as the Four Cs:

1. **Cohesion**- refers to program elements' (faculty and staff, students, and curriculum and instruction) ability to operate as a unit where behaviors and actions mesh or are rationally consistent;
2. **Cooperation**- refers to the degree to which program personnel work together toward common goals and the relationships between faculty and students as well as faculty and administrators are respectful and supportive;
3. **Connection**- refers to the program and its personnel's capacity to develop and maintain linkages and relationships both within the institution and to external parties, so that interdependence is both recognized and relied upon to advance the interests of the program;
4. **Consistency**- refers to the presence of a distinctive and stable pattern of program behaviors that promote regular interaction and collective events.

As well, we learned that several principles guided these practices. These principles included (a) attention to and focus upon student learning and student development, (b) commitment to the program among the participants, (c) strong work ethic, and (d) non-hierarchical and shared leadership. These principles were enacted by either a group of faculty in the instructional areas or by administrators, counselors and support staff in the student support areas.

Recommendations

We note throughout this report that institutional context is a significant component in the behaviors and actions of organizational participants. Our recommendations, then, must be translated to fit a specific college's context—its history, organizational functioning including existing norms, personnel, students, and community. The following recommendations are for the purpose of guidance and arose out of this project.

- The needs of a diverse student population need to be considered when developing curriculum and instruction and constructing student support services. It is not sufficient to have a "one size-fits-all" approach. Recognition of student development in both the realms of social and cognitive development for various populations (e.g., adult learners, ethnic groups) is a requisite and the use of practices tied to student development theory is imperative.
- Institutional commitment among college members requires a sense of

belonging and ownership. Work can be valued for both its intrinsic as well as extrinsic components. Institutional leaders are charged with developing a supportive environment for college members. The shared nature of the enterprise (its goals and actions) if absent, must be developed. As well, organizational members must know that their work is meaningful—that it counts and has consequences.

- To improve student outcomes, including course and program completion, job acquisition, and transfer to a university, college members must devote considerable effort and time to their work and to students in particular. The gap between what is and what is expected is considerable and it cannot be closed by magic; instead, both effort and efficiencies (e.g., coordination) of labor are necessary in order to make progress.
- Leadership that emphasizes hierarchy and authority will not suffice to move an organization forward effectively. Instead, leadership in effective programs has evolved over time and is more shared than located centrally. Colleges are encouraged to provide mechanisms (e.g., develop leadership programs) to build leadership within and across the institution.
- Decision-making that will have positive effects upon student development and educational

outcomes necessitates considerable participation by those organizational members involved with student development and education. Less-hierarchical authority structures are correlated with programs identified with promising practices. Colleges are encouraged to devolve responsibility and authority to those at the program level for decisions about students including student learning and student development.

Specific recommendations for each instructional program examined are outlined in the section ***Transferring these Effective Program Practices- A Guide***

Detailed descriptions about each promising program, as well as the context in which it is found, are also included in the full report.

For more information about the Transferring Promising Practices study or the California Community College Collaborative please visit www.c4.ucr.edu.

TRANSFERRING THESE EFFECTIVE PROGRAM PRACTICES- A GUIDE

Basic Skills

- We recommend the development and establishment of Learning Centers on campuses of community colleges that focus upon all learning skills for community college students. These centers should be central to instructional practices of all programs and serve all students in all programs. They will also house Basic Skills programming.
- We recommend organizing all components of the Learning Centers under the same formal administrative leadership but ensure that faculty have the authority, responsibility, and resources to operate the Learning Centers including the Basic Skills program and its curriculum.
- We recommend that all students be required to use the Learning Centers.
- We recommend that faculty hired for or assigned to the Learning Centers be committed to students and their development.

Career Education

- We recommend an internship program whereby students spend considerable time working in a related business and where students either receive pay or college credit. In order to manage this program, there needs to be a program

internship coordinator, a faculty member with industry experience and contacts with the relevant industry.

- We recommend the development and maintenance of close program ties to local business and industry and frequent interactions, both formally and informally.
- We recommend the hiring of faculty with industry experience and close ties to the businesses relevant to the program.
- We recommend program control and considerable autonomy over student program admissions and course registration, which would include the establishment of a coordinator/advisor position to oversee student advisement and registration.
- We recommend instructional practices that challenge students, such as project competitions, that bring industry representatives to campus.
- We recommend a curriculum that is industry relevant and current and that draws upon the advice of industry experts.
- We recommend the development of a strong program culture which includes support among faculty, students, and staff. This culture is built upon commitments of program personnel to student development and attainment and close working relationships among program personnel. The ethos to be developed is one of hard work both by faculty, staff, and students.

English as a Second Language

- We recommend the use of the same “homegrown” or locally developed assessment instrument for both the ESL credit and noncredit students to place incoming students followed by mandatory placement of students by level of English language proficiency. The test should include multiple choice questions and a writing sample, supplemented with an oral interview, so that it measures the overall language skills of the individual learner.
- We recommend institutional support and professional development for credit and noncredit faculty as well as full-time and part-time faculty through a Teaching Center.
- We recommend a substantial component of full-time faculty for ESL programs, including in the noncredit area.
- We recommend the offering of similar benefits to the part-time faculty such as comparable pay and health benefits, the use of institutional resources, and opportunities for training and professional development.
- We recommend the hiring of faculty who are a good fit both with existing faculty and with program directors.
- We recommend the centralized administration of the ESL program or programs.
- We recommend that both full-time and part-time faculty become involved in institutional governance both at the departmental and college levels.

- We recommend the holding of regular meetings of faculty and administrators to discuss program actions and planning.
- We recommend both numerous and various support services for students, including those which provide learning assistance and those which provide personal, social, and career support, as well as those that connect students and faculty in both credit and noncredit programs.

Vocational

- We recommend structuring curriculum in a way that requires students to mimic a work schedule (6–8 hours a day, 5 days a week).
- We recommend admitting students in groups and keep those students together throughout the duration of their coursework (i.e., cohort model).
- We recommend establishing relationships with external business and industry bodies to identify community needs, sources for funding, and potential employers.
- We recommend solidifying connections with external agencies by organizing those interactions into scheduled committee meetings and advising sessions.
- We recommend incorporating external agencies into college policy making and other processes (e.g., the admissions process).

- We recommend planning events (e.g., graduation ceremonies) to connect students with potential employers to quicken the hiring process.
- We recommend hiring faculty who exhibit commitment to students and the surrounding community. Hire faculty with industry experience (and therefore industry contacts).
- We recommend connecting faculty to public schools that feed into the college to create and streamline vocational education programs in middle and high schools that align with the college programs (and therefore the needs of the community).

Transfer

- We recommend connecting student services, particularly counseling and advising, to specific programs so that student support is tailored to the needs of specific student populations.
- We recommend ensuring that faculty and counselors are knowledgeable about specific program student characteristics and needs.
- We recommend ensuring that there are structures in place to develop and maintain networks for students across campus, to four-year colleges and universities, and to community agencies.
- We recommend developing curricula that are sensitive and attractive to student populations; that is, connect components of curricula such as

readings and assignments to the backgrounds of students so that there is lack of foreignness to college work.

- We recommend developing and maintaining high expectations and high interest levels for transfer of students to four-year colleges and universities both among student services personnel and faculty. We refer to this as “warming up” students.
- We recommend ensuring administrative support for both counseling services and transfer programs that respond to specific student populations.
- We recommend providing professional development opportunities for faculty and student support personnel so that they gain knowledge of student populations, pedagogy, and counseling interventions for students.
- We recommend providing opportunities and avenues for students to interact informally with each other, with faculty, and with counselors and to participate both on and off-campus in academically oriented activities.
- We recommend ensuring that students register, and can register, for classes that are transfer program requirements.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Basic Skills at Chaffey College



Introduction

The Chaffey Community College District: Location and Communities

The city of Rancho Cucamonga in Southern California’s Inland Empire is home to the main campus of the Chaffey Community College District. The city is a predominately White/European American community with the Latino/Hispanic population representing a sizeable minority.

By 2006, the population of Rancho Cucamonga grew to nearly 171,000; 86% of Rancho Cucamonga’s population over the age of 25 are high school graduates and 23.3% have earned bachelor’s degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Residents of Rancho Cucamonga enjoy a high standard of living with average household incomes exceeding \$90,000 annually (City of Rancho Cucamonga). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, just 7.1% of the city’s population was living below the poverty level in (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

In addition to serving Rancho Cucamonga, the Chaffey Community College District serves the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Fontana, Guasti, Montclair, Mt. Baldy, Ontario,

and Upland, with demographics varying city by city. Similar to Rancho Cucamonga, Upland, nestled between the San Bernardino and San Gabriel mountains, is home to a majority White/European-American population (62%) with a sizable Latino/Hispanic minority (35%). Average annual household income exceeds \$76,000(City of Upland, 2009). Sixteen miles east, the city of Fontana is crisscrossed by some of Southern California’s most congested freeways. Latinos/Hispanics comprise 65% of the population with the average household income estimated at approximately \$65,000 annually. Chino, once a center of California’s dairy industry, has a majority Latino/Hispanic population (58%) and average annual household incomes above \$80,000. Chino Hills, predominately European-American (49%) with significant Latino/Hispanic and Asian/Asian-American minority groups, has a young population with over 33% of residents under the age of 18 and average annual household incomes are recorded at a robust \$107,000. Unlike the larger cities in the district, Mt. Baldy, a popular mountain resort, has relatively few permanent residents and, instead, is a community of part-time residents and vacationers.

Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Rancho Cucamonga, 2000

Rancho Cucamonga, Race and Ethnicity, 2000	
White	66.0%
Hispanic	27.0%
Asian	6.0%
Black/African-American	7.9%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7%
Person reporting two or more races	5.4%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts, 2009)

Chaffey College

Chaffey College, originally founded as a private college, became one of California's first public junior colleges in 1916. Initially a department within the Chaffey Union High School District, the junior college articulated dual purposes offering both academic coursework as well as occupational courses preparing students to work in the local agricultural economy (Chaffey Community College District [CCCD], 2009). Currently offering comprehensive programs, Chaffey's mission is to "improve lives within the diverse communities it serves through equal access to quality, learning-centered occupational, transfer, general education, and foundation programs" (CCCD, 2009). Chaffey's main campus sits on 200-acres at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains in the city of Rancho Cucamonga. The district has satellite campuses in both Fontana and Chino, and the college reaches additional students through comprehensive online course offerings.

According to the 2008 Accountability Reporting of Community Colleges (ARCC), Chaffey College had an unduplicated headcount of 27,726 and 14,063 full-time equivalent students in 2006–2007. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) shows Chaffey College's fall 2007 enrollment at 18,736 students. Of these students, 66.5% were enrolled part-time and 33.5% enrolled full-time (National Center for Education Statistics). The ARCC report shows Chaffey College had a 60.8% course completion rate for basic skills classes during the 2006–2007 academic year and a persistence rate of 64.3% from Fall 2005 to Fall 2006. From 2001–2002 to 2006–2007, 47.2% of first-time Chaffey College students had transferred to a four-year institution, attained transfer status, or completed a degree or certificate program within six years.

Consistent with community college enrollments across the state, Chaffey College

enrolls a large percentage of minority students, with Latino/Hispanic students accounting for nearly 42% of the overall campus student population (Table 2).

Table 2: Chaffey College Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Ethnicity	%
White	27.0%
Hispanic	41.9%
Asian	6.1%
Black/African-American	12.2%
Filipino	3.1%
Pacific Islander	0.6%
Native American	0.6%
Other, non-White	1.7%
Decline to state/Unknown	6.7%

(Source: California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 106)

One staff member suggested that Chaffey College enrolls a significant population from outside district boundaries, students who opt to come to Chaffey because of its strong academic reputation.

They're not your average student. When they catch the bus—two, three, or four buses—whatever it takes from their communities to get here...and they come up to 'Harvard on the Hill,' which is what they refer to it [as] because it's not their community.

This influx of students from neighboring communities may help, in part, to explain the demographic composition of the Chaffey campus.

Promising Practice: The Success Centers

The Success Centers at Chaffey College are both centralized and faculty-led and supported supplemental instruction programs. The spirit in which the institution embraces the centers is reflected in the name—Success Center. Their overarching goal, to help all students succeed by staying in college and progressing through coursework, is evident.

The district has established seven Success Centers: four on the main campus, two on the Chino campus and one in Fontana. The four Success Centers on the main campus focus on separate content areas including mathematics, writing/composition, language, and multidisciplinary which supports the sciences and social sciences/humanities courses not served by the other centers. Directed and coordinated by faculty “Instructional Specialists,” the centers work with academic department faculty to plan instructional activities that range from direct instruction, to tutoring, and to workshops. Providing students with access to additional instruction in the content areas and skill development as well as space to collaborate with other students, the centers have also become an integral part of student services.

Respondents asserted that 45% of Chaffey’s students utilize Success Center opportunities, an indication of the widespread needs of the student body according to a campus institutional researcher. While pleased by the accomplishments of the centers and the level of student use, one administrator underscored the college’s commitment to the purpose of the centers stating, “there’s another 50% [of the student population] out there that still needs the service.” The Success Centers are a critical piece of Chaffey College’s focus of addressing the basic skills and foundational educational issues of its entire student population. While data indicate that ecological factors, particularly finances and demographics, influence the nature and maintenance of the program, historical-cultural forces and organizational features exert considerable influence on the overall functioning of the Success Centers and their positive impact on student achievement.

Analyses

Ecological Analysis

Success Centers at Chaffey College are largely influenced by two external factors: funding and student demographics. Administrators, faculty, and support staff suggest that state and federal funding can be seen to both help and hinder the college in general, and the Success Centers in particular. One faculty member lamented the limitations placed on Chaffey College by the [low] level of funding they receive from the State of California.

[W]e don’t have as much money as the UCs or Cal States, not by a long shot...I think our institution spends approximately \$3,800–4,000 per full-time student. My understanding is it’s a lot, lot more at the UC[s] and the Cal State[s]...And we don’t have as much money as any of the other[s]...Not just higher education any other part of the education system in California, at least. K through 12, they receive almost double what we receive per student.

Determined, in part, by the state’s higher education ‘compact,’ the Legislative Analyst’s Office shows that California’s higher education system³ receives approximately 12 percent of the state’s annual general fund budget with student fees, local property taxes, and federal/other funds augmenting total funding (Boilard, Simbol, & Kuhn, 2005). The 110-campus California community college system, which serves over 1.6 million full- and part-time students annually (IPEDS), receives differentiated funding with per-student rates for enrollments in noncredit bearing classes

³ The state’s system of public higher education involves three “segments”: The University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), and California Community Colleges (CCC). It also includes Hastings College of the Law, the California Student Aid Commission (SAC), and the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC).

approximately one-half of that for enrollments in credit bearing classes (Boilard et al., 2005, p. 18). The limits and indeed the relative reductions of state funding levels at Chaffey College means, as one faculty member stated, the college must function in a “much more cost-efficient” manner. Additionally, economic constraints increase reliance on additional funding sources and guide the institution’s approach to distributing such funds.

The Success Centers were initially funded, in large part, by Partnership for Excellence grant funds, which were intended to “significantly expand the contribution of the community colleges to the social and economic success of California” (California Community College Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO], 1999). However, once that program expired, the college assumed the fiduciary responsibility for the centers from district funds based on full-time equivalent enrollments. Discussing the Partnership for Excellence funds, one administrator focused on the overall flexibility of the program for colleges to design meaningful support systems for community college students.

[The] Partnership for Excellence was...a windfall of sorts, meant to support success and retention among community college students, and pretty much colleges up and down the state could do whatever they wanted with the money...We ended up spending all of our Partnership for Excellence money on [the Success Centers].

The key to Chaffey College’s accomplishments with the Success Centers has been their approach to allocating and expending Partnership supplemental funds. Typically, claimed one respondent, the distribution of grant and other external funding is fragmented, similar to “being pecked to death by a duck: everyone gets their little piece and at the end of it you really have nothing to show.” In contrast, Chaffey’s approach has been highly focused and consistent, and leadership has refrained from dividing funds in

an attempt to support multiple projects. Instead, administrators report that the college’s Vice-President was a “stickler,” insisting that funds be focused on one major project that would support all students and improve outcomes at the college. One administrator described the institution as united and focused when allocating supplemental funds indicating “we’re trying to make that...the norm that when we get these extra pots of money...that it really goes to support the goals of the institution and...the goals of what the Success Centers are designed to do.” While maintaining an uncompromising focus on serving students via the Success Centers, administrators are simultaneously cautious about being dependent on auxiliary funding sources—sources that they know may vanish should state priorities or budget capacities change. One administrator indicated a resistance to utilizing grant funds because of their tenuous nature.

[T]wo years down the line, or five years down the line, when that grant money disappears, I don’t want to be having a bake sale and a car wash to make sure students should get what they should get free.

With these salient concerns, Chaffey College administrators and faculty have made a commitment to students and the Success Centers to ensure longevity of the programs, indicating that in the absence of supplemental funding the majority of the financial burden would be assumed by the college and the Chaffey Community College District.

With one administrator estimating the overall costs to the district at “about three and a half million dollars [annually],” viewing the Success Centers purely from the perspective of economic outflow raises budget liability concerns. Yet, the Dean of Instructional Support acknowledged that the college recoups approximately 40% of overall costs from “initial positive attendance and both weekly student contact hours and noncredit positive attendance,” and stresses that it is frequently

difficult “to see the way that success and retention also creates revenue for the college.” Robust student persistence data, as shown in Table 3, punctuates respondents’ assertions of how Success Center programs trigger an increase in state revenues linked to enrollments⁴ as well as help maintain an elevated level in [non-refunded] student fees.

Table 3: Chaffey College Persistence Rate⁵

Student Persistence by Year			
Year	Fall 2003 to Fall 2004	Fall 2004 to Fall 2005	Fall 2005 to Fall 2006
Persistence Rate	67%	64%	64%

(Source: California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2008, p. 103)

Alert to the prospect that the high cost of the Success Centers may cause tension among campus departments not receiving allocations from Partnership funds, a concerted effort has been made to develop a college-wide culture of support for the goals and objectives of the institution and the Success Centers. These efforts have led to a collective commitment to the centers irrespective of their cost and, in turn, have moderated any possible negative influence that may have otherwise begun to permeate the college.

Another environmental feature affecting Chaffey College is student demographics. District research shows that, similar to community college students across the state, a large percentage of Chaffey’s students are underprepared for college level

⁴ The state does not employ an explicit marginal cost formula to fund enrollment growth at the community colleges. Instead, the state funds enrollment growth for the CCC system by increasing the prior year’s total enrollment funding by a specific percentage (Boilard, Simbol, & Kuhn, 2005, p. 18).

⁵ Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics show that just 50% of first-time community college students persist to the second year, indicating Chaffey’s persistence rates are well above average.

coursework (Cohen & Braver, 2003; Dougherty, 2001; McDonough, 1997; McIntosh & Rouse, 2009; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen & Person, 2006). According to McIntosh and Rouse, “61% of students who begin at two-year colleges take at least one remedial course while in college, with a full quarter taking two or more remedial courses” as compared with the 70% of students beginning higher education at four-year institutions who take no remedial coursework (p. 5).

One administrator indicated that “98% of our students are underprepared in at least one skill area,” and other administrators and faculty asserted that “70% or more come in with deficiencies in all three [critical content/skill areas]: reading, math, and English.” In response to these student needs, the Success Centers have been designed to offer opportunities for additional instruction and support to all students. The design of the Success Centers gives students an option to receive help as opposed to seek support from tutoring centers that can be “very stigmatizing” as those services, according to respondents, are typically designated for failing or struggling students. Instead, one administrator explained that the overarching goal was to “design things through the Success Center that try to prevent students from failing in the first place...And that transfer students as well as foundation-level students would find support there; occupational students find support there.” In this way, the culture of “success” at Chaffey is maintained as the needs of all students are met.

The intent of the Success Centers highlights that administrators, faculty, and support staff are to help prevent students from failing courses and ultimately withdrawing from college. Therefore, they collaborate with other Chaffey College programs in order to connect with underrepresented and underprepared students. The Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS) office, for example, has a history of active recruitment in

Latino communities surrounding Chaffey College. One staff member explained, “[W]e’d go out to community centers. We’d go out to agencies...where people are primarily Spanish speaking...and/or very low socio-economic areas, especially in a high school, poorer high school areas where a lot of them are in certain parts of town and are not competitive.” The students they recruit are introduced to and required to use the Success Centers as part of the EOPS guidance class and orientation. Specifically, the guidance class syllabus requires each student to work in the Success Centers five times during the term, completing activities that prompt student reflection on what they learned from their coursework and Success Center experiences.

Two additional campus programs, Opening Doors to Excellence and Smart Start, provide services for struggling students as well as students whose self-reported information indicate they are likely to struggle. As well, these programs deliberately connect students to the Success Centers. According to one member of the support staff, the Opening Doors to Excellence program works with “probationary students” who are on their “last step prior to being dismissed from the institution.” As part of the program, these students are “allowed to have immunity from dismissal for one year as a benefit for participating in the program and for increasing their awareness of the Success Centers.” Given the ability of the Success Center to retain students in college, fostering this connection between students likely to stop-out or drop-out and the Success Centers’ services is a key element in meeting institutional goals of serving students as well as maintaining funding for the program generated by course enrollments.

According to Success Center staff, the Smart Start program provides a pathway for incoming “students who are identified as being at-risk based on assessment/placement test results and their self-reported information from

high school.” These students, who scored low on placement assessments and claimed to struggle in secondary education, are also connected with the Success Centers in an effort to offer them academic support that helps them access and keep pace with class content as soon as they enroll.

So they’re going to be in the Success Center working on their reading, their writing, their math, or the multidisciplinary. They could be...in...a psychology class and then you know with a psychology tutor there, whatever, you know. The idea is to provide for them the support that they need to be successful so we kind of break down some of those barriers, you know, sometimes that are mental more than anything else.
(Chaffey Faculty Member)

Integrated with the services of the Success Centers, these two campus programs are additional examples of college efforts to meet students’ academic needs. Opening Doors to Excellence and Smart Start support staff were hesitant to discuss the presence of an achievement gap. Instead, one support staff asserted that “no single ethnic group...stands as a reigning majority. So our constituency is reflected in the populations that end up on probation and dismissal. The [groups] are probably pretty equal in terms of representation.”

Chaffey faculty and staff indicated that students representing all campus demographic groups are struggling; that the needs are “pretty equal” across groups and that the Success Centers are equally available to all students. Although campus demographics are largely Hispanic (Chancellor’s Office California Community College, ARCC, 2008, p. 106), respondents did not signal Latinos/Hispanics out as the only students whose skills put them at risk. Instead, interviews reflected the cultural values at Chaffey that orient college personnel toward a uniform view of helping and supporting all students.

Clearly, environmental features have had considerable influence on the establishment and maintenance of the Success Centers at Chaffey College, particularly the availability of supplemental funding and its use to meet the needs of the student body. Additionally, deeply embedded historical, cultural, and structural supports have a broad influence on the Success Centers as a promising practice.

Historical-Cultural Analysis

The Success Centers have a decade-long history at Chaffey College, emerging from the culture of concern for student success that permeates the institution. Specifically, leadership acknowledged that the Success Centers were conceived after internal research raised concerns regarding student completion and retention rates and a campus-wide distrust in the existing basic skills program had created an atmosphere of “despair” among campus constituents. According to one administrator, faculty and support staff realized, in part from their own anecdotal research, that an overwhelming majority of students were underprepared in at least one skill level and that the college was not “really doing the job that we should be doing.” Activity in the larger community college context, which one administrator referred to as “the basic skills transformation of the late 90s,” provided Chaffey with external pressure to examine their existing basic skills structure. Thus, a visiting evaluation team was brought in to assess the [basic skills] program.

The team found vast duplication of coursework between the basic skills programs and the main academic departments, as well as an overarching sense of confusion among students and faculty. One administrator remembered realizing that “there was duplication, students couldn’t figure out what class to go to, there was tutoring all over the place...” Another administrator agreed and

offered an explanation for why such duplication occurred.

[O]ur former model was not working for us and we’d have these kind of two parallel universes where there was a basic skills model and there was a basic skills English and basic skills reading and basic skills math; and then there were the disciplines that existed simultaneously over here, which also had foundation-level courses.

The systematic assessment of existing programs, while often politically sensitive, can have significant positive influence on the restructuring of programs and policies (Weiss, 1998). Yet, in order to “remedy program failings and capitalize on program strengths...evaluation findings have to be accepted as accurate and useful” (Weiss, 1998, p. 324). The intellectual openness of Chaffey administrators and faculty, coupled with a sincere desire to support students, made response to the assessment findings and subsequent large-scale shift in practice possible.

Simultaneously, Chaffey received a large “windfall” of money from The Partnership for Excellence, a supplemental state program administered through the California Community College Chancellor’s Office aimed to support efforts to, as one administrator stated, promote “success and retention among community college students.” Partnership funds provided Chaffey with the unique opportunity to design and launch the Success Centers. Rather than distribute funds across a broad spectrum of programs, an administrator explained that Vice President Don Berz “garnered all the Partnership for Excellence monies,” and was a “stickler for holding on to all of that money until they had the plan for the Success Centers worked out and gelled and then they used all that money to fund it and...get them up and running.” Another administrator agreed, asserting that Vice President Berz “was really the person who looked at basic skills as an issue that he thought

we needed to take on.” Berz, in collaboration with the Dean of Language Arts, Wayne Hubert, spearheaded the creation of the Basic Skills Transformation Task Force, which brought in key faculty and student services personnel to discuss and lead the way to a new basic skills structure.

While Berz was characterized by one support staff member as very “persuasive” and even a “tyrant,” what really made this task force effective were the individuals he recruited to participate.

[T]he people who were on the committee were well-connected to the college community...We could go out to our respective constituents and plug it...And what we did, what we initially did was make sure that all of us were responsible as individuals at the table to go back to our constituents and gather information.

Selection of these “well-connected” individuals increased the task force’s ability to build support for restructuring the basic skills program at Chaffey College. Consistent with the literature on organizational change, the kind of “re-orientation” undertaken at Chaffey College required campus leaders to spend “time to shape the change, build coalitions, and empower individuals to be effective...[while reshaping] core values in service to the revised strategy” (Nadler & Tushman, 1990, p. 280).

The Success Centers were the outcome of this campus-wide, basic skills re-orientation. At one point, recalls an administrator, a number of college personnel reached a collective realization that they needed “to blow this up and start over”; they understood that profound change was needed as opposed to basic restructuring, which paved the road for the envisioning of basic skills programs at Chaffey.

We moved everything back into the discipline, where it belonged...and got rid of this old basic skills model. So if it was English it went back into English. If it was reading it went into reading. If it was math

it went to math. We restructured everything; we renumbered everything; we eliminated duplication. We rewrote seventy five courses in a year...We implemented assessment and started a road of mandatory replacement in one year.

The outcome of Chaffey’s re-orientation was the Success Center model. Basic skills courses were aligned with disciplinary course structures and tutoring moved from peripheral areas to the centralized centers. All classes and student services funneled students in need of supplemental instruction or basic skills development to the Success Centers. This feature is unique to Chaffey College, distinguishing it from the typical array of support services “designed to be accessible to all students, [but found to be overwhelmingly utilized by] students who come from more advantaged family and academic backgrounds” (Mechur, Karp, O’Gara, & Hughes, as cited in McIntosh & Rouse, 2009, p. 16).

In time, services of the Success Centers were incorporated into course requirements, asking students to work a specific number of hours in the Success Centers each quarter. One reading instructor stated that her current syllabus instructs students “to fulfill a 15-hour requirement per semester,” but also indicated that “before that they had 30 hours.” An English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor indicated that his courses incorporated similar requirements, asserting “students in my pronunciation classes have to come to the Success Center for a minimum number of hours each semester—currently it’s 14 hours, it’s probably a little bit too much.” Another language instructor also emphasized that 14 hours per semester might be “a little much” and explained that the language departments were working with the Success Centers to decrease that requirement to 10 hours each term.

We think that we can do the same, have the same success with fewer hours if we have very directed learning going on. [Be]cause

14 hours, sometimes, they get a little restless and they find it a little bit difficult; because our students are community college students. They have jobs. They have families. They're busy...So we think that it's going to be better for them...if they have 10.

Similarly, a member of the English faculty indicated they had “eliminated the 14 hour requirement and turned it into a five hour requirement,” making those five hours more “intensive.” Over time, reading, language, and English faculty have collectively realized that their original hour requirements were potentially arbitrary and wasteful, and they have since reduced, or are in the process of reducing, those requirements while designing activities that maximize how student effort is utilized in the Success Centers.

In the wake of the re-organizing process of the basic skills program at Chaffey College is the legacy of passion and support for the Success Centers. As a member of the institutional research staff emphasized, Vice President Berz assumed that providing a more coherent and focused basic skills program was a “moral imperative.” His passion set the tone for a palpable culture of support for students and the Success Centers that continues in three primary ways: a commitment to internal financial support of the Success Centers; a campus-wide refusal to use the term “basic skills”; and, a commitment to relying upon research to improve the Success Centers and close the achievement gap.

It would be misleading, however, to claim that there was a single champion of the Success Centers. Data indicate that the campus culture is such that nearly all administrators, faculty, and support staff defend and support the Success Centers, a commitment most evident in the financial backing the centers receive from within Chaffey College. While initially funded with supplemental funds, faculty and staff members indicated they are confident the college would incorporate the

Success Centers’ budget into the overall college budget if necessary. One [faculty] Instructional Specialist spoke confidently, indicating that “all of us are of the same mind of not trying to seek soft money, not going out for grants. This is the responsibility of the college to fund these programs and that’s what we do.” Another Instructional Specialist recalled the response of campus representatives during a committee meeting, illustrating the college’s level of commitment to the Success Centers.

[S]omeone had presented that the Success Centers needed some supplemental funding from that pot of money and...it went to the committee of about 50 people representative of across campus. Administrators and faculty, and I think I was the only Instructional Specialist there, and I didn't even have to say anything really. So many faculty from all over the place just were like “Yes! We have to support the Success Centers!”

The response of faculty to securing the continuance of the Success Centers was immediate and urgent, which indicated the strength of support experienced by these centers at Chaffey. This seemed to be a case where the depth of the moral imperative to provide all students with the tools they need to “succeed” in their coursework surpasses concern for individual and departmental financial issues.

Administrators, faculty, and support staff have consciously chosen not to accept the use of the term “basic skills” when describing the Success Centers, seeing it as a derogatory term that can marginalize students. One faculty member, an Instructional Specialist, indicated this orientation was not limited to those working directly with the Success Centers, but was consistent across the institution.

I mean basic skills, for a number of years [has not been] a part of the culture... We didn't talk basic skills... We didn't use that language. Recently, in a board policy the word “remediation” showed up and

somebody in the faculty, not [just] one of us, said “You know what? That’s not language that we use on our campus,” and it was taken out of the board policy. And so that’s been a really important thing for that de-marginalization of students.

College actors as a whole are uncomfortable with potentially stigmatizing messages offered by the use of terms such as basic skills or remediation. Fairclough (2001) argues that, for the most part, there has been inadequate attention and sensitivity to language and the power it has on individuals and groups, and contends that consciousness of language is a first step in recognizing “how language contributes to the domination of some people by others” (p. 193). That the Chaffey community has made this commitment to eliminate biasing language from their discourse patterns deserves recognition.

Finally, personnel at Chaffey College are committed to an intellectual culture, one that utilizes research as a means of understanding students, their use of and achievements attributable, in part, to the Success Centers. Research, according to a member of the institutional research staff, has consistently been an integral part of developing and running the Success Centers because leadership wanted authentic data that could “inform our decisions later on in the process.” One administrator elaborated, suggesting that a secondary rationale for a research component that “was built in up front” was related to funding.

[W]e did that with the promise [from] the district [that] if there were results, [the district] would be prepared to provide the dollars that we would need to follow once that [original source of] money dried up, which it inevitably did.

According to the research staff, the Institutional Research Office was incorporated into plans for the Success Center in order to develop a manageable system with which to track students and their use of the centers.

[We designed a] tracking mechanism so we could identify why students were there and what sections they were there for...So we could do research later on and connect it back to their, the student and the grade in the course they were taking.

Evidence from research remains a central component of the Success Center culture and the research office consistently posts information online to provide instructional specialists, coordinators, and administrators access to a variety of information that helps them plan or adjust programs. An institutional researcher stated, “[W]e put all kinds of...success information on there. We put information by subject in terms of hours used, days, all kinds of things. And they look at those to help make decisions.” As noted in faculty comments, the prominent role of research contributes to adjustments many departments have made and continue to make related to required student use of the Success Centers.

The history of the Success Centers and the campus-wide culture that has developed from that history illustrate a unified focus on serving all students and providing them with the support systems necessary for their continual progress through college coursework. Cross campus, cross curricular support for the centers and for the centers’ approach ensures consistency for students regardless of the academic discipline.

Organizational Analysis

In contrast to the fractured and disconnected collection of basic skills classes and tutoring programs once found at Chaffey College, the design of the Success Centers places them at the center of the organization. From a curricular standpoint, their role is pivotal—working in tandem with academic departments and individual faculty to support student learning. From a human resources perspective, the Success Center is seen as the center of the campus: “These are not

marginalized programs. I mean, in a lot of ways I think they're one of, if not the central hub of the campus culture. Especially for students and, also, for faculty," stated an Instructional Specialist. Thus, the Success Centers are understood to be unifying instructional centers where all academic departments and student service groups can collaborate to meet academic, intellectual, and social needs of the students.

Another important structural facet of the Success Centers is the organization of power. All Success Centers report directly to the Dean of Instructional Support. One administrator explained that the only exception is the Math Success Center, which is not yet fully invested in the culture of transformation that permeated the rest of the college; organizational isolation is perhaps both a cause and a result of that reluctance.

[The Math Success Center] hasn't made as many significant changes, you know, their culture is a little different...and, I think they're starting to make some inroads in that transition, but, yeah, the changes are slower there. They're much more dissimilar from us than they are similar...They're the only Success Center that doesn't report to the Dean of Instructional Support.

The independent nature of the Mathematics Department from the larger Success Centers' culture is evident in that instructors do not require students to complete learning assignments or seek support in the center. Instead, the Success Centers are merely advertised as a possible resource for students in their course syllabi. In spite of the exception of the Math Success Center, there is a traditional organizational hierarchy where the majority of Success Centers operate under one administrative figure. However, this structural hierarchy also enables the faculty to maintain majority of control over the activities of the Success Centers. The leaders of each Success Center, called Instructional Specialists, hold full faculty status. Data suggest that Instructional

Specialists are the critical axis for the programs. During a focus group interview, multiple Instructional Specialists indicated that they are given relative autonomy over the Success Centers, especially regarding curriculum and academic planning, hiring, and training of personnel.

But overall, I know we're scheduling the instructors in the center as well as the tutors and scheduling workshops and study groups and monitoring, helping to facilitate the creation and implementation of Directed Learning Activities and other resources in the centers.

Recruiting, hiring, training tutors; training adjunct faculty. Depending on the setting, we design workshops, we deliver workshops; we train adjunct faculty members to deliver the same workshops.

A lot of intervention with students coming in with trouble, academic problems. They'll come in and we work in conjunction with all of the departments as well as counseling...

Although the Deans hold responsibility for financial resources, the lines of communication between Instruction Specialists and the Deans are fluid and straightforward. Recounting a circumstance where additional funding for faculty pay was needed, one Instructional Specialist remembered a simple electronic mail message to the Deans solved the problem: "I sent an e-mail to [the Deans] and said 'This is the circumstance,' and they're like 'Hey you do what you need to do, we'll find the money.'" While full oversight of center funding may not be under the purview of the Instructional Specialists, the Deans place trust in their judgments and offer their support in finding the money to meet the needs of the Success Centers.

Instructional Specialists are active at building and maintaining relationships and support across campus. The most crucial piece of this aspect of their job is collaborating with

faculty from various academic departments. This relationship manifests itself in several ways—working with individual faculty members to plan Success Center activities, coordinating schedules and curriculum, and reviewing research findings.

And a big part of what we do is we have to connect with the instructors in different disciplines to help them understand the resources of the Success Centers and how to utilize them with our students and working with them and designing materials or activities that would benefit their students. So we do a lot of that...[I]f they have specific needs for individual students or for their whole class, we work with them on developing things that would work for them. (Chaffey Instructional Specialist)

In other cases, the Instructional Specialists may attend various department meetings to discuss, plan, and coordinate with an entire department of faculty members. One faculty member from the Spanish department stressed the importance of communicating and planning with her Instructional Specialist, or “coordinator.”

Ours is an interesting case because Cindy is the coordinator of the center and she is our coordinator for Spanish. So, at our meetings, at our department meetings, inevitably we talk about department issues but we do talk a lot about the lab. And that’s because she’s our coordinator. See if other people have coordinators who aren’t involved with the lab, I don’t know how they would communicate.

Regardless of how interaction occurs between Instructional Specialists and academic faculty, nearly all faculty respondents stressed the importance of such communication to the operation of the program and the promotion of

the Success Center culture. Furthermore, data show this communication is an intentional part of the structural design. “[T]his program is going to serve you and your department will benefit from that. And so they’ve been structurally built that way and, you know, I think that’s what gets that culture moving,” explained one Instructional Specialist.

Instructional Specialists also participate in various planning committees and campus governance groups, broadening their sphere of influence and their ability to maintain a culture of understanding and support for the centers.

We now have two representatives on the faculty senate; we have two representatives on the union; we have two representatives on the curriculum committee...And so, we’re visible in all those places despite the fact that we only have six full-time faculty members in our school.

The Instructional Specialists exert considerable effort to maintain relationships with individuals and groups beyond the Success Centers and, consequently, their role within the larger organizational structure has been solidified. Furthermore, their contributions to the campus community serve to advance the Success Centers’ central positions on campus, important in fostering connections between the Success Centers and students.

All of the decisions are made at the faculty level. [T]hese are faculty members who really care about the students, who are passionate about their learning and their success. And the students see that and the students sense that there’s a lot of faculty involvement in the centers and it’s not just an independent center run by us, but is actually a cooperation amongst all the instructors. (Chaffey Instructional Specialist)

Table 4: Success Centers and Student Success by First-Time College Students, Gender, and Ethnicity, 2004-2005

Students	Success						Effect Size	Average % Gain
	Did Not Use SC			Used SC				
	#	N	%	#	N	%		
All	25,897	43,391	59.7	12,553	17,026	73.7	.29	11
First-Time	3,181	6,266	50.8	1,628	2,269	71.7	.42	16
Male	9,885	17,487	56.5	4,197	5,848	71.8	.31	12
Female	15,862	25,649	61.8	8,296	11,090	74.8	.27	10
African-American	2,480	5,109	48.5	1,541	2,290	67.3	.38	15
Asian	1,596	2,339	68.2	994	1,198	83.0	.33	13
Caucasian	9,472	14,501	65.3	2,888	3,559	81.1	.34	14
Filipino	776	1,204	64.5	358	456	78.5	.30	12
Hispanic	9,629	17,080	56.4	5,997	8,501	70.5	.29	11
Native American	154	300	51.3	49	82	59.8	.17	6
Pacific Islander	99	201	49.3	34	51	66.7	.35	14

(Notes: Source= Chaffey College, 2008, p. 1; # refers to students who were successful in courses, N refers to all students recording a grade, and %= #/N)

This influential role of faculty, presenting a program area in the institution, suggests that strong programs may be in part the consequence of faculty power in the organization (Mintzberg, 1983).

The unique organizational structure of Chaffey College and the Success Centers emphasizes collaboration across departments and disciplines at the faculty level. Administrators, while clearly invested in the success of the centers, place trust in the Instructional Specialists to run the centers while they focus on current and longitudinal budget issues and maintaining support for the centers from district-level administration.

Conclusions

Environmental, historical, cultural, and organizational features of the Success Centers at Chaffey College are deliberately interwoven to ensure students have the opportunity to be “successful” regardless of their background and prior levels of education. Defining success as staying in college (persistence) and progressing through coursework with passing grades, Chaffey College is committed to the operation of the Success Centers in the face of the substantial financial burden the centers place on the college’s budget.

Evidence gathered by Chaffey’s Office of Institutional Research suggests that the Success Centers have positive influences on student outcomes. Table 4, above, compares the number of students who were successful in courses (#) with the total number of students enrolled (N), and compares outcomes for students who used the Success Centers and those who did not. These data indicate that Chaffey College students who use the Success Centers receive higher grades in coursework than those who do not.

Chaffey’s Office of Institutional Research indicates that “an effect size of .20 can be considered small, an effect size of .50 can be considered medium, and an effect size of .80 can be considered large” (Chaffey College, 2008, p. 1). As evident in the table above, the majority of effect sizes for the individual sub-groups studied are considered small to medium. While first-time students (.42) and African-American students (.38) benefited the most, the Success Centers have a small effect as well on students from all backgrounds.⁶

⁶ It is important to note, however, that these data do not include the Math Success Centers. This omission underscores the findings from interviews that show the Mathematics Department continues to operate independently from the centralized Success Center model. Administrators, faculty, and support staff

Career Education and the Fashion Program at Los Angeles Trade and Technical College



Introduction

Los Angeles Community

Downtown Los Angeles (LA) is a tightly knit collection of specialized “neighborhoods” bordered by the Golden State, Harbor and Santa Monica freeways. From Civic Center to the Arts District, Bunker Hill to Little Tokyo, the Jewelry District to South Park, the downtown neighborhoods are in the midst of a cultural renaissance (LA Fashion District, 2009). Locals and visitors alike know the downtown area as home to the LA Lakers and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; they know Olvera Street at historic El Pueblo as the birthplace of LA; and, they recognize Figueroa Boulevard and Flower Street from the silver screen. But, fashion buyers, designers, and stylists know downtown Los Angeles for its vibrant fashion district.

Spanning ninety blocks, the Los Angeles Fashion District is “the hub of the apparel

currently involved in the Success Center culture continue to work to minimize ideological barriers between the larger campus and the Math Department, but the reticence of the current Math Department faculty has led college officials to adopt an approach that focuses on recruiting new mathematics faculty into the culture.

industry on the West Coast” (LA Fashion District, 2009). A top destination for wholesale buyers, retail shoppers, designers, fashion students, and Hollywood stylists, the district is the destination of over 1.5 million people from all around the world who visit annually searching for textiles, apparel, accessories, and emerging designers who work in the area’s many design lofts (LA Fashion District).

In 2006, the population of the city of Los Angeles, including the central business district, was 3,849,378 with an average per capita income of \$20,671 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In calendar year 2000, the racial and ethnic composition of the city of Los Angeles area was predominantly composed of persons of a Hispanic or Latino origin (44.6%) with White persons of non-Hispanic/Latino origin being the second largest racial group (31.1%).

Table 5. Los Angeles City Community Demographics

Population (2006)	3,849,378
Education Level (2000)	
Percent high school graduates (persons 25+)	66.6%
Percent Bachelor’s Degree or higher (persons 25+)	25.5%
Race and Ethnicity (2000)	
White	46.9%
Hispanic or Latino origin ⁷	46.5%
Asian	10%
Black or African-American	11.2%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.8%
Households (2000)	1,337,706
Persons per household (2000)	2.83
Median household income (1999)	\$36,687
Per capita money income (1999)	\$20,671
Percent of person below poverty (1999)	22.1%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts, 2009)

⁷ Hispanic/Latino persons may also be reported under another racial/ethnic category.

Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is the largest community college district in the United States. Consisting of nine colleges, LACCD covers an area of more than 882 square miles. Founded in 1925, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC), located just two miles south of the Los Angeles Central Business district, is the oldest college in the district (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 34). Formerly the Frank Wiggins Trade School, LATTC's 25-acre campus has 12 major buildings as well as an athletic field and theatre enjoyed by the larger community. While LATTC offers Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degrees, nearly "two-thirds of its instructional facilities are devoted" to the 90 different occupational programs offered by the college (Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, 2009). Thirty-two percent of LATTC's service area lives at or below the federal poverty level, the highest percentage among all nine colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District. The population in the service area is also characterized by low high school completion rates: 55.2% of the adult population does not possess a high-school diploma or equivalency; 20.2% have between a 9th and 12th grade education; and, 35% have less than a 9th grade education (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008).

LATTC is a predominantly minority serving institution (94.5%), a reflection of the population in its surrounding area (ARCC, 2008). Based on the Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges (ARCC) report (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008), LATTC enrollment in 2006–2007 consisted of a total of 12,002 full-time equivalent students (FTES) with an annual unduplicated headcount of 25,519. The

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data reported the total student enrollment in fall 2007 at 13,194 with 71.8% part-time and 28.2% full-time attendance status (NCES, 2009). Table 6 provides LATTC student demographics for the 2006–2007 academic year.

The ARCC report indicates LATTC's annual course completion rate for credit vocational courses as 74.3% in the 2006–2007 academic year and, in 2004, the college posted an overall completion rate of 19.2% and a transfer rate of 15.2%. The overall persistence rate for LATTC in the fall 2005–2006 year was 54.3% and, LATTC was identified as the California community college that awards the most AA/AS degrees in the Family and Consumer Sciences disciplines (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008).

Table 6. LATTC Student Demographics

White	6.3%
Hispanic	50.9%
Asian	5.2%
Black/African-American	29.1%
Filipino	1.9%
Pacific Islander	0.3%
Native American	0.4%
Other, non-White	1.0%
Decline to state/Unknown	4.8%

(Source: California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 34)

Promising Practice: The Fashion Program

The Fashion Program at LATTC, situated just steps away from the heart of the Los Angeles garment district, is designed to train students for jobs in the local apparel industry. Students in the program have opportunities to receive clothing design training and to create original fashion but the program prides itself on providing students with thorough training on the technical aspects of garment construction. Course sequencing ensures that students build strong foundations in the essential areas of

⁸ Hispanic/Latino persons may also be reported under another racial/ethnic category.

pattern making, draping, and industry sewing techniques.

Offering daytime, evening and weekend instruction in all aspects of the apparel industry, the Fashion Program's long-standing success can be attributed to a unique combination of environmental/ecological, historical and organizational factors. Of particular note is the relationship with local industry enjoyed by the program.

Analyses

Ecological/Environmental Analysis

The growth and development of the City of Los Angeles circa the 1920s is an essential starting point for understanding the interplay between local ecological/environmental features and LATTTC's fashion program. During this period of growth in Los Angeles, the downtown area became an increasingly important area for commerce, including businesses associated with the apparel industry. The 1924 completion of the Hollywood subway line brought willing workers from the neighboring areas of Hollywood, Glendale, and the San Fernando Valley (LAist, 2009). Simultaneously, the local movie industry took hold and the stars under contract with Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 20th Century Fox, and Paramount—Valentino, Garbo, West, Pickford—instantly made Los Angeles a center of glamour, and, by extension, fashion (Seeing Stars, 2009). Thus, time and place have been, and continue to be, instrumental in the successful operations of LATTTC's Fashion Program.

Situated within the boundaries of the city's fashion district, the program's geographical location is critical in that it allows for the continuous integration of program administrators, faculty and students with industry leadership and production sites. Since the program's inception in 1925, the program and the industry have maintained a strong reciprocal relationship where, on the one hand,

the Fashion Program meets industry needs by supplying a constant stream of well-trained workers and, on the other, the industry provides expertise in the form of both curricular guidance and capable faculty. Data suggest that the success of this vocational program is due, in large part, to the considerable influence industry wields on program development and maintenance and subsequent employment of its graduates. Respondents describe the relationship between the program and the industry as "very supportive" in that various businesses in the industry not only hire students through the internship program, but also provide scholarships for students and other forms of intellectual, economic and material support. Such a relationship is consistent with scholarly research on effective vocational program practices (Rosenbaum, 2001).

While the Fashion Program is fully integrated with local industry, respondents assert it maintains a level of independence from the rest of the LATTTC campus. Data show that this disconnection from the larger college environment, however, does not affect the ability of the program to train students effectively and ensure subsequent industry employment.

Fashion Program faculty and staff consistently defined "success" primarily as industry employment. In this way, the structure of the program suggests that training and job attainment are more important than provisions for general education coursework and credentials. However, one faculty member did note that the program would like to incorporate more general "remedial" education coursework into program requirements, commenting that many students do not have the requisite basic mathematical skills for mastering technical aspects of the industry. The Chair of the Fashion Program emphasized this point.

There's few...[high school] vocational ed[ucation] programs; there's no home

ec[onomics] programs anymore...[Students are] coming in at a real deficit. Not to mention the fact that they have trouble adding two and two.... So that's another issue; that's another problem. The basic skills situation, even if we refer our students there, our students are still very focused on fashion. Unless it revolves around fashion, they aren't interested...[To finish the certificate they do not have to pass these other basic skills classes]... [B]ut to get their AA degree—which they are pretty good at doing—then they have to take the academic classes....[W]e are trying to bring English and math classes into this building. You know this is where they are comfortable, and it's their home here. And all the classes would revolve around fashion. So you're still going to give them the English essays to write but they are going to be around fashion and the research on fashion and the math, too. You know, they have to know extensive math to be successful at this. So if we can bring that math in here, teach it to them by yardage estimates, that sort of thing. We're going to give it a shot. And see if that will make a difference and try to get more of them to go through and get their AA degree.

Additionally, fashion program faculty are developing plans to reach out to high schools in the Los Angeles area in an effort to both encourage development of basic skills and connect students to the world of fashion and garment making by providing on-site instruction.

And we've been talking about here, maybe...an academy model. So the academy what they do is the classes actually come to them. And the classes are taught contextually. So that's what we're after here...[but] it hasn't been implemented yet. (LATTC Faculty Member)

Respondents saw future outreach and connections with high schools serving dual purposes in that they would simultaneously be

able to provide students with information about the fashion industry and specifically about the program at LATTC while building students' basic skills in an effort to ameliorate weaknesses demonstrated by current student cohorts. This effort, respondents believed, would serve to increase the Fashion Program's already strong connections to the local industry environment while reducing dependence on the LATTC campus departments that typically offer these developmental classes.

Strong community and industry connections appear to have made the program resilient, allowing it to maintain its presence even when threatened with budget cuts and termination. As faculty recounted, a previous college president substantially curtailed the program's funding over a period of several years. Although faculty recalled a high level of program stability under college leadership from 1976–1995, the rapid turnover of several subsequent college presidents left the Fashion Program, as well as other campus vocational programs, short on faculty and funds.

Four presidents served for short periods of time before Dr. Daniel Castro was appointed interim president. There is virtual unanimity that the period from 1995 to present has been a very difficult time for the College—'years of shifting sands.'

Documents show that this period of instability created ripple effects, affecting several central aspects of the college and correlated with a unified "vision" for the college, weak leadership, and divisions on campus that pitted academic programs against vocational programs, long-term faculty against newer faculty, day faculty against night faculty, and proponents of change against proponents of the *status quo*. Additionally, the majority of administration and staff interviewees in the Fashion Program at LATTC noted that one president made a serious effort to terminate the Fashion Program by reducing funding and support. In spite of setbacks associated with this period, however, the department has

persevered, continuing to train students in ways valued by the industry, ensuring that students leave with marketable skills.

Historical-Cultural Analysis

The Fashion Program at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (LATTC) is the longest running fashion school in greater Los Angeles, having offered training for nearly a century. Responding to market demand, the fashion program opened its doors in 1925, supported, in part, by stakeholders in the apparel industry in need of a competent workforce. The launch of the program marked the beginning of a long and “unique partnership between education and industry,” a program designed to prepare individuals to work in all facets of an ever-evolving fashion industry. According to the current program chair, the fashion program was the first program at the college, and the growing need for employees in the industry was the driving force in its inception.

[T]he apparel industry actually started the [fashion] program themselves. Because... in the early twenties they...were having trouble finding employees. So they came to the school and said we will equip you and employ your students if you can set up a program.

Although the vast majority of faculty and administrators made note of the Fashion Program’s long-standing history within the community, they provided no elaboration on how this history has contributed to the program and its success with closing the achievement gap. Instead, the frequent mentioning of this history appeared to be part of the “story” that “convey[s] the value and identity of the [program] to insiders and outsiders, thereby building confidence and support” for the program (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 259).

Data indicate that a major factor contributing to program effectiveness is the culture of success, a culture of shared assumptions about how best to serve students,

born from the “accumulated wisdom [of faculty] who came before” and “constantly renewed and re-created as newcomers” arrive (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 244). Current and former students, faculty, and administrative respondents consistently noted how faculty members exert effort “above and beyond” their typical teaching responsibilities to help students. Additionally, student interviewees provided strong evidence of how well they respond to faculty efforts.

I think it’s the instructors, the teachers. I think that’s what makes the program work. I think they have the correct teachers because they’ve been in the industry so they know what employers are going to look for, and I think that’s what they emphasize on. To give you the right tools so you have the right tools when looking for a job.

Faculty members were described by students as highly accessible and viewed as people with whom students develop meaningful student/mentor relationships.

Yeah, most of my teachers, the majority of them have become friends and mentors even though I’m not in their classes anymore, which is very helpful. Some of them have led to either jobs or internships or just like I can always go in with them.

Students also frequently noted that the availability of faculty was a dominant and positive characteristic of the program.

[T]he teachers are very accessible. Like, if I have a question about my garment and my teacher’s helping somebody else and I’m waiting and I have this question and I think it’s a simple question and I need an answer, I go to another room and I ask a different teacher, “What do you think about this?” My teachers not going to tell me, “Oh, just go ask your teacher.” If she’s free, she will help me and that’s so lovely.

I’m grateful for every day that I am here because the teachers do - they bust their - you know, they really do. Like I’ve seen

teachers not eat. I've seen teachers stay here 'till nine o'clock at night. Like they support you like you have no idea. So, I think, I'm very thankful to a lot of them and I know that they put in all their heart and soul. They want to see us succeed; they don't want to see us fail. So, I love this school.

This acknowledged, critical role of faculty in program functioning and in student outcomes is supported in the scholarly literature, although one segment of this literature argues that faculty performance is weak (Grubb, Worthen, Byrd, Webb, Badway, Case, et al., 1999) and another segment sees faculty work as essential to both institutional functioning and student attainment (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006).

Faculty asserted that their willingness to contribute extra time and effort is echoed by the students who are, in turn, increasingly motivated to stay after class to complete challenging projects. This student/instructor involvement was one of the most frequently noted positive aspects of the program. While faculty admitted the pace and additional time commitment can be burdensome they unanimously affirmed their joy in preparing students for successful careers in the fashion industry regardless of the rigor of their jobs. In recent research, Levin and Montero-Hernandez (2009) claim that this communal work ethic, a form of co-construction of student and organizational development, characterizes positive student outcomes.

Organizational Analysis

As the cultural analysis was punctuated by discussions of faculty/student involvement, an important organizational feature of the Fashion Program at LATTC is the internship program. Discussed frequently by faculty and administrative respondents, the internship program is mentioned in nearly every interview in highly positive terms. Organized single handedly by one full-time faculty member, an

administrator explained that internship opportunities are developed through personal contact with businesses in the fashion district.

What [the internship coordinator] has done—and this is a woman, again, coming out of the industry, being very familiar, knowing people, knowing who's around in the industry, having the contacts and connections...[She] took over probably about two, maybe three years ago. She was able to call in connections and actually place students to some degree in some kind of a job: answering phones, following someone around...But, as I've understood, some of those students have, through their internship, been able to develop a relationship with the employer. "Gee, when you finish, I'd sure love you to come back and keep working at my company."

Although outside of the parameters of the core curriculum, the internship program serves as a robust link between students and industry, offering the potential for future employment. Students may receive credit for the completion of the unpaid internships as well as valuable feedback from industry personnel. Industry constituents maintained they are grateful for the interns and, although they expressed some frustration with interns who convey a sense of entitlement, they asserted that they frequently offer paid positions to those students who make a good impression by approaching the internship with a positive attitude and an interest in experiential learning. Student respondents provided a somewhat less enthusiastic review of the internship program failing to cite the benefits frequently noted by administrators and stakeholders. Instead, students indicated that there was little to be gained from the experience because students were given the "dirty work," and other menial tasks. "Unfortunately," lamented one student respondent, "you're an intern; it's like being a temp. They're going to give you everything they don't want to do." Data show, however, that the internship program serves as a critical

conduit linking students to the apparel industry and future employment. Conversely, student respondents enthusiastically praised the annual fashion show and “Golden Thimble” contest, enjoying the opportunity to showcase their work. Serving as students’ final project, fashion show entries are judged by a panel of program faculty and staff joined by esteemed industry officials. Students consistently asserted that the show makes them feel “proud” of their work and of this unique component of the program, “Yeah, we feel proud and the push to do it better or something like that, because we want to do the show so bad. We’re so excited about it.”

The fashion show also serves as an opportunity to “introduce the student population to real work world situations” (LATTC, 2009). The format motivates students to invest themselves in their work and further connects students to the program.

Student support services provided within the program are another salient component contributing to student attainment. Students note their appreciation of the convenience of a registration system available directly through the program and how helpful program staff and faculty are in facilitating their movement through the required curricula.

Well, we have a definite support system [and] a lot of teachers and staff that are looking out for us. [T]hey do a lot to keep us in line and checking up on us, they do. They actually check up on us to see—you know Ms. Anderson will come by and she’ll pull people aside and say, “How’s it going in this class?” or “How are you getting along?”
(LATTC Student)

Institutional respondents recounted that fashion program students previously registered through the college registrar’s office but, as considerable obstacles with the system continued to slow students’ efficient movement through the coursework, the program opted to bring registration into the department. An additional benefit of this

change was the opportunity for students to interact with staff and faculty who knew the components of the program, leading to more personal relationships between program personnel and students. On-site program registration operated by the Fashion Program at LATTC has also facilitated students’ retention and program completion, as acknowledged by a staff member.

[The students] can just come to me and I do process their ‘Add’ and ‘Drop’ cards and they are happy about that because there’s no line. [I have] a personal connection with them...and they’re so comfortable asking me any question. In other words they would come and ask and I could just easily say, “Look at the schedule book. Read it.” But, you know, all information they ask me is in the schedule. “When is the last day to drop? When is the last day to add?” It’s all in the book, but they all come in, “Let’s ask Tesse.” Even the teachers, “Go ask Tesse.”

The overall structure of the program was also altered in the last decade due to campus and student preferences for shorter semesters. These modifications required department administrators to make a series of adjustments to the coursework as explained by a faculty member.

[T]he fact that we went from an 18 week semester to a 16 week semester... So to take two full weeks away from them... was really doing a disservice to them. Only we were sorely outvoted by the rest of the campus and community. So we needed to adjust our curriculum a bit. So what we did was go to some of our classes and took some of the stuff out of them. So that they’re still getting the basics that they need, but for those students who recognize the fact that they need more...we developed advanced classes for the students to supplement what they got in regular classes.

While faculty and administrators have made necessary adjustments to course

material, students report appreciating this change as it allows them to focus on one subject at a time and work every day on the same subject. Students noted that this new class structure increased their learning of the subject asserting that “it’s like you just get it in the most potent form and it works.” Student respondents contended that the current program structure allows them to cover coursework more thoroughly and remain focused on one project at a time, which then provides ample opportunity to master skills and become more competent garment makers. One student remarked, “[A]ll I can say about this program is that there’s so much to learn and, you know, I can focus on one thing or I can just take it all and just learn it all.”

Students also generally noted how the “environment” of the program facilitated their continuation and movement through the program. As the following students described, this environment includes the perception of a collaborative culture, the availability of supplies, and the actual physical layout of the fashion program classrooms.

I think what creates the environment is because this program or this school provides everything you need. It’s like no one gets mad because everyone has their own machine or the dress form or, you know, it’s just enough. And all those classes are together. If you don’t have a machine in this class, you can always ask another teacher to use it in another classroom. It’s like you get what you need in there. You don’t need to fight over it...

One thing I really like is the classrooms are connected each to other. So I can go anywhere I want to go to. Really accessible.

The program’s positive influence on student outcomes derives, at least in part, from the breadth and depth of faculty members’ industry related experience. The program requires faculty to have a minimum of 5 years of industry experience to be considered for

employment as instructors. In the Merchandising Department, faculty must have experience in manufacturing as well as in retail. These requirements contribute to the quality of training the students receive and serve to help the program curricula stay current, ensuring that program faculty have up-to-date knowledge and experience with industry trends and technological advances.

I mean some of my best teachers are some of the teachers who have actually been in the industry, not just teachers, I mean they’ve actually ran their own design houses and had their own lines. And here they are teaching me what they know, you know. And how to flip a piece of fabric and sew it and it looks finished. ‘Cause they know what it’s supposed to look like when it’s on the hanger. And so, in that aspect of it all, and sketching teacher who is an artist, who went to school for art. So she can show us, she was showing me, and other students how to create something and make it look very artistic, not just a sketch. It looks almost real. (LATTC Student)

Additionally, about 50% of the faculty in the Fashion Program are program graduates who have returned to the college, carrying with them the standards and culture that were instilled in them when they were program students years earlier.

The program’s emphasis on training students in the technical aspects of the fashion industry acts as a seminal organizational attribute contributing to the Fashion Program’s stellar reputation within the industry. Respondents noted that a primary asset students carry to the workforce is their knowledge and keen ability to apply the “nuts and bolts” of the fashion industry (pattern making, draping, grading, and sewing) to the creation of garments. Multiple participants discussed how a nearby private and costly fashion school⁹ focuses more on design and the

⁹ Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM)

“art” of making clothing, overlooking the technical aspects of garment making—an aspect heavily emphasized in the training received by LATTC Fashion Program students. LATTC staff asserted that students trained at the private institution often enroll in the LATTC fashion program because they recognize the need for better training.

And many people that I spoke with, like for instance, there are people who went to FIDM here in LA, they regret getting into debt for going there because after there, they ended up going to Trade Tech anyways because it's more technical.

Student respondents also noted that peers trained at more expensive “elite” colleges often decide to attend the Fashion Program at LATTC due to the strong technical education and their ability to translate that into employment.

Yeah, my sister was a graduate in this [LATTC Fashion] program... and she's...telling me how amazing Trade Tech is. All [her] co-workers, the ones that are good are from Trade Tech and the ones that are from other schools didn't survive in the company or something like that. And she's making good money.

A lot of them, in fact I would say that, on average, probably two to three people in every one of my classes has come from another institute...I think this school is known for mostly pattern makers... [I]f you were looking for a pattern maker, you're gonna choose the person who went to Los Angeles Trade Tech. ... [T]hey see like people from Los Angeles Trade Tech, they like technical designers, they're pattern makers, their graders, but we actually can do [it] all.

The education and training students receive at LATTC is highly valued in the industry and therefore leads to greater job opportunities and resiliency while on the job. Multiple respondents (faculty and industry officials)

noted the high level of students' technical skills upon completion of the program.

Conclusions

The ability of the Fashion Program at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College to retain, train and place students in industry jobs in the face of students' disadvantaged social and educational backgrounds can be attributed to the convergence of all three theoretical frameworks guiding the TPP project. The program's proximity to the local apparel industry coupled with its strong ties to individuals and businesses in the LA fashion district contributes to the quality of program curriculum, opportunities for experiential learning, and the continued viability of the program. The history and traditions that permeate the program continue to provide momentum and serve to maintain connections with the surrounding industry. Additionally, the organizational strategies of the program not only reduce the obstacles and ‘hoop jumping’ that students frequently encounter in the college setting but also facilitate persistence, program completion, and eventual job placement.

Although the Fashion Program is not solidly integrated with the larger college campus, functioning instead as an “island,” program faculty are working to advance strategies that allow current students to develop the full range of basic skills normally offered by other departments. They are also planning outreach that would encourage future students to gain a greater command of the requisite math and reading skills for a productive career in the fashion industry prior to enrolling in LATTC. While this disconnection from the larger institution has some drawbacks, the independence of the Fashion Program has allowed constituents to preserve the unique culture and program design that distinguish the program, provide the industry with a highly

trained work force and, ultimately, contribute to closing the achievement gap.

English as a Second Language at City College of San Francisco



Introduction

The city of San Francisco

The glistening bay, rolling hills, eclectic architecture, and famous landmarks, including the Golden Gate Bridge, make the cosmopolitan city of San Francisco, located on Northern California's Pacific Coast, a popular international tourist destination. The city has also historically attracted large numbers of new immigrants, especially those from Asia and the Pacific Rim. Data show, for example, that in 2007 nearly 26,000 persons in the San Francisco Bay area obtained naturalized citizen status (Rytina & Caldera, 2008).

San Francisco is the fourth most populous city in the state, and approximately 85% of San Francisco's 757,000 plus residents have earned a high school diploma and 50% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). 2005 per capita income exceeded \$43,000, placing it well above the state average (U.S. Census Bureau). The city has a majority-minority ethnic population, with Asian/Pacific Islanders accounting for 32% of the population, followed by Hispanic/Latinos (14%) and Black/African-Americans (6.8%); non-

Hispanic Whites account for under 50% of San Francisco's population (U.S. Census Bureau).

City College of San Francisco (CCSF)

City College of San Francisco has a 70-year history of serving as a "resource for the community" (City College of San Francisco [CCSF], 2008). In addition to the central main campus, a commitment to "reach out to all neighborhoods, ethnic populations, and economic segments of our service area" has led to the development of twelve neighborhood campuses as well as more than 100 community instructional sites dotted across the city. By many estimates, over one-third of the residents of San Francisco have taken classes at CCSF (Spurling, Seymour, & Chrisman, 2008), participating in academic transfer, contract education, career and technical education, continuing education, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (CCSF, n.d.). Documents show that the college offers courses in more than 50 academic programs and over 100 occupational disciplines.

According to the 2008 Accountability Reporting of Community Colleges (ARCC) from the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), City College of San Francisco had an unduplicated headcount of 47,003 and 36,404 full-time equivalent students in 2006–2007. According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the total student enrollment in fall 2007 was 47,411 with 81.5% enrolled part-time and 18.5% enrolled full-time (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Student enrollment was fairly evenly divided between credit and noncredit coursework (Spurling, Seymour, & Chrisman, 2008). Over 55% of CCSF students completed a degree, received a certificate, or transferred during the 2001–2002 to 2006–2007 academic years (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008). Credit basic skills students boasted a 63.6% completion rate while credit vocational students had a 76.2% completion rate in 2006–2007 (California

Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2008, p. 119). Table 7 outlines the ethnic make-up of the students attending CCSF in 2006–2007.

Table 7: CCSF Ethnicity of Students

Ethnicity of Students	2006–2007
Asian	29.8%
Black/African-American	8.6%
Filipino	7.3%
Hispanic	15.0%
Native American	0.6%
Other Non-White	3.1%
Pacific Islander	0.9%
White	27.4%
Unknown/Decline to State	7.5%

(Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2008, p. 118)

Promising Practice: English as a Second Language Program

Location, student and community focus, size, and high faculty involvement characterize the ESL Department at City College of San Francisco. The largest department at CCSF, over 700 ESL course sections, both credit bearing and noncredit bearing, are offered annually by more than 300 faculty (CCSF, n.d.). With a long-standing reputation for excellence, the department has been recognized by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) and the Met Life Foundation (Spurling, et al., 2008). ESL student enrollments reflect overall community demographics and, as seen in Table 8, students are predominately Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino.

The rich history, strong culture of service to the community, and environmental attributes of the surrounding city contribute to Community College of San Francisco’s ESL Department’s strength. Evidence shows that a broad range of organizational

structures and features distinguish the ESL department, making it a beacon of possibility and a program of accomplishment.

Analyses

Environmental/Ecological Analysis

As the second most densely populated major city in the U.S., San Francisco has over 17,000 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Traditionally, new residents have settled in ethnic enclaves, concentrating members of various language groups together. This clear demographic demarcation facilitated CCSF’s planning both for satellite campuses and for the ESL Department’s citywide course offerings. As one administrative respondent noted, however, there are shifts in where people work and live and when they are available to attend classes, a change that affects planning and enrollment.

[O]ur population in terms of the city demographics has changed so that it’s no longer as clearly identified.... The Asian students are everywhere. We’re getting more Spanish speakers at Chinatown because they’re working in Fisherman’s Wharf.

Working with the challenges of a shifting community, both the credit and noncredit programs now offer classes days, evenings, and weekends in order to accommodate students’ needs and schedules.

I think [it] is great [that we] have many campuses...So, if you don’t feel this is the right place for you, okay, I’ll go to the Mission Campus or I’ll go to Chinatown...And then you have [a

Table 8: Ethnicity of ESL Students by Program: 2005-2006

Ethnicity of Credit ESL Program		Ethnicity of Noncredit ESL Program	
Asian/Pacific Islander	69.7%	Asian/Pacific Islander	58.2%
Hispanic/Latino	17.0%	Hispanic/Latino	36.4%
Unknown	1.2%	Unknown	13.3%

(Source: Spurling, Seymour, & Chrisman, 2008)

variety of] classes...If you want to take a class on Sunday morning at 7 A.M., you can take a class. Or you work all week, there's a Saturday class or you can take a class at night. (CCSF Faculty Member)

The needs of local industries and institutions also affect the ESL Department. For example, when local hospitals and medical clinics are in need of orderlies, nurses' assistants and other personnel who are conversant in health-related English, the ESL program designs and offers related instruction.

Yet, enrollment and funding constraints limit the program's ability to provide a full range of vocational related classes. A faculty member explained these challenges.

[W]e tried it here with the restaurant program with teaching a restaurant class and the enrollment is not high enough. You know, that's another thing. They want our enrollment to be up around 20 and sometimes it's hard to get a class of 20. You might get a class of ten and then they don't look highly on that.

Respondents did not clarify if local industry provided supplemental funding for the specially designed classes that help to offset costs to the college. Low enrollment in noncredit bearing classes becomes burdensome for California community college districts because the state's funding structure allocates significantly less for noncredit bearing classes in comparison to credit bearing classes (Boilard, Simbol, & Kuhn, 2005).

Sacramento doesn't look too favorably on noncredit [classes]...[T]hey think of noncredit mostly as like luxury courses like taking painting, retired people taking languages or something. They don't think of it as serious, and ESL is, I think, pretty critical for the state.

As this campus coordinator implied, the composition of the state's higher education funding influences program decisions and the department's ability to meet the needs of the community. Administrative respondents

concurred, indicating that fluctuations in state funding as well as the uncertainty of grant and other non-formula funding pose a serious challenge for the program. The broader economy and local employment opportunities also have an effect on the ESL program. One campus coordinator asserted that the ebb and flow in enrollment can be attributed to wider ecological factors.

[W]hen the economy is good...our students all go and find a job, so it [enrollment] declines. So our enrollment, credit and noncredit, depends a lot on the political situation and the economical situation.

Maintaining a focus on meeting students' needs and community-building has guided the college and its ESL Department as they have grappled with other ecological issues. Early in CCSF's history administrative decisions, including financial ones, were based on this community focus. According to one administrator, "[The administration] used the funding to put classes at churches, at schools, storefronts, wherever" rather than purchasing property to build new facilities—an approach that has resulted in the establishment of over 100 community instructional sites located around San Francisco. The industry and community connections as well as state-controlled funding issues are among the ecological factors that influence the ESL program at CCSF. These factors inform the department's administrators and have some effect on program offerings; financial and enrollment uncertainties have not, however, hampered the ESL program's focus and ability to serve the community.

Historical-Cultural analysis

English as a second language (ESL) classes have been offered in the San Francisco area since the 1860s, originally provided entirely by the local K-12 school district. Historically, English as a Second Language

classes have had dual purposes: (1) to assist new immigrants with assistance in learning the language and adapting to a new culture; and, (2) to meet citizens' academic and vocational instructional needs (Callas, 2002).

The imperative to assist newcomers became especially salient during the 1960s as an influx of recent immigrants enrolled at City College of San Francisco. The English Department faculty became concerned that they did not have the requisite training to help non-native English speakers. A campus coordinator recalled how faculty were recruited from within the department to teach newly created courses for these immigrant students.

I just came in to teach and I was hired by the English department, because that's what the program is under, to teach English 1A, actually. But then also, at that time, that's 1969, at that time already there were immigrants coming. And our colleagues were concerned, some of our best English department teachers, they just felt that they didn't know how to help these students because they were not trained to help non-native speakers. And so the department started having courses for non-native speakers in the English department. And, I was drafted together with some other people [to teach these classes].

During this period, credit ESL (coursework in preparation for further academic coursework) was under the auspices of CCSF's English Department while the San Francisco Unified School District's K-12 adult education program continued to provide noncredit ESL classes for individuals assimilating into the country (Callas, 2002). In the early 1970s, however, voters decided to put the noncredit program under the community college umbrella. ESL remained in the English department until, as one administrator noted, a "major restructuring of the district" during the 1990s led to the creation of a separate ESL Department.

[In] those years there were more and more ESL students from different countries and

then, by the time we restructured, we just felt that it probably made more sense [for ESL] to become a different department. And that's what happened.

A decade later, with credit and noncredit ESL merged into a single department, one administrative respondent suggested that the work of fully integrating the two entities is not yet finished stressing she "feel[s] like [they]'re still going through growing pains."

Organizational adjustments notwithstanding, department constituents continued to maintain that their "mission is to bring services to the students and bring it to the community that they live or they work in." This unified vision of service permeates the ESL department and its faculty. Terms such as "engaged," "involved," "helpful," and "caring" are used by administrators and students to describe both full- and part-time faculty. One administrator asserted that faculty approach their work with the commitment of Peace Corps volunteers, not an exaggeration when considering who has been employed by the department.

So, I was thinking about people who have retired who started the trend and then the next person after that and then the next person after that. And I started to think of them as the Peace Corps group. And I realized it was because...they all started in the Peace Corps...So I think it's always, you know, people were interested in the culture, were interested in language, interested in helping people.

According to ESL students, the faculty are vital to the ESL program and students' decisions to participate. Student respondents uniformly agreed about the ability of faculty to engage and challenge them as learners.

Why I chose this class? Because, in my opinion, this teacher is the best. I have known a lot of teachers, good teachers. Some of them were very good. This teacher is great, incredible and I guess his teaching is impeccable.

I think the teacher [is] number one. ... [S]he makes it interesting for us to want to study.

And with our present teacher, she makes us listen to her, she makes it interesting and she explains everything.

A former ESL student preparing to transfer to a four-year institution also pointed to the faculty as the reason for his ability to make a smooth transition to the credit program.

I think the instructor is very helpful for me. Patient. Whenever we ask them about English, they are very happy to help us...And also, one of my, actually two, two of my instructor(s) in the noncredit ESL, we [are] still in contact with each other.

These observations are consistent with one stream of scholarly literature: community college faculty can have considerable influence over student outcomes (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). More importantly, the interpersonal relationships between students and faculty can lead to substantial student and organizational development (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009).

Three hundred members strong, the ESL faculty is the largest department at CCSF and, as a group, they exert a strong presence in various college-wide committees and in the faculty union. According to one administrator, “[the faculty] are very active, I mean, at all levels—in the union, academic senate, college-wide committees and also campus-level committees.” Faculty see this involvement as an indicator of their commitment to the college and the students, “You know, we’re really active, driven, you know. It’s a real vibrant body of instructors,” and, “It’s [the ESL Department] very, very big. And...a lot of people in the union come from the ESL Department. “

This political clout is seen as “positive politics” in the sense that the focus is “to work

continually on shaping and pursuing what is valuable” (Fullan, 1991, p. 347). According to Fullan, “focusing on a few important priorities by implementing them especially well” is the key to positive politics (p. 347). One way the ESL Department at CCSF has been able “to use power to bring about improvements in [their] own immediate environment” is by holding the same stringent minimum qualifications for credit and noncredit faculty alike (Fullan, p. 348).

And our minimum requirement now is a Masters degree in, either a Masters in English with a certificate in TESOL, or a Masters in TESOL and also linguistic degrees, applied general linguistics. So those are the minimum. And also... most of our full-timers come from part-time. (CCSF Administrator)

A majority of both part- and full-time faculty are graduates of the Master of Arts TESOL program at San Francisco State University (SFSU) or the nearby University of California, Berkeley.

They first come in as part-time because they couldn’t get a full-time job, so they build up their experience. And that’s why when we have openings, they come and compete with the outside people and, of course, they have an inside track since they already know the program. They have taught here for awhile. (CCSF Administrator)

Increasing the number of full-time faculty is a priority for the ESL Department as an administrator remarked that full-time faculty are considered more advantageous for students because they can provide more consistent instruction and are on campus more hours to help the students. This does not mean that respondents consider part-time instructors less important to the program, however. In fact, part-time faculty receive health and other benefits and resources such as funds to attend conferences for professional development. According to one part-time faculty member, the support at CCSF is superior to the assistance available at other community colleges.

I think [the part-time faculty] receive a lot of support. I mean I'm comparing my job here from the job I have at [another community college]. So, here we get, for example, funding for professional development.

Additionally, the CCSF Teacher Resource Center (TRC) provides books, instructional ideas, and multi-media resources for the ESL instructors, both full- and part-time. A full-time faculty member is given release time to organize, operate, and supply the center.

I take care of the library and I make sure that the library has...the latest publications for teachers...[We] make sure we have enough copies so that if there is a need for a classroom teacher to have the materials at hand, that we have them for, you know, not just their main textbook, but any other, you know, like optional materials that they might need. So [we] really support the classroom teacher. [Instructors] can email or call the library to get materials and we mail it out if they cannot physically come...[S]o we have the textbooks here for their review and for their adoption if they so choose to.

Instructor generated lessons and materials as well as evaluations and suggestions for the use of textbooks and curriculum written by the instructors who have tried them are available in the TRC. Teaching DVDs and CDs for use in the classroom are also available along with training materials for giving the exit level or promotion tests. Leveled textbooks for the courses are another valuable resource. Instructors can go through the selections and see what textbooks are available for the level(s) they are teaching. This is particularly helpful for noncredit instructors who choose their own textbooks.

The culture of support for students and faculty is an important facet of the ESL Department at CCSF, and critical support structures evident in the organization play an important role in maintaining the ethos of the department. Faculty involvement in campus

committees and in the faculty union play a vital role in maintaining a strong presence in campus governance and giving the department agency as the college changes and the department is shaped and reshaped.

Organizational Analysis

Scott (1998) defines organizations as “social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals” (p. 10). A number of common challenges can be identified across organizations.

All must define (and redefine) their objectives; all must induce participants to contribute services; all must control and coordinate these contributions; resources must be garnered from the environment and products or services dispensed; participants must be selected, trained, and replaced; and some sort of working accommodation with the neighbors must be achieved. (Scott, 1998, p. 10)

Serving approximately 30,000 students annually, the ESL Department at CCSF is a complex organizational structure designed to attend to common organizational issues. A salient departmental feature is the distinction between the credit and noncredit ESL programs. With six graduated levels of coursework ranging from pre-college level reading and writing to critical reading of expository prose and advanced composition, the credit ESL program is designed for students who need academic English skills in order to transition to college work (Spurling et al., 2008). Data show that credit ESL classes are taught with an integrated approach, combining academic tasks and content.

So we switched about seven years ago to an integrated skill curriculum through which the skills are taught concurrently. Okay, so, as part of the course, students read [and] what they write should somehow relate to and grow out of what they read. The grammar that you address helps support the writing tasks that they have to do and

can be studied and talked about from the reading as well because you see examples of that in the reading. So there was much more of a tighter link across the skills in terms of the ways we teach them. (CCSF Faculty Member)

Some credit ESL classes are degree applicable, allowing students to apply credits to the AA/AS degree and/or to meet University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) transfer requirements. Approximately 14% of the department's students are enrolled in credit ESL classes offered at three CCSF campuses as well as at other locations throughout the city such as schools, storefronts, and churches.

The noncredit ESL program, intended to address the needs of English learner students who have recently arrived in the United States as well as community members who want to improve English communication skills in order to increase job opportunities and more successfully participate in the larger society, serves over 25,000 students citywide (CCSF, n.d.; Spurling, et al., 2008).

One of the goals [of the noncredit ESL program] is vocational, to prepare students for the workplace...Another goal is to help students get ready to transfer to the credit program and actually get a degree—a certificate or a degree—and encourage them to move even to the university...Other goals are just to make them feel more confident in this society; communicate with their children's teachers...Others are preparing for citizenship. (CCSF Faculty Member)

Tuition-free, CCSF's noncredit ESL program has rolling enrollment—or as one administrator remarked an “open entry/open exit policy.” An administrator explained both the benefits of and drawbacks to the noncredit ESL program design.

[T]he noncredit [classes] are tuition-free. So, particularly new immigrants who come here, even if they have [a] green card, for

the first year, they have to pay like a foreign student which is many times more—from \$20 [per] unit for residents, [to] \$280 for one unit. So, some of them do not want to spend the money. So they [would] rather go to the noncredit. We have a huge noncredit program and it's a wonderful program, but the noncredit teachers tend to have to teach many more hours. So, the students who go to class would not be expected to do homework; the teachers are not obligated to correct papers...[A]nd there is an open entry, open exit so students come and go making it very hard for the teachers to be demanding.

Noncredit ESL classes are offered at eight to ten CCSF campuses and at non-campus locations across the city (Spurling et al., 2008). Nine levels of coursework are organized into six categories: Literacy, Bridge, Citizenship, Focus, General, and Vocational (VESL). Literacy courses include both English and Spanish language instruction for students with low literacy skills. The Bridge courses are an introduction to computers for students planning to enter business courses at CCSF, while the Focus courses provide single skill development in reading, writing, listening, and speaking as well as courses that focus on specific topics such as women's issues or current events. General ESL, similar to credit ESL courses, integrate curriculum with the goal of sufficiently preparing students' skills for further academic work. The VESL courses include both general job preparation courses and courses that apply to specific vocations. For example, Communication Skills for Janitorial Workers and Communication Skills for Health Workers are recent course offerings within the VESL category (Spurling et al.). Additionally, the noncredit Vocational Office Training Program (VOTP) provides an intensive 18-week training that provides students with a certificate of completion, CCSF credit units, and job placement assistance. VOTP is unique for noncredit in that students must have reached

at least level five and must apply for and be accepted into the program. Faculty members stated that students are expected to maintain high attendance and dedicate themselves to their coursework.

After students apply to City College of San Francisco, their English language skills are assessed prior to enrollment in either the credit or noncredit ESL program. Flexible assessment schedules and locations facilitate the process for students, and ESL advisors assist students with inquiries following their meeting with a counselor. An administrator described the sequence.

[T]he first step is application to the school. And then [students] choose to take a placement test. And then, after they know the result, they see the counselors. The counselors give them the educational plan. And then, myself and a few of my colleagues are called advisors, not counselors...We would sometimes be at the orientation when the students come in, if they [have] questions to ask about ESL, we can answer them.

The placement tests for the credit and noncredit programs consist of reading and listening portions, which include multiple choice questions and a short interview which are scored by multiple faculty; a writing sample is also included for the credit program.

We have a multiple-choice part of the test, but we also have a short writing sample test for the ESL test. They [students] were given like twenty minutes to write. And after they write, uh, a few of us, three or four of us, would rotate and read the papers. So, it's a pretty reliable test. It's a home-grown test. And then, on top of that, we have the writing sample so it's not just multiple-choice. (CCSF Administrator)

On-going assessments within the noncredit ESL program include level exit exams that require the students to demonstrate competence in each of the four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Faculty participate in all

aspects of the level exit exams including performance-based oral interviews and the holistic scoring of writing samples. The level exit tests are used, in part, to provide consistency and integration in regards to meeting both program goals and activities and classroom goals and activities. One faculty member explained how the level exit tests contribute to course consistency across sites.

Well, I think the value of a testing program; there are a number of good things about it. Number one, we were talking about, you know, we have classes all over the city. It's a beast, you know, this program, in so far as you don't teach to a test, but testing helps kind of stabilize. If...teachers, really, at various levels, know that their students have to pass a writing test or a reading test or a listening test or an oral interview in order to go on to the next level, it's going to help them focus [on] what they're teaching their students. So, testing helps kind of maintain that, I don't know, like we're all speaking the same language. Level one student needs to be the same level at each campus. So, testing helps kind of do that.

Questions about student movement between ESL levels as well as student outcomes were consistently answered by administrators with references to the placement assessments, credit course finals, and noncredit level exit exams.

The student learning outcomes are imbued or inherent in the course outline. Every course outline has student learning outcomes at the end of the—well actually it's before assessment—but it will say, "At the end of this course a student will be able to do the following." So, simply by promoting them, we're measuring their outcomes. In credit, how do we promote them? We have common finals for all of the comp courses. Students are taking the same reading, grammar test and they're doing a composition in class. The composition is then scored in a group. All

the teachers of that level get together and score...so what the student has then is a grade from outside the class and what the department has is some grading across the board that maintains the level, right? And so that's, those are outcomes. As I said, in noncredit we have the two, four, and six promotion tests. So we're assessing there. So how do we measure - those are the basic ways we measure outcomes is we have those testing programs.

When asked how the program contributes to closing the achievement gap, one campus coordinator suggested that information from the assessments allows faculty to identify students who would benefit from additional learning in the free noncredit program in preparation to advance to the credit program and college coursework.

Well, I think we try to sort them out with the test, placement test. If they are place[d] in noncredit, that means they are not high enough to come to credit. So, we will ask them to spend some time, for free, in the noncredit to help them up the ladder.

Respondents stressed, however, that ultimately the decision regarding which class or classes to take is up to the student. And, once students are enrolled in ESL classes—credit or noncredit—support for their learning is available in the classroom as well as through various college-specific programs. For example, the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) offers tutoring and workshops for ESL students and has an open computer lab for their use. Tutoring is “drop in,” that is students come to the LAC when they have time and are ready for help (CCSF, n.d.). A part-time faculty member explained the goals of the tutoring.

So, the tutor wants to help the student identify an area of productive work, and, at the same, the tutor wants to sort of guide the student into accepting what the tutor thinks is appropriate help. So, that's, I mean, that's one sort of, I guess, learning process that students go through as they

use the Learning Assistance Center. They, they learn how to ask for appropriate help. And how much can be accomplished, realistically in 20 minutes.

The computer lab is available to ESL students, particularly those in the credit program who have a lab requirement in their courses. An ESL instructor operates the lab and provides assistance to students, as needed. Software programs tailored to developing the English language skills of ESL students are made available. In addition, faculty offer workshops four to seven times a day. The 50-minute sessions focus on grammar, writing, reading, pronunciation, and oral fluency. Attendance is limited to 12 students in each session so that students may receive more personal attention (CCSF, n.d.). Even the ESL Department Chair is assigned tutoring hours in the LAC. Additionally, Project SHINE, a service-learning initiative intended to benefit immigrants, refugees, ESL teachers and college students, links the credit and noncredit students in meaningful and mutual service by placing credit students as assistants in noncredit classes (CCSF, n.d.). One full-time faculty member detailed the organization and benefits of Project SHINE, indicating that the credit students benefit from opportunities to build confidence.

I was a coordinator of [SHINE] for two years on the credit program...What students do is credit students come into the noncredit [classes] to help the teacher. So let's say you're taking a Political Science class and your teacher says, “We have this program. You can go into the City College noncredit classes and help the teacher. Anybody interested?” So some students do it for extra credit, some teachers give it as a—“you can do a project or you can do Project SHINE.” So I was the coordinator and we had two hundred students...and they would come into the class. So you would

be teaching your ESL class with 40 students and you would get a [SHINE] student... for 10 weeks once a week. So what happens is the students get to hear a native speaker or they see another immigrant student who's now in college.

An administrative respondent was also enthusiastic about the program and articulated benefits in having credit ESL students working with noncredit students.

I feel that our students like that contact. It's a peer, but it's not really a peer, but it's not a teacher. So, they might be pulled out of class to do some small group work or individual work. ...They like that individual work.

Data also pointed to the Early Alert program, a campus-wide program that supports students at risk of failure. Instructors are encouraged to refer ESL students to an Early Alert Advisor as soon as they recognize that the student is struggling. Early Alert students are assessed and referred to appropriate support services for additional assistance so that they are able to complete coursework. As one administrative respondent noted, “[E]very semester our Early Alert program has shown that the students who take advantage of that have a higher success rate than the ones who do not.”

Coordination and planning of all ESL services are handled by faculty Campus Coordinators who assume administrative responsibilities during release time from their teaching load at each of the 10 campuses offering ESL classes. Four Campus Coordinator respondents stated they see themselves as faculty members first and foremost.

[C]ampus Coordinators are teachers. [We] get released from most of [our] teaching to do this job which...involves scheduling, troubleshooting, and generally coordinating activities at the campus.

Our governance system definitely is faculty governed. Peer governed, so that my immediate supervisor is the Chair of the ESL Department and that's a three year term. ...And then he's just faculty again.

The ESL Department at CCSF maintains a non-hierarchical structure and faculty are not ranked. Input from part- and full-time faculty is considered equally, a structure that induces participants to contribute services (Scott, 1998). Campus Coordinators recognize the high involvement of part-time faculty and see the egalitarian structure as promoting collaboration.

[I]n terms of their [part-time instructors'] participation in the program, yeah, they carry a lot of weight. And they can participate in all the different committees and involve themselves, yeah. And they do.

[T]he fact that we don't have a title, you know, we don't call each other professor, assistant professor, associate professor, so we seem to be more equal. And that fosters harmony rather than trying to cut throat to be a professor.

Resources and support services are dispersed evenly across ESL programs and faculty and that open structure has allowed close working relationships to develop as described by a faculty member.

I think it's the resources that are available...motivations for professional development, and, also, even though we are big...we are very close to the coordinator, we are very close to the chair.

This unified faculty body, with few if any distinctions between full-time and part-time faculty is anomalous to the state of faculty portrayed in community college literature (Levin, et al., 2006).

There is considerable complexity to the ESL program at CCSF and to ensure that all facets of the organization are consistently meeting faculty, student, and college needs, the department has developed means for

communication and commitment of all participants. A variety of committees provides faculty a place to articulate questions, voice concerns and to enhance their knowledge of course curriculum and other departmental or institutional issues.

[T]here are lots of committees in which faculty can just go and be part of and make their voices heard.

A very rich source of staff development is our committees' framework. We have a noncredit curriculum committee, a credit curriculum committee, a personnel committee, a technology committee...An elections committee for all these committees.

Committee membership may be as large as 15 faculty and bi-monthly meetings provide ample opportunity for members to introduce issues and needs. One faculty member explained that depending upon the issue(s), the ESL Dean, the counselor, or the librarian will come and talk with the faculty.

And then depending on the issues she [the Campus Coordinator] will bring guests. So, maybe the dean will come, maybe the counselor will come. The librarian will come and whatever issues we have we can just bring to those meetings.

Another faculty member who works in the TRC stressed the importance of communication among the campuses. "It's really imperative that everybody, you know, there's connection between the campuses." She went on to explain that the curriculum committee consisted of two representatives from each major campus who meet once a month to "hash out ideas." This "working accommodation with the neighbors" is critical for maintaining cohesiveness between sites (Scott, 1998, p. 10). Data reveal that not all faculty and administrators agree that there is sufficient release time for collaboration and planning and not all faculty experience

inclusiveness that otherwise permeates the interviews.

Conclusions

The organizational structure of the program is credited by the respondents for contributing to the recognition of the program as a promising practice. With both credit- and noncredit bearing programs, the department has designed a cohesive system of student placement and advancement through ESL which allows for a smooth transition from course to course and program to program. A high priority is placed on providing students with courses that meet their individual wants and needs as well as providing supplemental academic support through the Learning Assistance Center.

A non-hierarchical, faculty-driven governance structure reinforces instructors' sense of agency and gives them a strong sense of ownership of the programs. Various committees oversee curriculum decisions and frequent meetings contribute to a sense of collaboration. Instructors are supported by the Teacher Resource Center whose personnel consist of faculty given release time to perform their specific duties. This support is valued and appreciated by both part- and full-time instructors.

Student services and resources are available at all campuses such as ESL placement testing, registration and enrollment, and counseling. One student remarked, "It's clean [the campus], it's convenient and, if I have any questions, the phone number is on the catalogue and I can ask...and the staff is very helpful every time." This structure undoubtedly contributed to the ESL Department's recognition as one of the nation's outstanding community college ESL programs by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy in 2005.

The culture of commitment to meet student and community needs reverberated throughout the interviews. Yet, several

participants emphasized that they are never fully satisfied and are always looking for ways to improve the program. As one administrator argued, “You can’t come up with that perfect program and then just roll it from semester to semester.” Thus, there is a “constant kind of surveying of students and teachers to get a sense of what direction to go. And it’s an ongoing challenge.” A salient commitment to continual program improvement was evident in the data as faculty insisted “we’re constantly working on tweaking the curriculum to make it more efficient.”

History does play a role in this local context, and, while there is no other community just like San Francisco, the needs of English learners—academic English for transfer, vocational English for employment opportunities, social English for richer participation in American culture—are universal. Growing with the needs of the city, finding ways to meet the collective needs of individual students, communities, and industry are critical in the ESL program at CCSF where program practices help close the achievement gap.

Accelerated Careers in Technology (ACT) at Modesto Junior College



Introduction

The City of Modesto

Modesto, meaning modest in Spanish, was once the end of the Central Pacific Railroad line. Now the 16th largest city in the state, Modesto is situated in the very heart of California's great central valley. Modesto's rich soil and temperate climate are optimal for growing almonds, apricots, melons, tomatoes, wine grapes, peaches, and walnuts as well as raising dairy cattle and poultry. Regional employment opportunities range from professional occupations to sales and office work to manufacturing all aided by local infrastructure including major highways, airports, and the Stockton Deepwater Ship Channel, a key inland port just 34 miles north of the city (City of Modesto, 2009).

The 2008 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey showed Modesto's population at 209,936 (City of Modesto, 2009). Community demographics indicate that White/European-Americans comprise 69% of the population and Hispanic/Latinos represent a sizable minority (25.6%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). While 75% of Modesto's population aged 25 and over has a high school diploma, only 16.5% has a bachelor's degree or graduate degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This relatively low level of education corresponds with low annual household incomes reported for the community. According to the U.S.

Census Bureau, 15.7% of Modesto's population earns incomes below the poverty level and the per capita annual income was reported at \$17,797 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Table 9: Modesto Junior College Student Ethnicity 2006-2007

White/European-American	41.1%
Hispanic/Latino	27.3%
Asian/Asian-American	5.6%
Black/African-American	3.2%
Filipino	1.4%
Pacific Islander	1.2%
Native American	1.2%
Other, non-White	0.1%
Decline to state/Unknown	18.9%

(Source: California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 448)

Modesto Junior College

Modesto Junior College (MJC), part of the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD), serves Stanislaus County in central California. MJC is the county's primary post-secondary institution; data show that "70 percent of all college-going Stanislaus County high school students enter MJC" (Modesto Junior College, 2005). According to the Accountability Reporting of Community Colleges (ARCC) MJC had an unduplicated headcount of 26,632 and 14,479 full-time equivalent students for the 2006–2007 academic year. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reported Modesto's enrollment in fall 2007 at 18,546 students. Of these students, 64.6% attended the college part-time and 35.4% attended full-time (National Center for Education Statistics, [NCES], year?). The 2008 ARCC report indicated that 44.5% of first-time MJC students enrolled during the 2001–2002 through the 2006–2007 academic years transferred to a four-year institution, earned a degree or certificate, or achieved transfer status within 6 years of starting college (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 445). Additionally, during the 2006–2007 academic year, MJC

posted a persistence rate of 69.1% (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 445).

Demographics of Modesto Junior College mirror demographics of the surrounding community with the largest ethnic group White/European-American (41.1%), followed by Hispanic/Latinos (27.3%) (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008).

Classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a large rural-serving institution, Modesto Junior College is situated close to many of California's vibrant cities and rich natural attractions.

Modesto is less than two hours from the city life of San Francisco, the beaches of the Pacific Ocean, the State Capitol in Sacramento and great skiing and hiking in the Sierra Nevada mountains. One of California's largest visitor attractions, Yosemite National Park, is only a short drive to the east.

Modesto's central location provides access for current and potential students in the same way that the larger setting, Stanislaus County, is ideal for new and developing businesses. The growing diversity of manufacturing and other businesses in the Modesto area make the college a pivotal location for vocational education. Furthermore, as the ARCC report details, the college has a strong record of vocational and workforce training with coursework completion rates exceeding 73% in the 2006–2007 academic year (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2008, p. 446).

MJC's mission statement stresses a student-centered approach serving "all who can benefit" by utilizing "innovative instructional and student support programs that respond to the educational needs of our diverse community." To fulfill their commitment to the community, the college offers university transfer education, general education, career and technical education, basic skills education, workforce development,

civic engagement, comprehensive student services, community education, partnerships with the community, and economic development.

Promising Practice: Accelerated Careers in Technology

The Accelerated Careers in Technology (ACT) program at MJC fulfills the career and technical education, workforce development, community education, partnerships with the community, and economic development aspects of MJC's mission. The ACT program trains students in technical vocations of their choosing (e.g., welding, automotive, electrical, printing) with the intention of placing them in positions at companies in the local economy. As ACT is an "accelerated" program, students move through intensive course sequences in a work-like environment, trained or retrained within a few months with the goal of rapid employment.

Both the history and organization of ACT are heavily influenced by ecological factors and the program remains heavily dependent upon and often limited by the needs of the local economy. As well, relationships with community agencies influence the program often constraining program admissions and, by extension, program outcomes.

Analyses

Ecological Analysis

The ACT program, deeply rooted in and responsive to surrounding economic and demographic contexts, aims to train students in a vocation of their choosing, helping them obtain viable employment when they complete program requirements. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15.7% of Modesto's population earns incomes below the poverty level and the per capita annual income for the community is \$17,797 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In response to this demographic milieu, the ACT program has established contractual

relationships with two external organizations, the Community Services Agency (CSA) and Alliance Worknet (AW), both who refer potential students to the program at MJC. A college dean described CSA and AW as ACT's "partners," explaining that they "actually give us referrals" for the program. The partnership between ACT and the outside social organizations is a prime example of how ecological factors permeate the college and specifically the program.

The Community Services Agency is the county welfare office, and as one administrator explained, many students from CSA are part of the Cal Works program which requires "30–35 hours per week of training or work services...to receive their TANF¹⁰ check." In 2008, 4,032,704 people in the United States received federal welfare aid (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families). Based on recent data for California, 1,226,362 people received welfare aid in 1999 with approximately 9% of these individuals enrolled in the state's community colleges and in programs such as ACT (Levin, Montero-Hernandez, Cerven, & Shaker, 2010; Mathur, 2002).

CSA serves as the sponsor for students accepted into the ACT program paying for 100 percent of tuition, books, and other related costs. One administrator shared that "kits" are prepared for these students that include "books, materials...boots or safety glasses...specific rulers and tools," materials that would normally cost students "about \$35." A representative from CSA reiterated their firm commitment to ACT and to client success, underscoring the financial support provided to CSA students.

CSA has a contract with MJC ACT. In this contract, CSA provides funding for personnel and administrative costs. Also, CSA sponsors our customers [so that] when they attend

¹⁰ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

MJC ACT program[s] we pay for supplies, books, and material fees.

The partnership between ACT and CSA also limits the burden placed on the students to find gainful employment following program completion. Once CSA students complete the program, the ACT program is contractually obligated to place students in jobs within 60 days. One administrator, however, explained that the job placement requirement was a relatively new component of ACT's contract with CSA, and no clear guidelines or consequences had been established if students remained unemployed.

I really don't think that there would be a penalty [for not finding a job placement]. For statistic[al] purposes, obviously when we do [an] outcome report, that wouldn't look good. Percentage wise, that's what they're looking for in terms of re-funding the program in the future. But there is always a reason, and so with the outcome report I will always submit a narrative explaining exactly why.

Prior to formal contractual obligations to transition program graduates into jobs, ACT administrators did not maintain placement records and were unaware of how program completers had fared in the job market. In a 2008 interview, a college administrator acknowledged, "We haven't done it yet. This is our first year that we have to have accountability for [job placement]."

When discussing the Community Services Agency (CSA), one ACT faculty member characterized the organization as "not [quite] bleeding-heart, but [they believe they must] give everyone a chance." According to several ACT faculty and support staff, CSA's desire and goal to work with all prospective clients translates into ACT students who may have complex challenges beyond the average student.

[Y]eah definitely if they are...CSA...they have lots of problems. If they haven't secured their housing and their childcare and all

that, it just really sets them up to fail. So I notice some of the people that have a lot of problems, that don't have a steady car, their...grades start suffering and suffering.

The backgrounds and complex lives of CSA students are particularly problematic for the ACT program because, as one faculty member argued, "the majority of [ACT students] are [from] CSA." Many of these students either struggle to stay in the program or, for a myriad of reasons, are not easily employable, leading some members of the staff and faculty to push for more stringent application and screening processes in an effort to reduce the number of students unable to complete the program. Bombach (2001) asserts that welfare recipients, grappling with low self-esteem and self-confidence, are likely to live in a "culture of poverty" that hinders their capacity to plan for more than a month or to identify education as immediately relevant to their well-being (p. 77).

Alliance Worknet (AW), another ACT partner, differs in purpose from CSA. While it also functions to place community members in the workforce, its focus is on retraining and connecting individuals to various training institutions. AW seeks to be a "one-stop" service agency for employers and potential employees, focusing on "job creation, business assistance, and workforce preparation." AW uses an Employment Training Provider List (ETPL)¹¹ to help direct students to appropriate training institutions, a list that includes Modesto Junior College. Several administrators provided further context for understanding Alliance Worknet's role and their strategies for serving clients.

¹¹ California's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) was established in compliance with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. The purpose of the ETPL is to provide customer-focused employment training for adults and dislocated workers. Training providers who are eligible to receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) through WIA Title I-B funds are listed on the ETPL.

[AW is] not a teaching entity...They are able to utilize some of their funds to send to providers that are on this list that their customers can apply to [in order to] get actual education and training.

[The ETPL is a] Workforce Investment Act funded vehicle and allows a voucher-based approach so that an individual can take the offerings and be reimbursed fully for the offerings.

Analogous to CSA's client benefits, Alliance Worknet students who enroll in the ACT program incur no costs although AW students must individually navigate the college admission process, unlike CSA students. Once students are admitted, AW reimburses ACT "\$2,100 per student," shared one administrator. ACT faculty and staff are more confident about the prospects of AW students as compared to CSA students. For example, the same faculty member who worried about placing CSA students asserted that AW students are consistently prepared for coursework and subsequent employment.

Alliance Worknet [students] are pre-screened—they're pre-tested, and so in terms of skills, I don't think I've run across an Alliance Worknet student who isn't ready to go. They'll definitely be [in] the top five [in program classes].

Upon completing an ACT program of study, AW students return to Alliance Worknet for assistance with securing employment. A majority of ACT students are referred to the program from the Community Service Agency and Alliance Network. These students are representative of the local demographics—largely Hispanic/Latino, low-income, and undereducated. Because the overarching goal of the ACT program is to place individuals in the workforce, students referred by external agencies such as AW and CSA are not automatically admitted to the program. Instead, the program is required, according to

one administrator, to "take all...referrals, but we don't have to accept [them all]."

In an effort to process each referral, the ACT program developed an interview-screening process. Student screening begins with potential students attending an orientation and completing basic skills testing. The purpose of the initial assessments, according to one administrator, is to gain a general understanding of "where [the students are] at in terms of reading, math, and English." One faculty member asserted that prospective students "...need to be at least [at] a 7th grade level to be let into the program but we have accepted some that are lower than that." The basic skills test places some limitations on student admission but the ACT program exercises flexibility, working with students as individuals not as merely a set of test scores. For example, one administrator stressed the importance of student commitment. *We never refuse a student based on their educational level. We flag the potential challenge that we'll have to work with and it helps for advising. After that they have to interview with us. So what we're asking them to do is attend an information session, take the test, come in for an interview with us, and during that interview we'll ask questions, we'll ask about their commitment, because it is a very rigorous program. And we kind of get that verbal commitment to get that vibe from the student.* The interviews allow ACT faculty to incorporate the academic level, commitment, and background of potential students into the admissions process. When serious concerns regarding the suitability of a particular candidate to this specific program arise in the interview, ACT program administrators advise the individual to pursue other programs or courses at MJC. One administrator explained that students, who are not redirected, move forward to the "preparation phase" of the program which lasts "anywhere from 5–10 week[s]." This "preparation phase" serves as a practice run. Students, according to the same

Table 10: Progress through Referral-Acceptance Process for Two ACT Cohorts

Sponsor	CSA		AW		Total	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Referred	114	73	36		150	73
Orientation	52	34 (1)	29		81	42
Assessment	38	24 (1)	25	5	63	29
Interview	34	22	21	4	55	26
Accepted	24	16 (1)	16	4	40	20
Enrolled in summer Prep Phase	22	17	15	4	37	21
Enrolled in Fall term	13	12	12	2	25	14

(Source: G. Boodrookas, personal communication, July 29, 2009. Numbers in parenthesis indicate students exempted from that stage of the process).

administrator, take “a guidance course, basic math course, general safety class, general college studies class,” and are required “to attend about 9–10 hours a week.” One administrator connected this preparation phase with the interview process, and hoped that potential students would prove themselves. “[W]hat we’re looking at...is their ability to do what they said they were going to do for 10 weeks.” The preparation phase provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to learning and to finishing the program and those students who complete this phase are admitted unconditionally into the ACT program.

The data collected from two ACT cohort groups, as seen in Table 10, illustrate how the application, interview, and preparation phase processes limit the number of students ultimately enrolled in the program, ensuring that those who will most benefit from training and be placed in the local economy are served by the program. This segment of ACT is important due to the fact that the program is a special contracted activity and thus not like the totality of technical education training options at MJC which do not have such stringent outcomes attached to the continued funding from external agencies.

Particularly important to ACT, the screening process maximizes the number of students who have the potential to be employed. To increase the likelihood that program graduates secure employment, the program has developed a relationship with another external organization, Bayside Solutions, to assist students with job seeking.

General ecological influences that impinge on the ACT program were also identified in the data. The mission of the California Community College System, articulated by one administrator as containing five diverse goals, “transfer; degrees and certificates; basic skills; economic and workforce development; and lifelong learning,” structures the program and its actions. By design, the ACT program fulfills workforce development and lifelong learning goals. In spite of the support offered by the larger community college system many faculty members in the ACT program encounter negative reactions towards the integrity and viability of vocational programs and the economic prospects for graduates.

[A] lot of folks seem to think that in high school the quote ‘shop classes’ are for the people who just are failures: they can’t do anything else...the school

system does not recognize that as a successful career.

If you look on an average city block, who has the newest car and the boat and everything? It's the plumber. It's not the manager.

To mitigate these negative misconceptions, MJC has established programs with local secondary schools to develop technical or vocational education and to communicate the possibility of vocational education to young students.

Ultimately, both the qualifications of students admitted in the ACT program and ACT's goals for the students after they complete the program are tied to the local job market. The continuation of the program, then, is also tied to the local economy and its ongoing needs. By extension, the city of Modesto, which boasts its "prime location for any business planning or anticipating future growth," is a pivotal, if indirect partner of the ACT program (City of Modesto, 2009).

Areas of Modesto have been designated as an Enterprise Zone (EZ) by the Governor of California through The Housing & Community Development Department. Being in the EZ provides businesses with tax incentives offered by the State to aid economic growth and enhance the community. (City of Modesto, 2009)

As Enterprise Zone incentives and friendly business environments are essential to ACT's long-term well-being, the larger economy and health of established local commerce is even more critical as the program relies on relationships with employers, donations from companies, and employment opportunities for program completers.

Historical-Cultural Analysis

The origin of the ACT program can be linked to a conversation between Modesto Junior College and city officials in the late 1990s. According to one administrator,

Modesto had just received a "national League of Cities" grant and, after enlisting the support of the college, began developing the "Pre-Construction Training Program." The Director of the Modesto Junior College Workforce Training Center, who later became Dean of Community and Economic Development at MJC, met with city and county officials and other educators to discuss Modesto's economic need for skilled construction workers. In utilizing a portion of the grant money, the construction program was created, and several cohorts of students entered and graduated. The construction program's success, according to informants, was bolstered by support from a broad range of constituents, "[T]here was a lot of fanfare, lot of real support for the effort among all the partners."

According to one administrator, "[the construction program] sort of coasted into a self-sustaining on-going effort," and later was transformed into the Accelerated Careers in Technology. A knowledgeable staff member from the Workforce Training Center was brought in to "champion" the program. The ACT program was subsequently moved into the technical education unit of the college where it expanded to include preparation for a wider variety of vocations (e.g., welding, automotive, electrical, printing).

Internal support, as well as support from outside the institution has created a positive culture surrounding the ACT program. Funding from external sources continues to be important, yet an administrator remarked that the institution has fully embraced the program as a critical part of the college.

[I]t's almost viewed as an institutional project because of the way the college looks at, the way the partners look at it. It's almost like we can't let it go now. It's something we have to continue.

Leadership, according to respondents, and a culture of innovation are reported as the most crucial elements to the program. According to one administrative respondent,

leadership is “entrepreneurial” and “innovative” in its efforts to sustain the program and “change the normal course of business to make something like this happen.”

The ACT program also concentrates on building a collegial student culture. The structure of the program simulates a job atmosphere, requiring students to show up at the same time everyday and spend several hours a day on campus with their cohort. Respondents indicated that the cohort model they utilize fosters a culture of camaraderie among students, and leads to students building a strong “work” community and supporting each other throughout the program.

Another important cultural aspect of the ACT program relates to the role of the faculty. One student respondent characterized the quality of the instructors and the level of support they provide as “great” and praised their commitment to student success.

I was after class and looking at some drawings, and I was looking at the application, and in my head I couldn't get the drawings to connect with the thing. And this was late at night because class goes 'til 10:30pm, and we were there 'til like 11pm. [The instructor] stayed and it was me and him. And he was really cool and very passionate about what he does. And it made it work: a light bulb totally went off and the next day I thanked him. And what was really cool about thanking him, he said, “no, thank you” because he liked being graded by his students. So that was kind of cool you know. He's not just going through the motions to get a check, you know. He's really putting the effort into it.

The faculty are passionate and willing to stay after class to help students, and the students respect their extra efforts. The combination of faculty commitment with student respect and effort creates a powerful educational relationship.

ACT faculty are also involved with schools in the local community. For example,

one faculty respondent described the “Passport to College” program explaining how it brings fifth grade students from the local schools to tour the vocational areas of the college and begin imagining technical careers. ACT faculty also interact with local high schools, helping them develop quality vocational and technical education programs. In part, this effort is to improve the background knowledge of potential future MJC students in these fields. One faculty member explained the connection between the ACT program and a local high school and the benefits to students.

[The high school has] also recognized the fact that the college track is not the only track to go through for individuals. So they are rebuilding their technical education classes from the ground up, and they have asked for our assistance. We've been working with them for almost a year and a half to be able to make sure that their educational process matches with ours. As a matter of fact, if done properly, a senior at [the high school] going through their program will have already earned 10 college credits because of [a] reciprocal agreement and so forth. They will have 10 college credits already.

Consistency between secondary schools and MJC's programs is immediately useful for students but is also viewed as an essential and long-term component of addressing community needs. In another outreach strategy of ACT, one faculty member works with “at-risk high school students from alternative education in Modesto City Schools.” The data make clear ACT faculty's commitment to work beyond the normal boundaries of their college job descriptions to strengthen programs inside and outside of Modesto Junior College and address the long-term needs of the local economy. These efforts create a strong learning-centered and supportive culture that helps sustain program quality.

The history and culture of the ACT program are deeply rooted in the program's

environment. The program developed and continues to develop in conjunction with external funding and local organizations and the actions of program leadership reflect the flexibility necessary to cope with changing ecological conditions. Similarly, the student culture fostered by the ACT program mirrors the job environment and reflects the ecological nature of ACT's goals: preparing students for and placing them in jobs.

Organizational Analysis

Several organizational aspects of the ACT program influence its culture and its relationships with external organizations. Structurally, the ACT program has been integrated into the technical education branch of the college and both function under the leadership of the Dean of Workforce and Economic Development and Director of Technical Education/ACT.

Students in ACT are frequently enrolled in classes with non-ACT students and several companies that hire students from Modesto Junior College either know very little about ACT or do not differentiate between ACT students and other vocational program completers. One industry respondent indicated he "had no real knowledge about the ACT program" and another was not aware of ACT by name but "was aware that they had the accelerated program." It is clear that the primary concern of companies employing ACT graduates is the quality, preparation, and commitment of potential employees. Because MJC has a vested interest in the success of all its students, both ACT students and those independently enrolled, leadership maximizes resources by blending students into courses. This also serves to reduce the stigmatization of students placed through community welfare agencies and ensures that high quality training is standardized for all technical education students.

Another important benefit of blending ACT program coursework with existing

technical education courses is that the credits students complete through ACT programs can be applied toward an associate's degree. One administrator articulated how program curriculum alignment provided maximum benefits to students, allowing ACT students to accelerate through certificate requirements that could, should a student wish, be translated later into associate's degree and/or transfer requirements.

For example, the electrician certificate for the electrician pathway is the same program as the industrial technology electrician certificate. And actually we have in this particular case; it led the transformation of that program. Our press operator's pathway under ACT is also the print press operator certificate at the college. Our automotive pathway in ACT is our maintenance mechanic college certificate for automotive, the smaller of the two. So they're very much linked in the line because for them to go through a program and not have longevity in the value of that certificate would not be as meaningful.

Thus, while the main goal of the ACT program is to prepare students for immediate employment in local industry, the structure of its curriculum gives an advantage to ACT alumni returning to MJC for additional education at a later date.

Planning and development for the ACT program is coordinated with external economic and governmental authorities and organizations. One administrator overseeing the ACT program sits on numerous committees with various purposes but that often contain the same representatives, strengthening connections between organizations.

I do anywhere from 15 to 20 meetings a week, and probably one third or more of those are off campus. So for instance I sit on the chamber board of directors. I sit on the Workforce Alliance committee on education, the subcommittee on workforce and economic development. You know

various bodies whose job it is to look at these issues and find solutions. So I'm already sitting at tables where partners are naturally sitting together. We're calling ourselves "the usual suspects" of these meetings.

According to the same administrator, the college collaborated with industry committees to place a staff member at Alliant, the local business development and research center. In this position, the MJC staff member spearheads the "Center for Excellence" which is responsible for "environmental scanning of workforce trends in the region." He further explained the committees utilize this information to discuss potential ACT program opportunities, their feasibility and viability, considering both economic need and the availability of external funding.

[N]umber one, first and foremost, it's about the right people, right place, right time. And as you see on the whiteboard behind you, I list some things and I use this whiteboard sometimes to just sort of list...local ventures and regional ventures. Some of these are in process; some of them are just dreams that we're looking at as a community. And we're looking for the right people, right place, right time to make them happen, or the right funding from the right source to make them happen. Because we know the need is there, but we don't today have the wherewithal to make it happen so we just keep it on the board and we go after it as the opportunity arises.

Respondents made clear that an intentional organizational aspect of the ACT program is the development of programs closely aligned with the specific employment needs of local industry coupled with the availability of resources from potential sponsors.

The organizational structure of the ACT program's admission and interviewing process also includes external organizations. Specifically, representatives from the Community Services Agency sit on the

interview panel during the screening process. One faculty member explained each interview panel has five members and that "CSA is two people on the interviews," along with one administrator, one support staff, and one faculty member. While each person has a vote regarding which students are accepted and what guidance each is given, the group tries "to come to a consensus somewhere." This consensus process includes representatives from ACT administration, faculty, and staff as well as from CSA and it fosters negotiation of the admissions process that might not occur otherwise.

Similarly, ACT faculty convene "advisory committees" with representatives from local industry. One faculty member suggested this practice was consistent across MJC technical/vocational programs; "[Program faculty] have advisory committees that are local companies, local individuals." While official meetings of these committees occur only a few times a year, one ACT faculty member asserted that faculty and industry representatives are in constant contact.

I call us a bottom-up program, the industrial [program] because it's not the state that dictates here's what we do and picks our books. We talk to manufacturers. We go on tours in plants. We see what they're doing. The majority of my current regular program students work in the manufacturing industry. And so every year I talk to them and say, "What did you like and what did you not like?" "What did you want to learn, but didn't?" And so as a result of those types of [continuous industry and program graduate] feedback, our books, our lab equipment, what we do is based on that.

Another faculty member concurred with his colleague's assertions explaining his contact with representatives from local industry.

We meet once a year, sometimes twice a year, and basically we go over anything, any changes that we've had in the program. I

maintain contact with them all the time. I was in contact with an outfit yesterday. I talk to them on a weekly basis.

“Constant” contact with advisory committees is a critical aspect of keeping programs current with industry needs and practices, and this ensures that the programs have the “material” support they need. These connections to local business and industry are consistent with scholarly recommendations for effective vocational programs (Rosenbaum, 2001).

The organization of the ACT program also reflects the ecological nature of the program by replicating a work environment with its intense, job-like schedule and its cohort design. Students are required to show up at the same time and devote relatively long hours every day to simulate, and prepare them for, jobs. This structure, as a faculty member noted, serves as a means to promote dedication to the craft and collaboration among students.

[W]e have really noticed throughout the years that if a student is dedicated to school, they try to make school their life, they seem to do better. If they're a part-time student where they're juggling between family and work and other things and school, school becomes the “kind of-sort of we'll get to it if we can” type of situation. So we thought that if we made this very intense, very powerful experience, lots of units, “your life is now ours” kind of situation, maybe [they] would turn around and do a good job.

Students are also organized into cohorts that go through this intense program together, resulting in a strong sense of camaraderie.

The students will get together and one will bring a pizza this week and the next week the other guy brings sandwiches, and they'll get together and study or they'll go to a coffee shop and nurse a cup of coffee for three hours and study, memorize. I would say that on my midterms especially, and final exams, the students who are in the ACT program tend to get, especially the

memorized portions of, the curriculum down very well. So they're quizzing each other and working on these sorts of things. On a day before a test I can hear them in the hallway waiting to get into the classroom saying, “What do you think this is?” and “What do you think that is?” “No it's the other.” Where the other students are just waiting. So these folks are very actively involved with each other. (MJC Faculty Member)

A final salient organizational feature of the ACT program is the MJC Technical Education graduation. All student completers in technical education programs attend the ceremony. The college invites representatives from local businesses both to emphasize the important achievement of the students and to provide students and industry representatives with an opportunity to interact. Thus, the graduation doubles as an informal hiring fair, allowing individual students to approach potential employers and inquire about the availability of jobs, and, in some cases, be hired on the spot. This culminating activity in the ACT program illustrates the influence of ecological forces on the program and the pressure on the ACT program to connect students with jobs.

Conclusions

Because ACT faculty and administrators have not collected employment data consistently for program graduates, it is difficult to quantitatively assess how “successful” the ACT program has been at ensuring program completers obtain employment correlated to the training. Recent contractual changes, however, have placed additional responsibility on the ACT program to secure a job for each student supported by the Community Services Agency (CSA), a change that ostensibly will lead to a comprehensive data collection/tracking system. Although quantitative data are not available, one administrator estimated that the first few cohorts of ACT students had a

“75–80% placement rate.” In spite of the statistical void, two indicators of program “success” are useful. First, and perhaps most critical, the highly ecological nature of the program suggests that the program would simply cease were it not serving the needs of the local economy in that industry would opt not to participate, external organizations would not place their clients at MJC, and students would find other programs that offered more promising cost-benefit ratios (Kane & Rouse, 1999). Second, ACT program participants provided compelling anecdotal evidence of their success, an important aspect of program evaluation (Weiss, 1972/1998).

When asked to articulate how the ACT program identifies “successful” students or “successful outcomes,” one administrator discussed changes in individuals that are not easily quantifiable.

When I look at student outcomes for these students, one is obviously the knowledge that they gain within their vocation. The changing of the person, the person is actually changing and they’re becoming more confident. You see that seed of hope being evolved. Changes in their family. Many who are participants have children and it’s flowing down to the family in terms of mom or dad is going out to work or going out and studying. Cohort level, they’re very tight as a group. They have these networks that stay together for a long time...It’s a lot more than just your academics...We’ve changed the person. The person is now very employable, believes in themselves, begins to have hope, and actually wants more for themselves and their family.

This observation is consistent with recent research on community college outcomes for students (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009). Recognizing these personal character and quality of life outcomes for students, an administrative respondent offered two specific examples of program success.

There is John [pseudonym], I think he’s from [a local company], who we worked with him and he actually served his, he had a sentence to serve during his program and he went to school. He was having issues with the legal situation and we intervened and we negotiated...[E]very Friday for about 6 or 8 weeks, when he finished his classes he would drive to the county courthouse and turn himself in and serve Saturday and Sunday. He would be released on Sunday mid-day so he could get home to see his family because he had a daughter and get ready for school on Monday. John was very successful in acquiring employment and it transformed his life.

We had Bill [pseudonym], former military, a Marine, anger management problem. I can remember very specifically saying the comment when he walked out of our interview, “Are we sure we want him in the program?” Bill ended up being our valedictorian...in that particular program and has done very well with [a local company]. So it’s the little stories and it’s the danger of prejudice. Bill to me was 3 years ago the danger of prejudice. And I think I thought at the graduation ceremony that if someone would have told me that Bill was going to be the top of our class, I need to take this time to apologize to him because I prejudged him.

In the absence of statistics to support assertions that the program places graduates into jobs in local companies, administrators point toward specific “stories” that illustrate the program’s success. Success for the program is thus defined as the combination of gaining employment and changes in the character and quality of the students’ lives.

The ACT program at Modesto Junior College is highly influenced by ecological factors, especially the economic and demographic characteristics of the Modesto area. The history, culture, and organization of

the ACT program reflect the importance of these external factors, and the ACT program has adapted a variety of strategies to address them. Perhaps the most powerful of these ecological factors is related to the job market in the region surrounding Modesto. Channeling students through training for the purpose of employment is a central goal of the ACT program; due to the supportive environment, faculty involvement and strong relationships with the external environment, the ACT program is not only meeting that goal but also working to close the achievement gap.

Adelante Program at Santa Monica College



Introduction

The City of Santa Monica

Santa Monica, a “sustainable community on the shores of the Santa Monica Bay,” is home to just over 90 thousand residents (City of Santa Monica, 2008). U.S. Census Bureau data show that Santa Monica residents are predominately White (78%) with Hispanic/Latinos constituting the next largest residential group (13%) and Asian and African-American residents accounting for 7% and 4% respectively. More than 90% of Santa Monica residents are high school graduates and data indicate that 55% of residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Median income in 2000 was recorded as nearly \$51,000 with an average of 1.8 persons per household (U.S. Census

Bureau).

The city’s famed ocean walk and pier are enjoyed by locals, tourists, and the entertainment industry, and its legendary farmer’s markets attract nearly 18,000 shoppers each week, including the finest restaurateurs and chefs from across Los Angeles County. Residents from outside city limits also join Santa Monica residents at Santa Monica Community College—1 of the 110 colleges in the statewide community college system.

Santa Monica College

Santa Monica College, opened in 1929, occupies a 38-acre main campus in western Los Angeles County located just two miles from the Pacific Ocean, and is the city’s largest employer. Together with five satellite campuses within city boundaries, including the Academy of Entertainment and Technology and the Emeritus campus, the college offers transfer, vocational/certificate, and recreational classes to a broad range of students. According to the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) 2008 Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges (ARCC), Santa Monica College enrolled 22,074 full-time equivalent students (FTES) with an annual unduplicated headcount of 50,649 during the 2006–2007 academic year. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Table 11: Santa Monica College, Ethnicity of Students: 2006-2007

Ethnicity of Students	2006-2007
Asian	16.2%
Black/African-American	10.0%
Filipino	2.4%
Hispanic/Latino*	22.8%
Native American	0.5%
Other Non-White	2.9%
Pacific Islander	0.6%
White	35.1%
Unknown/Decline to State	9.5%

(Source: California Community College Chancellor’s Office, Management Information System *Note: The Hispanic/Latino population in the City of Santa Monica is approximately 13.4%)

reported the total student enrollment in fall 2007 as 28,958. Consistent with community colleges in general, about half of Santa Monica's student population is traditionally aged (18–24 years) with females outnumbering males, 60% to 40% respectively. Demographic data show that Santa Monica College enrolls a diverse student body (Table 11).

The college "boasts one of the largest international student populations of any community college in the nation" (Santa Monica College, n.d.). Its rates of transfer to University of California (UC) campuses, especially the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA),¹² as well as the University of Southern California and other baccalaureate granting institutions position it as a transfer leader in the California Community College system (Santa Monica College, 2009; University of California Office of the President, 2007). During the 2006–2007 academic year, the college was ranked first among California community colleges in the number of Hispanic/Latino students transferring to a UC campus and 12th for transfers to California State University campuses (Table 12).

Table 12: Santa Monica Transfer Statistics, 2006-2007

	Number of Students
SMC Total Transfers to UC/CSU	2,102
SMC Latino Transfers to UC	106
SMC Latino Transfers to CSU	266
Total Transfers from CA community colleges to UC & CSU campuses	82,359

(Sources: UC Office of the President; CSU Chancellor's Office)

SMC is designated an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), and Hispanics/Latinos make up approximately 23% of the overall campus enrollment (Castillo, Del Valle, Drinot, Herrera,

¹² Hilmer (1997, as cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) argues that attending community college allows students from "poor families, [who] were of low tested ability, or performed poorly in high school" to transfer to a more selective institution than they could have attended "right out of high school" (p. 495).

& Martinez, 2007). As well, the college enjoys the support of a U.S. Department of Education Title V grant which provides funds to "enhance and expand [the college's] capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional stability, management, and fiscal capabilities of eligible institutions" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Santa Monica College Counseling Center

The college has positioned counseling and guidance as a prominent facet of student services as evidenced by the wide range of specialized counseling programs listed on their website and discussed by informants. "There is a very strong counseling program at Santa Monica College. There's a very strong commitment to counseling services" asserted an administrative informant. This commitment is traced, according to one administrator, to "three college presidents ago... [who] happened to marry a counselor and it was his wife who helped him understand the importance of counselors." Senior administration argued that "for students to be successful within the classroom, they need to be supported outside of the classroom." The college, according to a faculty respondent, "[has] about 19 different counseling programs" with some, such as the Extended Opportunities, Programs, and Services (EOPS) and the Center for Students with Disabilities, familiar state-wide and nationally to community college practitioners, and others, including the African-American Collegians Center, the Pico Partnership, and the Latino Center, unique to Santa Monica College. According to the college's counseling website, the "Latino Center is dedicated to promoting, encouraging, and increasing the retention, transfer, academic success, and graduation of Latino students" (SMC, 2009). The Latino Center "functions within a student-centered holistic model composed of instructional-based and student services-based counseling components"

(Castillo, et al., 2007); under the umbrella of the Latino Center is the Adelante Program (SMC, 2009).

Promising Practice: The Adelante Program

Meaning forward, ahead, or for the future, the Adelante Program is described as a success-oriented program focusing on academic achievement, transfer, cultural awareness, and personal growth. The program was established in the 1980s, and staff indicated that Adelante’s main purpose is to help students build networks.

[T]o make connections with key resources on campus so they can have the support, get the direction they need to accomplish their objective. We’re really trying to help students make the transition for transfer... Definitely trying to have them maximize their time here; really know that there are people here to support them.

Adelante faculty and staff rely on several key program components to serve students—“the basic one is the counseling, the academic counseling. The second would be our resources...and there’s a tutoring service.” As one staff member conveyed, “most of what [the Adelante Program] had to offer was within the Latino Center.” According to SMC documents Adelante classes, which “emphasize verbal, written, and critical thinking skills essential to college success, and...accentuate the Latino experience within the context of the course subject” distinguish the program from the center. Adelante students receive priority for enrolling in Adelante classes, although not all students who identify as belonging to Adelante enroll in these classes and Adelante classes are open to non-Adelante students after the first wave of registration.

Interviews with administrators, faculty, support staff and students (Table 13) coupled with college artifacts (e.g., memos, program reviews) provided an organizational point of view and detail how the Latino Center operates to serve the Latino population within the larger

context of the college. Data show that increased student attainment among Santa Monica College’s Latino population can be attributed to the Latino Center/ Adelante Program and the program’s purposeful intersection of ecological-environmental, historical-cultural and organizational factors. Cultural aspects coupled with organizational features at both programmatic and campus levels are essential to the Latino Center/Adelante Program as a promising practice. For the purpose of this overview, the center and the program are discussed together, fluidly, as this seems to best represent how informants understand the Adelante Program.

Table 13: Santa Monica College/Latino Center Informants

Santa Monica College Informants Interviewed for the Transferring Promising Practices Project	
Position	Number Interviewed
Administrators	4
Faculty	5
Support Staff	4
Students	4
Student Focus Groups	2

(Source: SMC Participant Roster)

Analyses

Ecological-Environmental Analysis

Liaisons with institutions and agencies outside of Santa Monica College were frequently discussed by sources in the context of serving students. Because approximately 23%¹³ of Adelante students are undocumented residents (AB540) they are unable to receive state and federal financial aid. Latino Center/Adelante counselors reported that they “send them to the agencies that they can get some financial assistance...institutions like MALDEF¹⁴ that offer scholarships for students whether they’re documented or undocumented.” Documents show that faculty

¹³ College data show 725 AB540 students enrolled in fall 2006.

¹⁴ Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

and staff also support scholarships for Latino Center students through annual payroll deductions. Program staff indicated that students needing counseling beyond the Center's capacity (e.g., mental health counseling) are referred to "agencies here in Santa Monica or, in one case, agencies in downtown L.A." Recurrent discussions of referring students, of helping students solve myriad personal and educational issues, suggest that the absence of strategic network connections inside and outside the college might limit student persistence and retention and overall student attainment.

Multiple sources reported connections with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and other baccalaureate-granting institutions and discussed opportunities made possible by Santa Monica College and the Latino Center/Adelante Program for students to visit these campuses. Visits, administrators contended, motivate students, reaffirm their goal to transfer, and give students the opportunity to imagine living and studying in a new environment. The Center supports the costs associated with taking students to visit UCLA "because that is within the [local] radius." For visits to universities outside the local area, viewed as critical for this target population, the Center Director must "get creative" because "they are really tight with the buses now." As one administrative respondent noted, collaborating with other campus units is one successful strategy for maintaining key activities.

The Director of the Transfer Center organized a Northern California college trip where they go visit UC schools up in Northern California—Santa Barbara, Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, Davis. It's all sponsored by the Transfer Center and we tried to push our students to go because many of our students in the Latino culture, the parents kind of want to keep you close to home. So, it can't work both ways, you know. Fathers and daughters, they want to

keep you close. Mothers with sons, especially if he is the first son, the first born, they want to keep him close. So, sometimes, through a northern college trip, [the students] see another environment and then maybe that gets them going. Sometimes, we had to have this conversation where we told the students, "You know my mom and my dad is not going to let me go anyplace else but the University of Southern California or Cal State LA." So, we had to tell the student, you know, make another appointment and bring your parents, we will talk to them. Because in the Latino culture, we can take the advantage that educators are very well respected. They won't respect their child...but then when an educator speaks to them, they will consider it.

The Latino Center/Adelante Program reaches out to the broader community through the annual Latino Youth Conference which respondents saw as "a huge outreach effort to the local high schools." The conference program includes a myriad of workshops for [high school] students and their parents with topics ranging from learning about financial aid to academic success strategies to the politics of immigration issues and options for undocumented students, as well as a motivational keynote speaker. Outside funding for the conference from the City of Santa Monica offsets costs to the college for sponsoring and planning the event. Additionally, the Center has a relationship with the Edison Language Academy, a local elementary charter school situated in the nearby Pico neighborhood. Students from the Latino Center/Adelante program volunteer as tutors at the Spanish/English dual immersion school, gaining valuable career exploration opportunities, expanding their social networks, as well as having an opportunity to recognize the value of their own bilingual/bicultural skills in the workforce and community.

Latino Center personnel and program activities are district funded¹⁵ and a recent Title V grant from the U.S. Department of Education makes “supplemental instruction” in Adelante designated classes possible. Budget constraints are offered as an explanation for modifications made to some program components such as a reduction in the number of available tutoring hours and the end-of-year awards banquet/transfer celebration. However, imaginative solutions have been found to address shortfalls over the years, including recruitment of volunteer tutors and combining the Latino Center celebration with other programs’ year-end banquets. For some, budget cuts have been sufficiently masked so that little or no impact is recognized; as one faculty member said, “I know there are budget constraints and I know that we haven’t felt them like even when there’s very bad class cuts, Adelante classes are not cut, so I think that they do have priority.”

One exception to adequate funding identified by administrators was in response to “state-wide budget cuts in 2003–2004...when we did have to let go of thirty part-time counselors.” The effect was “devastating” says the source, indicating that “if you don’t have a critical mass of staffing then it doesn’t really make sense to provide a service if you really can’t meet the student demand.” Additionally, several informants indicated that limits to [summer/inter-term] funding prevent them from programming year-round, and documents show that Latino Center counselors are [mostly] subsumed into the Transfer Center during summer and winter sessions.

Consistent with community colleges throughout California, Santa Monica College’s Latino population often identifies themselves

as first-generation college students and low-income—demographic traits frequently discussed in the community college literature (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Dougherty, 2001; Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). During a focus group interview, student informants offered an extension of this element of the ecology of the college as they reflected on prior schooling and their growing realization that their K-12 experiences had not always served them well, leaving them underprepared for higher education.

I just realized the teachers were just first teachers so they’re just trying to pass you by ‘cause they were doing it for the first time. And teachers weren’t really steady. That’s what [I] hate about living in low income [areas] because the first new wave teachers come and they’re still trying to get their curriculum right. And then they can’t get it right so they blame themselves and take it easier on the students so you get a higher grade than you’re supposed to get. Then when you go to a place like this where the standards are really up there where they expect you to know it, you’re completely like, “Oh, my God!”

Yeah, I passed my class, I know what I’m doing, but the expectations are so low because they are comparing you to 50 percent that’s barely putting attention, if any.

So, I’m like, “All right. I’m ready for college.” And then I graduated ...and took the assessment and I took math and English...“Okay, I’m going to graduate from here with honors.” I knew, or at least I thought I knew. Then, I’m like, “Oh, my God!” I got the lowest math and the lowest English. That got me to depression a little...Because [secondary] school didn’t even prepare you to do what you thought you knew. You’re not even to the standard.

¹⁵ The district allocated \$84,556 beyond counselors’ salaries from the General Fund to the Latino Center in 2007. These funds were designated for clerical support, instructional assistants, other classified hourly, and student help. Less than 3% of the budget was designated for program supplies (SMC.D1.35).

As students discussed concerns of how high schools had not adequately prepared them for college, they also began to articulate their understanding of the limitations of their peer social networks including the low stores of social and emotional support, as directly related to their educational pursuits that they receive from their families.

You just sit in this little circle where you go nowhere. Most of my close girlfriends they by now have at least one or two kids. Which is normal, actually, it's average, you know.

Of about 20 of my closest friends, I'm the only one who went to college...Everyone else, none of them. My whole neighborhood, not. They just work.

My parents don't understand. Until I finally get my achievement, my goal, then maybe they'll get it. It's so bad when they're like, "Why don't you just quit and go to work?" And that's what some of my friends do because their parents just put them down.

They're raised to work. My parents were raised to work. They were not raised to get an education.

[M]y mom is constantly asking me, "When are you going to graduate? When are you going to go do this?" Like, "Mom..." She's like, "Oh, okay." It gets annoying, though. They don't know how hard it is.

[M]ost of these parents just went to grade school. They didn't go to high school. They don't understand. My mother is more understanding...but most of my friends they dropped out because their parents, yeah, "Help with the rent, you're 18, get a real job."

Scholars have consistently argued that home social and emotional environments are critical to students' educational aspirations and persistence (Clark, 1983; Steinberg, Dornbush,

& Brown, 1992; Teachman & Paasch, 1998). At both the micro- and macro-social levels, parental actions can influence "students' beliefs about the relationship between education and life success" (Steinberg et al., p. 726). Without negating the genuine needs of these working class families to provide basic necessities for their families through low-level employment, Latino Center counselors recognize the limits of parental educational experience and support for students and the potentially detrimental effects on student persistence as an environmental aspect of the college. Thus, the social networks established within and through the Latino Center/Adelante Program intentionally serve to fill a tangible void for these first-generation college students through strengthened engagement with the college and various academic events.

Other salient environmental features of the Latino Center/Adelante Program include the many campus clubs and activities that informants identified as avenues for integration with the college as well as for peer support and student activism, program recruitment, and faculty-student mentoring. In addition, the retention of faculty and staff whose long-term relationship with the college adds to the understanding of and commitment to programs and services. Finally, there is an acknowledgement of a supportive administration that values the role of student services.

Historical-Cultural Analysis

The history of the Latino Center/Adelante Program is grounded in the recognition of the identified needs of Latino students who attend the college. Constituents have adopted slightly different versions of how the center was initiated with each account privileging different individuals or groups.

I know a little bit about the history of how it got started. Initially it was the idea of some professors who felt that there was a need that wasn't being met. (SMC Staff Member)

There was a group of students back in the early 1990s who were very active and adamant about getting more services for Latino students, including bilingual and bicultural counselors. And a group of them actually stormed the President's office, just like the good old days. (SMC Faculty Member)

When the Latino Center and the African-American Center were born, there was an administrator who conceived it and put it together. (SMC Faculty Member)

I think the Center started in the eighties...prompted by students and staff. (SMC Staff Member)

I was an intern, I was over at UCLA, and I came over to do an internship. Our counseling department was very small; we had about 20 counselors...But the counselors were trying to be all things to all people. And there was a group of us who decided that in order to be more effective, we needed to start creating special programs to meet the unique needs of the students who were coming to SMC. And out of that really came the birth of the Latino Center and then our African-American Collegians Center and then our Scholars Program and on and on...So in the mid-1980s we really made this commitment to try to create areas of specialty within the counseling department. (SMC Administrator)

I think it was around 1990, 1991...and there was a big push to facilitate transfer of underrepresented students. And the biggest underrepresented populations were Hispanic and Chicano/Latino. (SMC Administrator)

While not providing clarity about details of the center's origins, each account, or myth, keeps

service to students as the central focus while signaling the ideals of the institution. These myths, assert Bolman and Deal (2003), "are the story behind the story. They explain. They express...and [they] support claims of distinctiveness" (p. 251). The stories that blossom from organizational myth "convey information, morals, values...and keep the historical exploits of heroes and heroines alive" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 257). At Santa Monica College, the Latino Center/Adelante Program "creation story" allows various constituents the opportunity to continually celebrate the original champions of the program and renew their personal and institutional commitment to Latino students.

An enduring culture of caring and support along with a tacit understanding of the "interconnectedness of culture, knowledge, and power" are outstanding features of the Latino Center/Adelante Program (Rhoads, 1999, p. 121). Counselors in the center, all bilingual, were also first-generation college students and "out of the six of us, five of us were actually community college students" making it easy to "...identify with the students and the students clearly identify with us... So they are more comfortable with us and asking questions that they normally are not willing to ask counselors of another ethnic background because they don't want to look silly or ignorant." When asked to describe the resources offered by the program, one counselor argued that culture is a key element.

Then, I'd say there is kind of an umbrella kind of cultural component in terms of understanding from her first-hand experience as well as an educative point of view the first-generation college student experience. And speaking the language, you know, Spanish language for those students who still need it to feel comfortable or make their needs more fully addressed. I think that's a really important thing.

Center counselors indicated that “know[ing] the needs of the students and try[ing] to really get to them, you know, talk to them” are critical, and that positive student outcomes can be attributed to counseling and the relationships they develop with students. “[I]t’s the personal connection, the amount of time, the more detailed counseling that we tend to do as a group.” Latino Center counselors believe they have specific sensibilities which contribute to their relationships with students.

[We have] sensitivity to the cultural issues of the Latino community...the background, how the community works, their upbringing, issues not only just cultural issues, of language issues. It’s knowing and understanding the background of this group of students, and being able to connect with them at that level, [that] bond the student and the counselor.

Counselors maintain an open door policy providing easy, continuous access for students. One student informant claimed that “they never shut the door on you; they were always willing to help you.” Counselors’ willingness to help, the quality of the relationships that develop, and the feelings of agency for students that emerge were frequently cited by students.

They talk to you like you’re family. Spanglish. You relate really good to them. And I think that’s really helpful because...we don’t get that at home.

I formed that connection with the staff and so, for me, I never thought of it as a structured program that I had to go to. It was always a place where I could go for any questions and I think that’s something important. It was kind of like, you know, with your friends.

The counselors were really nice and do look out for you and make sure that you stick with your plan if you want to transfer or if

you want to get your AA....it felt like a family.

The Latino Center is a place where you really feel comfortable...I really love the experience I have with every counselor because they have become like mentors and friends to us...it feels really like family because you don’t feel uncomfortable to talk to any of them at all.

I even have my counselor’s personal email. “You can call me any time, you can email and I’ll answer your question.” I thought that was pretty awesome. Who does that?

[T]hey always believe in you...they always felt that you could do it, you know.

They [help you] realize that you’re not—that you’re just a student—that you’re not a minority, you’re not, you know, like an undocumented student. You’re a student above all and so it gives you the confidence to realize that you really are equal to everyone else.

Students also distinguish the quality of interactions in the Latino Center from encounters with other campus departments and other colleges, further emphasizing the influence of the caring and supportive culture that permeates the Center/Program.

The other offices, unfortunately not all offices in college were that open and giving to students, the admissions office, they aren’t really the nicest. When you go to other offices, you wouldn’t really get that one-on-one connection with the person.

Sometimes it’s very intimidating to go to the financial aid office...

I drive from South Central all the way over here, just for that. People always ask me, “Why?” “Why don’t you go to LACC? Why don’t you go to East Los?” I don’t want to go

to those schools because I know how they treat you.

And the first time I saw [a regular counselor] it's like, I was fresh and new and everything...I didn't feel like connected. I feel like rejected.

Similarly, faculty noted a sense of community within the Center, suggesting that the small size of the group contributes to positive professional interaction.

I know the Latino Center counselors well. So, I feel actually more a sense of community in the Latino Center...So, I would say it's more cohesive because it's a small program and such, we're basically interacting with a smaller group in a smaller community—counselors, support staff, the secretaries, the tutors.

Organizational Analysis

Multiple facets of the college's organizational structures contribute to the Latino Center/Adelante Program's ability to serve students and increase student attainment. The campus mission and the overall climate established by administration, faculty, and staff is that of academic success with transfer as the valued goal. Discussions about technical/vocational education were conspicuously limited or absent. Students learn about the Latino Center/Adelante Program through multiple channels including the campus Welcome Center, in classes, from print material, and even before leaving high school at the annual Latino Youth Conference. Simplified processes eliminate hurdles for students who want to "enroll" and participate in the program—"it's really an intake sheet, not an application," explained a staff member. Attendance at a brief orientation meeting, held numerous times each semester, solidifies their place in the program and helps them understand the full range of services/activities while also meeting center counselors.

In some cases, current Santa Monica students are referred to the Latino Center by a faculty member who believes the student would benefit from the center's support services. Using the SMC Special Programs Referral Form, faculty communicate to the student and the center the nature of his/her concerns (e.g., tardiness, incomplete assignments, low test scores) and students are instructed to "contact the appropriate center to schedule a counseling appointment." Upon receiving the referral, center staff "establish a student file in order to monitor student progress," contact the student to confirm a counseling appointment, and commit to providing "adequate support services and/or referrals to other campus services in order to facilitate success." Among other goals during appointments, counselors assist students with time management, provide a model calendar so they can visually ascertain how they might balance school, work and homework, and, look at students' overall commitments. Furthermore, counselors help students recognize their personal "burn-out" level and emotional threshold.

Other key components of the Latino Center/Adelante Program that resonate with the literature are visible in the interview texts. Counselors stressed that "what we like to do we call a more intrusive counseling¹⁶ and really try to gauge where the student is at." Frequent advisement and intrusive advisement—the practice of intentional contacts to develop beneficial student-institution relationships—are associated with increased levels of persistence and retention (Muraskin & Lee, 2004; Rosenbaum, Deil Amen, & Person, 2006; Seidman, 1991 as cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Adelante students commit to meeting with a Latino Center counselor "twice each semester, [and] once a semester if a continuing Adelante student with a cumulative

¹⁶ Latino Center counselors report conducting 2,327 counseling appointments during the 2006-2007 academic year.

GPA above 2.0.” Maintaining continuous enrollment at the college and following the “recommendations and referrals of Adelante and Latino Center faculty” are other commitments students make when joining the program. Persistence data show that SMC Latino students who participate in Latino Center/Adelante programs are retained in higher numbers than Latino students at the college who do not avail themselves of the center’s services (Table 14).

Table 14: Semester-to-Semester Persistence Rates

Fall 2005: Semester-to-Semester Persistence Rates

	New Latinos	New Latinos Adelante
# Started	2,178	89
2 Semesters	65%	89%
3 Semesters	51%	72%

(Source: Castillo, Del Valle, Drinot, Herrera, & Martinez, 2007)

While community college counseling programs are shrouded in reports of “cooling out” (Clark, 1960) and “gatekeeping” (Erickson & Shultz, 1982), the counseling agenda in the Latino Center can be said to be one that works to “warm up” the aspirations of the target population (Rosenbaum et al., 2006).

The one thing, though, is that a lot of our students and I think this is true of our Latino students is that they don’t realize the capability that they have within themselves and so sometimes it is the counselor’s role to help them realize that they can actually dream larger dreams than they actually have. (SMC Administrator)

I never thought of transfer but decided to transfer even though I originally came just to improve my English. (SMC Student)

What the program does, though, is not only give you counseling over classes, but it goes beyond that. It actually starts giving you options. It starts talking, it starts incenting you to want to transfer. (SMC Student)

[M]aybe they don’t have [transfer] as an option yet and we bring up, “Down the road you may want to think about this. These are the benefits. This is what you can do if you go straight into work. Think about this and then further down the road you can incorporate a bachelors.” We’ll talk to them about it. (SMC Staff Member)

[W]ith their help, I saw more possibilities. I never thought I would transfer to a really good university...[but] they wanted my expectations to be high. (SMC Student)

Not just empty encouragement, however, the counselors provide students with “the tools you need, remarked a student, with concise and logical plans to accomplish goals while fully integrating students into the fabric of the college.

Not only do they help us to enroll in the right classes, but also help us with the deadlines, what are the requirements to go to a four year college. And also, they were always willing to help us in the way they would talk, give advice, encouraging us, motivating us...provide us tools to succeed...so we couldn’t feel like we’re somewhere we didn’t belong. (SMC Student)

Sometimes they come in with an agenda and we may realize early on that that shouldn’t be the agenda. We can just step back and that’s very ambitious, but start from the very beginning. You get a lot of that interpersonal reaction and the cultural component, obviously, is really where in the counseling we can really address that in different ways. (SMC Staff Member)

The magic for me was working one-on-one in office hours. (SMC Student)

Asserting that “students should not have to go all over to get knowledge that should be common place,” faculty noted that training they have received has infused transfer expertise into all counseling programs,

including the Latino Center, so that students can be served in any counseling area, not just the designated transfer center. Counselors also have access to other professional development, both on- and off-campus, supported by district funds. Professional development, say staff respondents, “can be funded by our department or the wider professional development committee on campus. So, the opportunity is definitely there.” The chair of the counseling department also detailed a recent on-campus strategy to build counselors’ expertise and capacity to meet students’ needs.

[W]e have been experimenting with a number of different models. I think we finally have hit on something that is really working. We used to set up training every fall for an annual training. We used to advertise one or two sessions and ask people to come. But we found that the people that probably needed it the least were showing up. This year we worked with our VP to tell everyone that it was mandatory...Our VP emailed every counselor and said that it was required: “here are the five sessions...[and] if you can’t stay the entire time we will ask you to attend again”...We had a presentation on “Possible Pitfalls on Assessment and Transcript Evaluations and How to Avoid Them.” The presenters talked about common mistakes the counselors make on assessment waivers and unusual cases.

Staffing decisions are another important organizational feature that can be linked to program success. A full-time administrator directs the center. According to a staff member, expertise, diversity, and “experience in the community college setting” are qualities the center seeks when hiring new counselors along with “technical knowledge” and “preferably, you know, Spanish/English bilingual.” Not coincidentally, “all the counselors in the Latino Center are first-generation college students themselves” and

“four out of the six were students here...yes, we can’t leave the nest... we love it here.”

The center’s counselors pride themselves on their work ethic and effectiveness and they extend their energy beyond formal job descriptions—volunteering to accompany students on the college tour during their spring vacation; raising [private] funds for scholarships for undocumented, AB540 students; and interacting with students’ parents. To ensure that target students have current information in order to avail themselves of campus and community opportunities, including campus classes that may have particular relevance to the students, the Latino Center generally mails information home, refraining from using email which may not be universally accessible to these lower income students. An administrator explained, “So, for example, the transfer center offers millions of different workshops, such as how to handle your math anxiety, how to complete your UC, Cal State application. So, we give this information to our students to attend.” Although advertised to the target population, Non-Latino Center/Adelante students also attend Latino Center workshops as evidenced by sign-in sheets and informant dialogue.

One component that distinguishes the Program from the Center, according to both support staff and administrators, is the slate of classes that carry Adelante designation—“sections reserved solely for them during the initial part of the enrollment phase”; “they are” according to college administrators, “the classes in English and math that they need to get to that transferrable level.”

My understanding of the Adelante Program specifically is that it’s a curriculum that has been created for the Latino students where often times the faculty who teach the classes are either Latino or Latina or they are faculty who are very sensitive to the needs of that particular community. And they try to infuse within that curriculum the history, the philosophy, you know,

information that would be of interest to that community. And then on the side there's tutoring built in; there's mentoring built in. So that as these students are in the classroom they feel a tremendous amount of support and bonding and connection that will help them want to continue to pursue their academics at Santa Monica. (SMC Administrator)

Faculty for Adelante classes are generally selected by the Latino Center and/or by department administrators and are compensated with either a small stipend for the additional planning/mentoring/tutoring (if the Adelante class is an overload course) or the option to 'bank' the credits. Multiple sources reported that Adelante classes are capped at a lower number than other classes, but a faculty member who teaches in the program asserted "they're about the same." According to some staff respondents, the curriculum is "adapted" to meet the needs of target students although others suggest "it's not like a curriculum from the Latino Center. It's a college thing." Faculty emphasized that the difference is their approach or selection of materials.

The classes that I teach in Adelante are English classes which mean that they're doing the same exact program that the non-Adelante students are doing except for the literature I choose is Latino-based.

The data, however, are inconclusive as to whether the Adelante designated classes are an essential component of the program, with students offering relatively anemic explanations as to their value. On the one hand, students praised the specialized classes.

If you needed this one class, they would have a specific class that was for the Adelante students. That became really important for some students that, let's say, had late enrollment or maybe they didn't get the classes they wanted.

I think [the classes are] pretty cool, most of them. I had three and they were all pretty funny. They had good lecturing.

My friends [in the Adelante program] ...got access to the classes earlier than I did.

What makes them good, a difference is like they teach, but they also like help you after class.

On the other hand, one student articulated clear frustration with the classes.

I had an Adelante Program class, but I didn't really like it because I felt like I was in high school and the people were immature...So it was a bad experience...[T]he kids were rude; they were immature; and it was like high school. Then the professor was babying us like giving extra credit and turning in late work. Redo, make-ups. You feel like you're cutting in line. You feel like they're giving it to you on a silver platter. You're gonna get an A.

Although most students regarded the Adelante classes as friendly and inviting, this student not only reacted to the level of maturity in the classes—"I felt like I was in high school"—but also viewed the ethnic makeup of the class limiting to academically, accelerated social networks.

I was actually excited to meet different cultures because I went to a 90% Hispanic high school. Like one or two white people. Maybe ten Black people and the rest were Filipinos. And then, I was excited, like, "Cool, we're gonna get out of the bubble, like the little bubble we were in where everybody spoke Spanish and got along with each other."

Discussion by faculty and administrators also leaves some doubt as to the overall necessity of the Adelante-specific classes.

I have a syllabus but it's not any different. It's not any different because it is an Adelante class, not at all. Again, I run my two English 1 classes: one is an Adelante

and one is not, exact[ly] the same way, except for when I am with the Adelante students in discussion certain subjects, I will purposely curve the subject toward their specific needs and towards their interests in that subject.

The students who are Latino can take a non-Latino focused course and be no worse off.

Because the truth of the matter is, in my Adelante class, there are a lot of students who are not Adelante. And in my non-Adelante classes, I actually do have Adelante students.

Although Adelante classes are important for numerous students, they do not carry the same level of universal importance as the specialized counseling. The most salient feature of the classes may be the selection of faculty who are, as one staff member stated, “more sensitive to the cultural issues of the Latino community,” faculty that resist a monocultural view of society and education and instead, in the sense of multicultural education, “believe that teaching is about learning from the students.” Through their choice of texts and discussion topics, Adelante faculty may transmit the culture of support and caring present in the Latino Center and central to the program’s overall success.

Conclusions

Santa Monica College serves low-income Latino students from both the local community and the greater Los Angeles Basin who are attracted to the college by proximity, reputation, and a belief that they will be treated respectfully and that their aspirations will be supported. Both students and faculty recognize that a significant proportion of Latino students have been academically underprepared for college-level work and, in response to this environmental feature, the Latino Center and Adelante Program have built

structures and services, centered around a culture of caring, to meet students’ social, academic and financial needs.

Although the importance of caring in education is not novel, caring can be more symbolic than substantial (Noddings, 1984; 1992, as cited in Valenzuela, 1999). However, the Latino Center/Adelante Program “conveys acceptance and confirmation” (Valenzuela, p. 21), developing and sustaining respectful relationships that ultimately foster students’ connection to the college and their commitment to academic pursuits.

Student informants continually stressed that in the Latino Center they do not feel “rejected” and that the counselors help them see “that you’re not a minority, you’re not... [just] an undocumented student, you’re a student above all.” By celebrating Adelante students’ cultural roots and various histories, faculty in the Latino Center and Adelante Program, who bring a multiplicity of cultural knowledge to the organization as a whole, create opportunities for students to cross cultural borders and “make a successful transition into the academic world while retaining their own sense of cultural identity” (Laden, 1999). Academic and support services employed by Latino Center/Adelante faculty and staff help mitigate students’ negative self-appraisals and reduce anxiety associated with a college environment where, as student respondents expressed, “the standards are really up there.” Additionally, as students’ anxiety is reduced and competence as a learner becomes a salient aspect of their individual identities. Students’ help-seeking behaviors grow as well.

So, any question that I ever have, I either ask my peers, like whoever’s there in the office or I’ll always go to the other counselors. If one is busy, someone else would be there to answer your questions.

I took advantage of our tutors in the Latino Center.

When I get out of my class or on my break I always go [to the Latino Center] and just chill.

I would go to tutoring, and I did go for counseling...And so they helped you as far as financial and how to apply for financial aid, how to apply when you reach transfer, and if you were to apply to a school, if you have to write essays and stuff, they would look over it and see like if you need help or if you need someone to proofread your essay.

Counselors' understanding of the students' culture, their own experiences as first in the family to attend college, their ability to speak with students in Spanish, and "Spanglish," bolster their credibility and allow for greater latitude in guiding students through the academic trajectory. Student informants contended "you relate really good to them"; "they always believe in you"; "they have become like friends to us";...[and] "it feels really like family." Appreciating community mores of respect for educators and accorded the latitude by students who regard them "like family," Latino Center faculty are able to function beyond their duties in the Latino Center, including negotiating with students' parents to secure support for their children's education.

Finally, the organizational, pedagogical, and relational practices of the Latino Center/Adelante Program intentionally develop students' social and cultural capital by providing opportunities for students to "join a network of Latino students, faculty, and staff" and "collaborate with...members of the neighboring community on projects/activities related to the advancement of Latino students" (SMC, 2007). Thus, the Adelante program and the Latino Center foster agency and connectedness for Latino students and provide the mechanisms and avenues to facilitate transfer behaviors and outcomes.

TRANSFERRING PROMISING PRACTICES TO OTHER COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Perhaps the most critical goal of this project was to extrapolate knowledge from detailed examinations of promising practices in community colleges for transfer to other sites. According to Bogan and English (1994), adopting best practices from leaders in a field is an “effective way to manage change and to supercharge continuous improvement” (p. 152). It can provide opportunities for comparison, be used as a tool to create a learning organization, and lead to organizational re-engineering (Best Practices, 2007). However, research and theory in the area of transferring best or promising practices in educational environments are scarce; with few exceptions, our framework for transferring knowledge about promising community college practices comes from the fields of medicine and business.

We define transferability as a process of identifying and learning from promising practices and applying them in a new configuration or a new location (“Ensure Competitiveness—Transfer Best Practices,” 1993). In essence, transferability is based on a process of appropriation. This understanding offers a persuasive way to think about how educative practices are produced and adapted from other contexts. As McKeon (1998) notes, promising practices cannot be merely adopted on other institutional sites; “the one size-fits-all approach to best practice does not usually work” (p. 498). Rather, a “generative approach” to transferring promising practices is more likely to be useful (Rockwell, 1996, p. 318). Such an approach relies on selective appropriation of the promising practices within a program and respects the local autonomy of a receiving organization and the importance of allowing institutional actors to reinterpret or

transform the discourses offered to the organization as promising.

Challenges in Transferring Promising Practices

Although there is little research or theory in the educational literature about how to transfer a promising practice from one institution to another, there is some consensus on the challenges involved in this process. These challenges include the cultural capacity of the receiving institution; little commitment to the ideals of a learning organization; lack of teamwork at the receiving institution; and unsteady or absent support from college leaders (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1995; Clark & Estes, 2002; Dehoff et al., 2001; Love, 1985). Perhaps one of the most complex challenges centers on college leaders’ support or absence of support for the transfer of a practice; receiving institutions that do not exhibit a robust enthusiasm for adapting an external promising practice to their own institutional processes may be disappointed in the results.

Although many of these challenges have to do with the ways that receiving institutions learn about, adapt, and implement promising practices from peer institutions, there is much that we as researchers can do to facilitate the transfer of promising practices from one community college to another.

How This Project Can Facilitate the Transfer of Promising Practices

According to Sashkin and Ergermeier (1993), in order to disseminate innovations in education, “personal assistance and continuing support from a skilled and knowledgeable agent” is more productive than simply asking institutions to disseminate stand-alone

information on their programs, processes, and practices (p. v). In this project, the California Community College Collaborative (C4) will act as this skilled and knowledgeable agent, and will follow four steps (gathered from the literature) to facilitate the transfer of promising practices (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1995; Clark & Estes, 2002; Dehoff et al., 2001; Garvin, 1993; Kidwell, Vander Linde, & Johnson, 2000; Love, 1985).

1. Provide explicit, detailed description of the promising practice and its components;
2. Provide explicit, detailed description of the institutional context and history influencing and surrounding a promising practice. As noted previously, research on promising practices must be extremely detailed to discover the root causes of what differentiates it as promising, and interviews and observations should probe for the tacit internal knowledge of changes and modifications made during the establishment or maintenance of a promising practice that do not appear in explicit records;
3. Detail quantifiable effects of potential improvements. Community college faculty and administrators are understandably hesitant to implement practices or processes from another institution without solid evidence that these practices have improved student outcomes or helped to close the achievement gap between Latino, African-American, Native American, and low-income students and their white, Asian, or more affluent peers. Demonstrating the ways in which a given program, practice, or process has improved student or organizational outcomes is essential to facilitating the transfer of promising practices to other community colleges;

4. Translate the benefits of one or more promising practices into clear steps for adoption or adaptation. We include detailed descriptions about the institutional context, actors, and culture at each institution under study, which will allow other community colleges to assess how similar or dissimilar it is to their own institution. We also describe instructional programs as a cohesive set of specific practices or processes that can be transferred individually, depending on a receiving institution's context. The California Community College Collaborative may work side-by-side with faculty and administrators at a given community college to help them adopt or adapt one or more promising practices or processes.

What Receiving Institutions Must Do to Transfer a Promising Practice

To be capable of receiving and implementing promising practices, community colleges need to emulate the definition of a learning organization; they should be skilled at “creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights” (Dehoff et al., 2001, p. 5; Garvin, 1993). According to Dill (1999), if an institution wants to learn from others, it must also systematize the process of looking outside itself for useful knowledge. In short, to adopt or adapt a promising practice from another institution, a community college must have an organizational culture that is open to dialogue, self-reflection, and collaboration. It must also demonstrate strong intra-group communication and leadership (Dehoff et al., 2001; Kidwell, Vander Line, & Johnson, 2000; Pyzdek, 1996).

One of the first steps in transferring promising practices to a specific receiving institution is to decide upon a common vocabulary and approach to planning activities (Dehoff et al., 2001). Receiving institutions

must also establish a credible picture or baseline of their current situation; the examination of existing practices, processes, resources, and assessments is crucial to determining the adaptability of an identified promising practice to a new campus environment (Alstete, 1995; Dehoff et al., 2001; Tucker, 1996). Upon rigorous assessment of existing gaps in institutional performance, the receiving institution can begin implementing promising practices where the most critical gaps occur.

Receiving institutions must also recognize that there will be challenges to the implementation of new practices. Resistance to change is frequently the most significant barrier to the knowledge transfer process, and it takes dedicated community college faculty and administrators to build consensus and generate the support of peers to implement any promising practice successfully (Bender, 2002). Finally, receiving institutions must engage in rigorous and continuous assessment, reflection, and modification once a new practice or process is implemented (Dill, 1999). They must put in place a plan to measure student and organizational outcomes, and use those data to inform future modifications and program improvements (Dehoff et al., 2001). In essence, transferring promising practices from other community colleges requires significant resources, commitment of stakeholders, preparation, institutional self-reflection, long-range planning, and a culture that embraces learning and dynamic change.

DETAILS OF EACH PROMISING PRACTICE

Basic Skills

Success Centers at Chaffey College

The Success Centers at Chaffey College are centralized, faculty led, and support supplementary instructional programs. The name “Success Centers” reflects the idealism of institutional members in undertaking these instructional efforts. Their goal is to help all students “succeed” by staying in college and progressing in their coursework by providing (and in some cases requiring) additional learning opportunities such as tutoring, workshops, and directed learning activities. The Success Centers are directed and coordinated by a small group of faculty called “Instructional Specialists.” These faculty members work with other faculty members from academic departments to plan all Success Center instructional activities. The Success Centers provide students with additional instruction in subject matter, additional time to develop specific skill sets, and additional space to work with other students. Furthermore, there are different success centers for different subjects (specifically math, writing, and multidisciplinary, a catch-all category). While the Success Centers work closely with academic departments, they are also used by various student services or support programs throughout the college. The Success Centers have become a central feature of Chaffey College.

The Success Centers at Chaffey College exhibit each of the “Four Cs” (cohesion, cooperation, connection, consistency) and these characteristics lead to effective practice. The cohesion of the Success Centers is characterized by the presence of a college-wide culture of support, the commitment of faculty, and the widespread use of the Success Centers by various academic departments and student service programs at Chaffey College.

The Success Centers enjoy the benefits of a powerful organizational culture that values the work of the centers, including their work with students and their role in the institution. The administration, faculty, and support staff exhibit a collective responsibility for maintaining funding for the Success Centers regardless of the availability of external funding, a campus-wide refusal to use the term “basic skills,” and a reverence of and commitment to using research to improve the Success Centers. These attitudes and behaviors support the Success Centers.

Chaffey College faculty are committed to using and improving the Success Centers. The Instructional Specialists (faculty in charge of the Success Centers) work as “missionaries” and connect with faculty from academic departments to recruit them to the ethos of the Success Centers and to participate in the development of Success Center curricula. Faculty members from academic departments teach in the Success Centers, plan Success Center activities, and take time off of their regular teaching assignments to focus more attention on the Success Centers.

Finally, the Success Centers are centralized and widely used by academic departments and student service programs at Chaffey College. English classes, foreign language classes, and ESL classes require all of their students to spend a pre-determined amount of time in the Success Centers. Similarly, student service programs that work with minority and low-achieving students such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Opening Doors to Excellence, and Smart Start also require their students to use the Success Centers. This widespread, required use of the Success Centers for all types of students limits the stigmatization of students who access them and, thus, promotes greater student engagement.

The cooperation among those involved in the Success Centers is evident through administrator-faculty relationships and faculty-

faculty relationships. Success Center administrators and the Instructional Specialists work together to run the Success Centers and foster support for them throughout the college. Administrators operate at the upper levels of the college and advocate for the Success Centers with new presidents, vice presidents, and the like. They directly influence the Success Centers through the encouragement and financial support they give to the Instructional Specialists. The Instructional Specialists have considerable autonomy and jurisdiction over the Success Centers (with the exception of financial resources), and they work with other faculty to create the Success Center curricula.

The characteristic of connection is important in that the Success Centers are attributed as responsible for closing the achievement gap. Student service programs filter students into the program; specifically, the Extended Opportunity and Program Services (EOPS) office and the Smart Start office connect with students in communities surrounding Chaffey. EOPS specifically targets Hispanic students and students from low socioeconomic areas or high schools that are not competitive. Similarly, the Smart Start program is a bridge program for students with poor assessment results and self-reported information that suggests they may struggle in college. EOPS and Smart Start require their students to use the Success Centers if they want to be a part of their programs. Thus, the Success Centers have indirect connections with the community.

Finally, the behaviors and activities surrounding the Success Centers provide consistency for the program. The Instructional Specialists of the different Success Centers (except mathematics) operate under the same dean and are influenced by a similar ethos. This structural feature streamlines the different Success Centers and fosters consistency over time. The Success Centers also provide the same curricular structure regardless of

academic subject. Students attending the centers for English, reading, languages and other subjects take part in workshops, directed learning activities, and supplemental lectures. This curricular characteristic stabilizes the experiences of students over time.

The Success Centers at Chaffey College rely upon practices that would be useful to other colleges that are starting or revitalizing their basic skills programs. The cohesion of the Success Center may be difficult to replicate in other institutions because of the prominence of a strong ethos that developed organically as administrators and faculty collectively realized the need to repair the basic skills program at Chaffey. Nonetheless, community colleges could replicate other practices and structures that contribute to cohesion. These practices unify the experiences of faculty and students, streamline the curriculum given to students, and limit the stigmatization of students. In order to develop program cohesion, we recommend that colleges:

1. Hire faculty committed to students.
2. Place the basic skills program at the center of the college structure (as opposed to placing small, specialized pockets in various academic departments and service programs).
3. Organize all components of the basic skills program under the same administrative leadership.
4. Require all students in specific courses to use the Success Centers.

The emphasis on the role of faculty, a centralized structure, and universal student use of the basic skills program are all practices that contribute to creating a cohesive environment.

The Success Centers' cooperative practices are not complex and could be transferred to other colleges without great effort. The supportive relationships between administrators and faculty and the division of labor limit the potential for power struggles over the Success Centers. Interactions between the faculty responsible for Success Centers and

faculty in academic departments result in Success Center curricula that directly support students' experience in their courses. In order to develop program cooperation, we recommend that colleges:

1. Clarify the roles of administrators and faculty regarding the basic skills program.
2. Place faculty in direct control over the basic skills program and the creation and maintenance of curricula.
3. Organize meetings between basic skills program faculty and faculty from academic departments to discuss the purpose and curricula of the basic skills program.

These three steps foster cooperation and streamline student experiences in the basic skills program.

The Success Centers do not have direct connections to the external community, but they do work with student services that do. This mediated relationship with the community funnels minority and at-risk students to the supplemental instruction and support offered by the Success Centers. To replicate this practice we recommend that colleges require all student service programs to use the centralized, basic skills program.

Finally, the centralized structure and utilization of similar curricula structures regardless of academic subject increases the consistency between the different components of the Success Centers and this practice ensures stability over time. To establish these practices we recommend that colleges organize all components of their basic skills program under the same administrative leadership and require all sub-components to use the same types of activities (i.e., workshops and directed activities).

Career Program

Fashion Program at Los Angeles Trade Tech

The ability of the Fashion Program at LA Trade Tech (LATTC) to retain students, effectively train them, and place them in jobs in spite of students' disadvantaged social backgrounds can be attributed to the four principles of cohesion, connection, cooperation, and consistency. The program's long-standing tradition and history have provided it with a good deal of momentum to maintain connections with the surrounding industry from which students benefit. Additionally, the organizational strategies of the program not only reduce the obstacles and 'hoop jumping' that students frequently encounter in the college setting but they also facilitate job attainment. And finally, the program's physical location nested within the fashion district of Los Angeles has certainly contributed both to students' ability to obtain employment and to the quality of the program's curriculum and expert training in the making of garments.

The Fashion Program at Los Angeles Trade Tech displays a strong culture of support among faculty, students, and staff. The principles exhibited in this practice include cohesion, caring, and consideration. This practice manifests itself through faculty's explicit dedication to the students. Faculty members were often cited as regularly staying after class to help students with their projects and course material, helping students who were not in their own class, and making themselves available to students via office hours. All these practices helped students and faculty develop strong relationships where students acknowledged a support system that facilitated their longevity in the program.

The potential benefit of this practice for other institutions includes better trained students leading to job placement, an improved working environment leading to better reputation of program, and greater overall

student retention. Possible ways in which these practices may be institutionalized into a college itself include providing meeting spaces for instructors and students to meet informally as well as giving instructors incentives to stay "after hours." Such incentives may be in monetary form for part-time faculty or in the form of the substitution of teaching obligations with official "tutoring/advising" time for full-time faculty.

The internship program present in the Fashion Program at LATT is also a practice that contributes to extant principles of connection, consistency, and longevity inherent in the program. The practice is implemented through the steady dedication of one internship coordinator who maintains strong connections with industry affiliates. The practice may be implemented and retained at other colleges through ensuring that internship coordinators physically visit local businesses and stakeholders frequently as well as having the internship coordinator(s) meet with students and business affiliates throughout the duration of the internship to ensure the job is a good fit not only for the student but also for the business. If the match does not prove to be beneficial for either party, students are moved to another business that may serve the needs of the student and business more effectively.

These behaviors serve to maintain strong relationships between the college program and business stakeholders. As such, these behaviors ensure strong ties to the industry relevant to the vocational program; the business connections provide practical training for students aiming to garner employment in the industry; and these connections increase the potential for better job placement. Ways in which colleges may adopt and institutionalize these practices include creating an internship course so that students may receive credit and/or pay, the

hiring of one or two internship coordinators who have connections (personal and professional) to the industry, and instating an evaluation technique for students and businesses once the internship is complete for future reference (i.e., survey, interviews) so that the program may be improved to operate at its optimal level.

A student competition upon the completion of a project in a vocational program is another practice displayed through LATT's fashion program (e.g., Gold Thimble competition at LATT). The opportunity to showcase one's work for a competition in which work is judged was identified by several students and faculty as an opportunity for students to excel and produce at a high level. The principles inherent in this practice include cohesion, forward thinking, productivity, and excellence.

This practice may be implemented at other colleges through the establishment of a course aimed at creating products that every student presents at the end of course/program and making this course a requirement for completion of the program. Additionally, including local industry officials and business stakeholders to attend and participate in judging the students' work are actions that would further connect the industry with the college program and further inculcate the relationship between the two. Moreover, including other local community colleges in the competition would serve to develop and establish collegial relationships between colleges with similar programs. This integration and connection with outside institutions and businesses would bolster the program overall.

Another organizational practice contributing to LATT's Fashion Program's success is their within program registration system. In this practice, a registration coordinator or program chair (faculty member) speaks regularly with students about course sequences and offers timely advisement to ensure students' productive progress through

the program. This practice contributes to the principles of cohesion and convenience inherent in the program. Additionally, other institutions could benefit from this practice and achieve greater retention, greater ease of moving students through the program, and higher completion or graduation rates. Ways in which this practice may be adopted into a program include hiring of a registration coordinator who is trained to know course sequences to finish the program, having a separate office for within-program registration, and regularly advertising within program registration in courses.

The hiring of faculty with a minimum of five years of industry experience is another practice that contributes to the high quality training students receive in the Fashion Program at LATT. Ways in which this practice may be implemented includes recruiting faculty from within the industry, creating and maintaining connections with industry officials to be updated on a possible pool of applicants, and regularly speaking with industry officials. This practice exemplifies the principles of connection, experience, and excellence in training students. Ways in which other institutions may benefit from this practice include a prepared program faculty with industry experience who train students well and oriented them to the "real world" job. Higher quality training would only lead to higher job acquisition rates thus boosting the program/department's reputation and prestige. A seminal way in which to institutionalize this practice would be to adopt a hiring policy that requires that faculty have a minimum of five-years industry experience before their consideration for employment.

The final practice related to the program's organization is effectively training students to have precision in what they produce or create. Ways in which this practice may be implemented include asking for input from industry as to what is valued and what currently is important in the industry and using

these suggestions to design course curricula. Another way to implement this practice is managing to have program actors (i.e., faculty, students, and staff) “buy in” to the idea of going “above and beyond” what is required of them. This may be indicative of the culture of a department but if this were evident in the actors at all levels of the program, higher quality work would be produced.

One of the preeminent practices for student attainment in a vocational program is the development and maintenance of a close relationship with the industry relevant to the program. In the case of the Fashion Program at LATT, a close relationship with the apparel industry in the garment district in downtown Los Angeles has benefited the institution through greater job acquisition rates and industry relevant training of students which contributes to their greater competitiveness on the job market.

This practice is implemented through three primary factors. First, a few program actors remain in regular contact with the business. Second, the program itself is physically located close to industry. Finally, the Fashion Department at LATT invites and even requests feedback from the apparel industry as to what is being emphasized and created in the industry. Fashion program faculty design courses according to these suggestions. This practice emphasizes the principle of connection. Ways in which this practice may be implemented at other institutions includes the hiring of faculty and administrators from the industry, having program officials regularly visit and speak with industry officials, and inviting industry officials to participate in program events such as end-of-year contests/celebrations.

English as a Second Language ESL program at City College of San Francisco (CCSF)

The ESL program at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) consists of several promising practices that are noteworthy in terms of their transferability to other community college ESL programs. For one, the assessment and placement of students by level of English language proficiency is an integral structure of the program. Both the credit and noncredit ESL programs use the same home-grown assessment to place incoming students. The placement test includes multiple choice questions, a short interview, and a writing sample so that it measures the overall language skills of the individual learner (California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages [CATESOL], 2000; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

This structure provides cohesion in the program. Harklau et al. (1999) suggest that comprehensive assessment instruments may help minimize inappropriate ESL course placements and prevent unnecessary delays in ESL students’ progress through the program. Implementing this structure benefits both students and faculty by minimizing the need to move students from one course to another at the beginning of the semester because of misplacement. Also, while complete homogeneity of English proficiency within the classes may not be possible or even desirable, students and faculty benefit from a classroom containing a more limited range of abilities. Students benefit by having peers at or close to their own level of English proficiency with which to communicate and work. Faculty benefit by being able to plan instruction that directly addresses the needs of most, if not all, of their students.

Currently, fewer than 40% of California community colleges use an assessment that includes a writing sample, even for placement in writing courses (Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate, 2006). Lack of time

and money are the main factors contributing to their limited use. Yet, placing more resources into assessment and placement would be an important step for improving any ESL program. Evidence from CCSF suggests that the use of a writing sample as an assessment instrument improves the assessment and placement of ESL students, supplemented with an oral interview.

A second practice that is noteworthy is the support and training that are available to both credit and noncredit faculty as well as full-time and part-time faculty through the Teacher Resource Center (TRC). This structure addresses Blumenthal's (2002) concerns that noncredit ESL faculty typically do not have access to the same resources as credit ESL faculty. It also addresses Chrisman and Crandall's (2007) observation that part-time faculty typically receive lower benefits and job security than full-time ESL faculty. Part-time ESL faculty at CCSF recognize and take advantage of opportunities to participate in institutional governance that is one status indicator of academe (Blumenthal, 2002). Because a significant number of part-time faculty are eventually hired as full-time and a strategy of the ESL Department is hiring more full-time faculty, the recruitment and retention of highly qualified and motivated instructors for the noncredit ESL program does not pose a problem at CCSF (Chrisman & Crandall, 2007).

Admittedly, not all ESL programs have such ready access to a large pool of highly qualified ESL instructors. Also, part-time instructors typically far outnumber full-time faculty on community college campuses (Blumenthal, 2002; CATESOL, 2000). Yet, at CCSF full-time faculty are considered more advantageous for students because they can provide more consistent instruction and are on campus more hours to help the students. Therefore, this practice allows for greater consistency in the program.

Increasing the retention and motivation of part-time faculty can be accomplished by offering similar benefits to the part-timers such

as comparable pay, benefits, resources, and opportunities for training and professional development. The institution's hiring of faculty with a good fit is another step that can be taken when attempting to transfer this promising practice. CCSF matches faculty hiring with what is working for student outcomes.

A third promising practice is the centralized administration of the ESL Department at CCSF (Kuo, 1999, 2000). The department has achieved high integration of curriculum, in spite of having up to ten different satellite campuses with somewhat different student populations and offering multiple ESL programs. This coordination is accomplished through monthly curriculum committee meetings. The committee structure also provides full-time and part-time faculty the opportunity to become involved in institutional governance both at the departmental and college levels. The part-time faculty in the ESL Department at CCSF are motivated to become involved because they are treated as equals. This sense of equal status is extended to the noncredit faculty as well.

The large number of noncredit ESL faculty at CCSF is not the norm among California community colleges, and, thus, this may limit the transferability of the faculty participation on college committees. Nonetheless, there is evidence of the importance of regular meetings of faculty and administrators in order to develop connections.

Centralized ESL administration may also facilitate budgetary planning and the distribution of material and human resources. Students may find it easier to understand their ESL course options, set goals, access services, and move from one level of the program to another (CATESOL, 2007). A benefit of the committee structure is that it has afforded the ESL Department at CCSF considerable influence when it comes to institution-wide decision-making. Not housing ESL programs in a separate department limits the program

faculty's influence on policies that directly affect ESL students.

A sense of connection between faculty and ESL Department administrators is evident in the practice of release time of faculty to perform some administrative duties. Campus program coordinators and department chairs are selected from the faculty and then return to their faculty position after their term is over. That is, administrators maintain an academic load in addition to their other responsibilities. A part-time instructor who is also the coordinator of the Learning Assistance Center tutorial program sees the benefit of administrators being assigned tutoring hours.

[T]hat has been tremendously helpful because then the Department Chair who, you know, is instrumental in a lot of policy, knows what goes on at the program and has a first-hand feel for its usefulness.

Another structure that stands out as a promising practice is the numerous and varied enhanced support services available to students. The Learning Assistance Center, Project SHINE,¹⁷ and Early Alert programs all help with student retention and help students advance through the program whether it be from noncredit ESL to credit ESL or from credit ESL to higher levels of education in other credit areas (Chrisman & Crandall, 2007).

The ESL Department at CCSF has a long history of student- and community-focused decision-making. Project SHINE, the service learning initiative that connects students in the credit program with instructors and students in the noncredit program, exemplifies this focus. This component benefits all participants; the ESL noncredit instructors receive extra help in classrooms which are generally larger than credit ESL classes, the SHINE students gain

confidence, and the noncredit students gain a role model of someone who has gone on to the credit program.

Not all the benefits of increased student support services are quantifiable. Nevertheless, scholars indicate that such services can help immigrant ESL students overcome social, academic, and career barriers (Chrisman & Crandall, 2007; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). Immigrant students, however, have needs that can be met through the use of peers for tutoring and in-class assistance from faculty. This practice requires commitment, planning, and training on the part of ESL faculty and staff.

Vocational Program

Accelerated Careers in Technology (ACT) at Modesto Junior College

The Accelerated Careers in Technology (ACT) program at Modesto Junior College (MJC) fulfills the career and technical education, workforce development, community education, partnerships with the community, and economic development aspects of MJC's mission. The ACT program trains students in technical vocations of their choosing (Electrician, Maintenance Mechanic, Manufacturing Operator, Printing Press Operator, Welder, Construction Technician, Air Conditioning and Sheet Metal Technician, and Automotive Mechanic) with the intention of placing them in positions at companies in the local economy. The program is "accelerated" because students move through it quickly and intensely in a work-like environment to be trained (or retrained) and placed in employment in a few months. ACT is an opportunistic program dependent on and limited by the economic needs of the local economy, and this, in turn, causes the program to place significant constraints on the types of students admitted to the program.

The ACT program exhibits each of the "Four Cs" (cohesion, connection, cooperation, and consistency) and these characteristics lead

¹⁷ Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders) is a national service-learning program that places college students as volunteer tutors/aides in local ESL (English as a Second Language) and Citizenship programs.

to effective practice. The cohesion of the program is characterized by the commitment of faculty, the community or “family-like” atmosphere surrounding the ACT program, and the mainstreaming of students. ACT faculty work beyond the time constraints of their classes to help students understand difficult material; they exhibit passion that students recognize and admire. The ACT program creates a family-like atmosphere by organizing students into cohorts. Each cohort progresses through coursework together and, given the intense, accelerated nature of the program, individuals in a specific cohort work, study, and eat together like a family. The ACT program also fosters community by inviting alumni to the Technical Education/ACT graduation ceremony to visit or to look for employment, and stresses that alumni are welcome to come back for additional training if the need should arise. The faculty commitment and the family-like atmosphere create a cohesive, united program.

The graduation ceremony illustrates the importance of mainstreaming the ACT program into the larger Technical Education Department at MJC. The graduation is designed to double as a hiring fair, as the college invites employers from local companies to attend the graduation and meet graduating students. Regular technical education and ACT program graduates are given the same opportunity to secure jobs. Furthermore, the ACT students take regular technical education courses and benefit from the same curriculum as regular students. This mainstreaming of students limits the potential stigmatization of students and contributes to the cohesion of the ACT program.

Program connection is characterized by the relationships between ACT administration and faculty as well as between the college and external state agencies, local industries, and schools. ACT administrators and faculty meet continually with external contacts to create new ACT programs, to review and develop

curriculum, to ensure the ACT programs have the appropriate equipment to train students for their chosen vocations, and to filter students into the program. ACT faculty establish and maintain connections with local public schools to promote vocational education and to help plan the vocational education curriculum in those schools. These connections with external groups are crucial, influential components of the program.

Cooperation is also an important and salient characteristic of the ACT program. Cooperation is evident in the committee meetings that create new ACT programs and the interview-screening process that filters students into ACT. The committee meetings require ACT administrators to interact and collaborate with county and city officials and representatives from local industries to identify potential program opportunities and provide a way to fund them. Similarly, ACT faculty collaborate with representatives from the Community Services Agency (CSA) for Stanislaus County when they interview potential students. ACT faculty and CSA representatives find a way to balance the “accept everyone” approach of the CSA with the ACT program’s need to screen students to ensure they are able to endure the intensity of the program. These organizational activities, while also underlining the connections the ACT program has with external bodies, suggest the importance and presence of cooperation in the operation of the ACT program.

Finally, the ACT program activities exhibit consistency over time. Interactions and meetings with external bodies, the interview-screening process, and the cohort model are regularly scheduled and incorporated into the organization of the program. This regularity provides consistency for the experiences of ACT administrators, faculty, support staff, and students and provides stability for the program from year to year.

The Accelerated Careers in Technology program utilizes practices that would be

valuable to other institutions that have or are trying to start a vocational education program. The cohesion of the ACT program would be a valuable component to transfer to other institutions. Program cohesion fosters unity, community, and the creation of program culture. In the case of ACT, program cohesion seemed to have the most influence on students' experiences. In order to provide a sense of community for students, we recommend that colleges:

1. Hire faculty who exhibit commitment to students and the surrounding community.
2. Admit students in groups and keep those students together throughout the duration of their coursework (cohort model).
3. Structure curriculum in a way that requires students to mimic a work schedule (6–8 hours a day, 5 days a week). This prepares them for work and fosters close relationships within the cohort.
4. Structure curriculum so that students in the accelerated workforce development program take the same courses as students in regular vocational programs. This limits the potential stigmatization of students and prevents employers from selecting students from other programs because there is a quality differential among the student groups.

The connection and cooperation that ACT has with external agencies, industries, and schools establish and perpetuate ACT's role in the Modesto community. These relationships with external bodies would help other institutions tailor their programs to the specific context of their surrounding demographic and economic environment. To receive the benefits of these connections and cooperative relationships with external authorities, we recommend that colleges:

1. Hire faculty with industry experience (and therefore industry contacts).

2. Establish relationships with external economic and industrial bodies to identify community needs, sources for funding, and potential employers.
3. Connect faculty to public schools that feed into the college to create and streamline vocational education programs in middle and high schools that align with the college programs (and therefore the needs of the community).
4. Plan events (e.g., graduation ceremonies) to connect students with potential employers to quicken the hiring process.

Finally, the ACT program demonstrates the importance of continuity to college programs in general and workforce development programs in particular. To facilitate this continuity, all of these practices need to be incorporated into the regular, structured operation of the institution or program. We recommend, then, that colleges:

1. Solidify connections with external agencies by organizing those interactions into scheduled committee meetings and advising sessions.
2. Incorporate external agencies into college policy making and other processes (e.g., the admissions process).

Transfer

Adelante Program at Santa Monica College

The practices of the Latino Center/Adelante Program at Santa Monica College are intentional efforts to develop students by providing opportunities for students not only to participate in a network of Latino students, faculty, and staff but also to encourage and facilitate transfer of students to universities and four-year colleges. The Latino Center staffed by professional counselors, both full- and part-time, as well as by classified staff and tutors, serves as a nucleus of services. The primary focus of the center is academic

counseling and guidance. Center counselors employ a form of intrusive advisement, reaching out to students and requiring students new to the program to meet with them a minimum of twice per semester. Students are asked to make a commitment to follow through with counselors' suggestions. In addition to course selection and goal articulation, counselors address students' other needs during both formal and informal meetings, helping them with time and stress management while they transition to the role of competent college student and with building students' emotional commitment to education.

Each semester at Santa Monica College a variety of classes across campus are designated as Adelante Program sections. Students with active membership in the program receive priority registration in the Adelante classes which are taught by select faculty. While Adelante course objectives and curricula are consistent with other departmental courses, faculty use culturally-relevant materials and pedagogy to engage Adelante students.

There are three overarching salient characteristics that contribute to the Latino Center/Adelante Program as a promising practice. These characteristics suggest that practices are cohesive, cooperative, connected, and consistent. First, the center and the Adelante program have unwavering support from administration at all levels and from departments and faculty across campus, providing connection and cooperation. This support can be found in a variety of contexts from district-level funding, to private and personal donations for center activities and scholarships, and from the confidence afforded the center from faculty who refer students, teach Adelante classes, and contribute professional expertise and effort to workshops and other center activities. Students, too, show their support through attendance at meetings and events, and their acknowledged trust for the advice of the center's counselors and staff.

Second, practice matches theory, to the extent that the Latino Center/Adelante Program processes and actions are consistent with mission and objectives. Ongoing program self-evaluation serves to maintain this consistency, giving the college opportunities to recalibrate goals and/or processes as needs or resources change. Third, and finally, counselors not only possess the requisite job qualifications (e.g., master's degree) but also have direct knowledge of the challenges faced by the students served in the program. The counselors are themselves first-generation students who understand the strengths, experiences, and needs of the local Latino community, and they have the requisite background and experiences to guide and mentor students. Counselors in the Latino Center are bilingual and bicultural, and they serve as models of possibility. As well, they and their center bring cohesion to the Adelante program.

Programs such as the Latino Center/Adelante Program need uniform support from administration, faculty, staff, community and board members. Employing a cadre of counselors and staff that understand first-hand the needs and challenges as well as the strengths of the Latino community is essential and an effective approach to ensuring a climate of mutual respect. Establishing a culture of caring for students, building relationships that are supportive and family-like to the students is also crucial. Finally, maintaining an open-door policy and focusing guidance and other activities on "warming-up" student aspirations show promising outcomes for Latino student persistence, retention and transfer, and ultimately for narrowing the achievement gap.

Several key program elements support program goals and objectives and could be replicated by other institutions, particularly to improve retention and persistence for Latino students. Consistency, cooperation,

connection, and a cohesive approach are evident across these program elements.

1. Comprehensive, centralized services

Students' myriad counseling/guidance, tutoring/mentoring, and social needs are met in the centralized Latino Center. Counselors, who have received training in multiple aspects of student services, have the ability to answer student questions on a broad range of topics so that students are not shuffled from department to department. The climate of the center is welcoming, relaxed and friendly and an open door policy coupled with staff who have sensitivity to the cultural issues of the Latino community.

Integration with other departments and relationships with faculty across campus gives Latino Center counselors multiple avenues for student recruitment. A student referral process ensures that Latino students in need of support are identified; and if they fail to contact the Latino Center, the center will reach out to them to establish a working relationship. A simplified application/orientation process eliminates structural barriers that might otherwise deter student participation.

2. An agenda that focuses on "warming up" student aspirations

The counseling agenda is one of "warming up" student aspirations, helping students see their own potential and guiding them towards transfer. To assist students with new and broader goals, counselors employ a form of intrusive counseling, closely monitoring student progress, maintaining individual files, calling students they have not seen for a while, those who have received grades below the program's expectations, or those over or under enrolled for a coming term. They expect to see students regularly and they do not wait for the students to come to them. Furthermore, they nudge them towards transferable coursework

and ensure that as soon as the student is eligible for transfer, they complete the required application.

3. Systematic efforts to build students' social capital

Latino Center counselors maintain efforts to build students' stores of social capital, helping them with connections with key campus officials who can support them. Counselors facilitate students' involvement in purposeful, off-campus activities that both serve others and give students' a view of themselves as capable and critical to the health of the community. The center invites community members to participate in the annual conference and serve as Latino Center tutors, and refers students to outside agencies and other institutions. These efforts help students participate in a network and learn how to collaborate. At the same time, counselors build students' soft skills, their ability to represent themselves in a variety of professional situations, to speak publicly, and to understand how presentation of self influences others' beliefs and expectations.

4. Counselor professional development

Santa Monica College has prepared Latino Center and all counselors to assist students with myriad facets of traditional student services. Latino Center counselors, for example, provide advice regarding registration and course selection, goal clarification, financial aid, scholarships, stress management, internships and transfer. They connect students with service learning opportunities, conferences, and other departments and outside agencies as means of additional support. Within this framework of responsibility, counselors have access to professional development, both on- and off-campus, supported by district funds. Administration has recently implemented a mandatory training component for counselors,

ensuring that all full- and part-time counselors have knowledge about salient and current counseling issues.

5. Course offerings and priority registration in classes geared to Latino students' needs

Adelante developmental and college-level classes are identified each semester by program faculty and counselors. Faculty members are selected for these sections based on their demonstrated ability to connect with Latino students and to engage these students in relevant instruction. Although the classes follow the regular SMC course requirements, the selection of readings and discussion topics are geared towards the interests, background, and needs of Latino students. Priority registration is offered to students enrolled in the program, ensuring that they are able to take the Adelante classes with an instructor sensitive to their particular histories and needs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What is a Practice?

Any examination of an educational practice must begin with a simple question: What is a practice? Based on Rockwell's (1995) description of the construction of school scenarios, we understand an educational practice (in this case, an educational practice taking place at a community college) to be a specific form of organization of individual students and college employees' (faculty, administrators, and staff) educational experiences. Per this understanding, entire instructional programs can be based upon one educational practice, or several practices might be evident within one program.

As Rockwell (1995) tells us, an educational practice has several different dimensions, including its *structure* (the use of

the time and space, norms, communicative forms or structures of participation, and power relationships); the *conditions of teaching*; the *content* (academic curriculum); the *conditions of learning*; and *the transmission of value orientations that enable individuals to develop a perspective about themselves and their context*. To understand how educational practices are produced, we must focus on the processes and conditions that make possible the organization of educational experiences. In so doing we draw upon three theoretical approaches: an educational ecology model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), an organizational model (Bidwell, 1965, 2001; Scott, 1998), and a historical-cultural perspective of how educational experiences are constructed (Rockwell, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) educational ecology model calls our attention to the dynamic relationships that a college establishes with other organizations in the external environment. The use of an ecology model allows us to analyze two aspects of community college practice: the ways in which programs work with other colleges, universities, business communities, or federal or state agencies, and the ways that community college programs and their practices are influenced by their surrounding contexts (budget cuts, for example). In short, an ecological framework encourages us to examine how inter-organizational networks are associated with the construction of educational practice. As a result, in examining a specific community college vocational career pathway program (for example), our educational ecology orientation reinforces the necessity of asking questions about how administrators and faculty members create links to the labor market or develop curricular structures that allow students to earn college credit (and develop relevant work skills) by participating in internship programs.

An organizational model of educational practice (Bidwell, 1965, 2001; Scott, 1998), on the other hand, calls our attention to the fact

that educational practices are the result of constitutive action within formal organizations. This orientation reminds us that practices are developed by organizational members whose actions are framed by the intersection of social structures, goals, technology, and the environment. As Giddens (1991) notes, practices in formal organizations such as community colleges are influenced by institutional constraints as well as opportunities for agency. Thus, viewed through the lens of this organizational model, to develop a specific program or practice, institutional members (in our case, community college faculty, staff, and administrators) must identify and integrate organizational resources, structures, and processes in order to accomplish shared goals.

Finally, our historical-cultural perspective (Rockwell, 1999) helps us to understand how historical, cultural, and subjective factors influence educational practice. Drawing from this perspective, we seek to examine how local and larger traditions have contributed to the development of specific educational practices within, for example, a community college basic skills program. To understand the historical dimension of a program, we must examine the patterns of continuity and change in the development of practices. We must also explore how and why individuals abandon, preserve, or create new organizational behaviors to adjust to a dynamic context. We assume that college practices are non-fixed and adaptable to new cultural traditions. College practices may preserve long-established processes and structures such as student support or flexible scheduling, and simultaneously incorporate new strategies such as revenue generating behavior. Ultimately, this historical-cultural approach helps us to observe how ongoing interactions between students and college personnel enable the construction of college practices by appropriating cultural and academic traditions.

Taken together, our educational ecology, organizational, and historical-cultural perspectives help us to understand that community college practices are: (1) constructed under specific historical traditions; (2) mediated by local and larger contextual factors; (3) based on the negotiation of official and everyday norms that result from the existence of various ideologies and personal backgrounds; and (4) reinvented continually by individuals in order to serve contextual demands.

What is a Promising Practice?

There exist numerous definitions of a best practice, both in the education and business literature. Dehoff et al. (2001) define a best practice as an,

[I]terative, rigorous, and highly analytical process that becomes institutionalized over time. It involves identifying superior capabilities, transferring them across business units, and then systematically monitoring and realizing results. . . . At its most powerful, it means using performance improvements to drive strategic transformation. (p. 2)

McKeon (1998) adds that a best practice incorporates the implementation of criteria that have been legitimized within a community of practice (e.g., best practice standards) and innovations in the field of knowledge (i.e., current research).

Although these definitions of best practices are useful, we have chosen to stay away from the term “best practice,” preferring instead “promising practice,” as the latter term does not imply that any one educational practice or program is “the best.” Furthermore, use of the word “best” seems to imply that a particular practice is applicable in all situations and should be implemented whenever possible. A “promising practice,” on the other hand, may be essential to the success of one instructional program, but may not be appropriate in all

situations and should be adopted or adapted with careful consideration (Alstete, 1995). Thus, based on our theoretical approaches (Bidwell, 1965, 2001; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Rockwell, 1999; Scott, 1998), we define a promising practice as a social structure in which the integration of subjectivities, actions, and material resources and historical and cultural conditions allow the achievement of goals that ensure both the development of the participants and the consolidation of the organization itself. Additionally, we emphasize that the development of a promising practice is context-driven; promising practices are produced by individuals and linked to the conditions in effect at a certain place and time.

A promising practice in the context of community colleges is thus a social structure that fosters educational improvement at both the individual and organizational levels. In other words, promising practices should lead to student learning gains and demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap, as measured by course pass rates, certificate or degree attainment rates, and so forth. However, a promising practice should also lead to the consolidation of organizational strategies that are responsive to the characteristics and demands of the student body. In our view, organizational strategies that are designed and integrated in order to provide comprehensive support to disadvantaged students are central components of a promising practice.

Examining Promising Practices in Community Colleges

In order to identify and examine promising practices within a community college instructional program, researchers are directed to seek a “comprehensive perspective” on each practice to discover the root causes of what differentiates it as promising (Dehoff et al., 2001). Researchers thus must focus on identifying both the explicit and tacit knowledge underlying a program, and interviews and observations should probe for

the tacit internal knowledge of changes and modifications made during the implementation and maintenance of a promising practice that do not appear in explicit records. As well, interview questions should seek to explore the “beliefs, values, expectations, and practices of institutional actors,” as these actors have great influence over not only the practices in place, but also how they are implemented and sustained. According to Dehoff et al. (2001), the extrapolation of knowledge from these research activities must be sufficiently descriptive and detailed so that the practice may be adapted to a different environment.

To further guide our exploration of promising practices on community college campuses, we draw on organizational effectiveness literature (Cameron, 1981, 1986; Jones & James, 1979; Lysons & Hatherly, 1992; Lysons, Hatherly, & Mitchell, 1998). Based on this body of work, we identified three dimensions to guide our examination of promising practices: ecological, historical-cultural, and organizational. Although we discuss these three dimensions separately in the paragraphs that follow, we recognize that they are interconnected and overlap in the everyday actions of community college personnel. Nonetheless, we suggest that in each dimension there are certain indicators or factors that explain the aspects of a promising practice that lead to improved student learning or attainment.

In the ecological dimension, we group those forms of organizational behavior that promote dynamic exchanges with the larger environment (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). Researchers (Carter, 1998; Kisker, 2007; Pearman, Elliott, & Aborn, 2004; Zinser & Lawrenz, 2004) have emphasized that community college liaisons with the local community, public and private agencies, and other educational institutions allow students to transfer to four-year institutions, develop working skills, and find jobs related to their education more effectively. Thus, in examining

promising practices in community colleges, we pay special attention to the ways in which college faculty and administrators generate inter-organizational networks and partnerships to create educational services that respond to students' needs and promote student learning. In addition, we explore how policies in areas of funding and accountability are appropriated and used by college personnel in order to create promising instructional programs.

The factors that define the historical-cultural dimension of a promising practice refer to those practices of interaction that students and college personnel jointly develop on a daily basis (Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976, 1978; Rockwell, 1999). As noted earlier, to understand the historical dimension of a program, we are directed to examine the patterns of continuity and change in the development of practices. We are advised to also explore how and why individuals abandon, preserve, or create new organizational behaviors to adjust to a dynamic context. Furthermore, we explore how individuals use and have used organizational resources and appropriate elements of the college culture to define the nature of their educational experiences. In so doing, we pay special attention to the character of the social relationships among students, faculty, staff, and college administrators.

The organizational dimension includes such factors as institutional and program leadership, human and financial resources, the nature of the curriculum and academic planning, and the structures and processes in place to collect information about organizational performance. However, the other two dimensions, ecological and historical-cultural, may also contain these factors.

Institutional and Program Leadership

The relationship between educational planning and leadership is frequently noted in organizational effectiveness literature. Indeed, effective leadership is often described as the

ability of a college authority or authorities to create a vision of change and to develop conditions of dialogue and support among the other members of the organization (Pozner, 2000; Slater et al., 2006). Effective leadership is associated not only with the construction of a supportive culture and climate in the institution (Mai, 2004; Nunnelley, Whaley, Mull, & Hott, 2003) but also with academic achievement (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Since educational leadership is not exclusive of college authorities (Du, 2007; Shirley, 2006; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003), in this study we examine how faculty, staff, and administrators interact with one another to enact leadership behaviors that allow them to implement educational experiences that lead to student learning or help to close the achievement gap. We also explore how faculty and administrators negotiate issues of power to ensure the accomplishment of personal and institutional goals.

Human Resources

As Gonzalez (2002) notes, effective college performance is linked to each institution's ability to staff classrooms and programs with qualified and sensitive personnel capable of responding to students' needs. Both a sense of caring for students and the provision of professional development opportunities are associated with institutional effectiveness (Astin, 1993; McArthur, 2005; Smith, 2000; Valenzuela, 1999). In addition, the characteristics of the students who are admitted or recruited to a particular college program affect the institution's ability to offer practices that lead to student learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998). To understand how the characteristics of the student body and college personnel are associated with the development of promising practices, we examine issues such as the kind of professionals (i.e., part-time and full-time faculty, counselors, staff, and administrators) who participate in the design and implementation of allegedly

successful instructional programs; the target population of such programs; student admissions criteria; and the cultural, ethnical, social, and economic characteristics of the student body and/or target population.

Financial Resources

Several higher education researchers (Bragg & Hamm, 1996; Kisker & Carducci, 2003) have argued that the availability of monetary sources is a key component in the development of promising instructional practices. As a result, inadequate funding is often noted as an obstacle to providing services to a large number of students, offering financial aid, or implementing curricular innovations (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Sheldon, 2003). Thus, applying for grants and other revenue-seeking behaviors, as well as the adoption of new funding allocation criteria, are viewed as important in creating and sustaining promising community college practices (Henry, 2000; Lynton, 1991; Rifkin & McKinney, 1996; Shirley, 2006). To explore the effects of financial resources on the development of promising practices, we examine the ways that financial resources are utilized to design and sustain effective instructional practices and how funding allocation criteria are enacted to help students overcome financial barriers to program participation.

Curriculum and Academic Planning

One argument is that the provision of a comprehensive curriculum that offers opportunities for academic, personal, and occupational development is essential in enacting promising practices that lead to student learning (Bragg, 2001). Incorporating cross-disciplinary work, culturally responsive academic content, and student-centered pedagogy are viewed as appropriate ways to enrich students' educational experiences (Belgarde, Mitchell, & Arquero, 2002; Brabant & Hochman, 2004; Ellermann, Kataoka-Yahiro, & Wong, 2006; Palmer, 2004). In other words,

promising practices are more likely to occur when curricula are designed to foster collaboration between students and institutional agents and to integrate content and instructional techniques in ways that are relevant to students' lives. Thus, our examination of promising practices seeks to identify those characteristics of the curriculum and the process of academic planning that encourage student achievement, thus leading to the development of interview questions such as: How was the program initiated? What are its goals and purposes? Who decided upon these goals and purposes?

Assessment and Evaluation

Continual assessment and evaluation of student learning outcomes, as well as systematic evaluations of teaching effectiveness and overall college performance, are viewed as critical elements enabling the provision of promising practices (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1996; Senge, 1990). Thus, our investigation of promising practices in community colleges examines how college personnel select, implement, and utilize tools and strategies to measure the accomplishment of their goals and the quality of student outcomes. As Ingram, Louis, and Schroeder (2004) have pointed out, community college faculty and administrators have a tendency to combine quantitative and anecdotal data when assessing student outcomes, and thus we pay attention to the ways in which formal and informal assessments and evaluations are used to define and improve college practices.

The five factors in our organizational, historical-cultural, and educational ecology dimensions guided our initial examination of promising practices in community colleges by calling our attention to the different facets of an educational program or practice that may contribute to its effectiveness. By asking questions about and focusing observations on each of the areas outlined above, we gain a comprehensive, descriptive, and detailed

perspective of an instructional program and its practices at a community college, which in turn allows us to focus on the ways in which promising practices in place at one institution may be transferred to another campus, which may differ dramatically in student population, geographical location, social context, and institutional history.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

Subsequent to a comprehensive review of several bodies of literature (see literature review section), we developed two primary research questions to guide this project:

1. What promising practices have helped California community colleges improve student learning and close the achievement gap in the following program areas?
 - a. English as a Second Language programs
 - b. Basic skills / developmental education programs
 - c. Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) transfer programs
 - d. Rigorous transfer programs targeting Latinos, African-Americans, or Native Americans
 - e. Career pathway / workforce education programs
 - f. Vocational transfer programs
 - g. Trade certification programs
 - h. High school programs
 - i. Collaborations with business and industry

2. How might these promising practices be transferred to and adopted on other community college campuses across the state, which may differ dramatically in student population, social context, and institutional history?

Method

To identify and examine promising practices in California community colleges, and to explore how these practices might be transferred to and adopted on other campuses throughout the state, we conducted six qualitative case study analyses of six community college instructional programs (drawn from six of the areas identified above). The following provides more information about our selection criteria and methods, data collection, validity, and data coding and analysis. We followed the advice of scholars on field methods research both in data collection and analysis processes (Burgess, 1984; Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mason, 2002; Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 1991; Yin, 1994).

Selection Criteria and Methods. We used a purposeful sampling method in order to select six promising¹⁸ community college instructional programs to participate in our case studies. The first step in identifying and selecting programs was to draw upon the expertise and knowledge held by top community college practitioners and policymakers in California. Thus, we convened a “Panel of Experts” consisting of state-level officials, community college presidents and chancellors, members of the community college academic senate’s executive committee, and other knowledgeable practitioners.

We asked the Panel of Experts to recommend two or three exemplary community colleges in each of nine different instructional areas (English as a Second Language programs, basic skills programs, science, technology, engineering, and math [STEM] transfer programs, rigorous transfer programs targeting Latinos, African-Americans,

¹⁸We define a “promising” instructional program as one that has demonstrably improved student learning and has closed the achievement gap, as measured by course pass rates, certificate or degree attainment rates, and so forth.

or Native Americans, career pathway/workforce education programs, vocational transfer programs, trade certification programs, high school programs offered at community colleges, collaborations with business and industry).¹⁹

Based on the Panel's recommendations, we used data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, the U.S. Department of Education, the Postsecondary Education Commission, the 2007 Chancellor's Office Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC), individual college Web sites, and other databases and reports to evaluate each recommended instructional program and compare them using what we termed "effectiveness indicators": student outcomes such as course pass rates, job placement rates, certificate or degree attainment rates, progress through instructional sequences, and so forth. These effectiveness indicators were specific to each type of instructional program (e.g., we looked at transfer rates to compare transfer-oriented programs and job placement rates in short-term certificate programs). Where possible, we used data broken down by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status in order to assess how much progress each college program had made in closing the achievement gap. This analysis allowed us to narrow our list of recommended community colleges programs to those that have demonstrably improved student learning and closed the achievement gap.

We also collected demographic information about each recommended college, including the region of California in which it is located, whether it is located in an urban, suburban, or rural area, its enrollment (both total and full-time equivalent), and the racial/ethnic, gender, and age composition of

its student body and local community. Using this demographic information (as well as our analysis of effectiveness indicators) we compiled a sample of six community college instructional programs stratified by region; urban, suburban, or rural locale; and enrollment size. Information about the composition of student bodies and local communities was not used to obtain a stratified sample as our focus on the achievement gap necessitated selecting colleges that all have high proportions of Latino, African-American, and/or Native American students.

The six programs selected for this study are listed below with the selection criteria listed for each as well as the region of California in which the college is located:

1. English as a Second Language (ESL): City College of San Francisco (CCSF), Northern CA, Bay Area. For academic years 2003–04 to 2005–06, the CCSF ESL program had a Basic Skills (ESL was considered in this category in 2007) improvement rate²⁰ of 51.3% (statewide improvement rate was 50.4%) and a centralized administration which is supported in the literature as a promising model.
2. Basic Skills/Developmental Education: Chaffey College, Southern CA. According to the 2007 Accountability Reporting of Community Colleges (ARCC), report, Chaffey had a 61.3% credit basic skills course completion rate²¹

²⁰ To be counted as "improved" a student must have enrolled in a credit basic skills course; then in a subsequent term, the student must enroll in a credit course with a course program code in the same discipline (English, ESL, or Math), but which is at a higher level (Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

²¹ For students enrolled in credit basic skills courses in the academic years of interest success was defined as having been retained to the end of the term (or end of the course) with a final course grade of A, B, C, or CR/P

¹⁹ Although we only included six instructional programs in our final sample, we asked the Panel of Experts to provide information about nine program areas in order to give us more freedom in creating a stratified sample of promising programs.

(statewide rate was 60.4%). In 2007, the Chaffey program also reported the following basic skills course completion rates for underrepresented populations: African-American: 49.5% and Hispanic: 57.7%.

3. Transfer (Targeting African-Americans or Latinos): Santa Monica College, Southern CA. Santa Monica College (SMC) had the highest overall transfer rate²² of any of the institutions recommended by the Panel, 6.9%. SMC also reported the highest proportional transfer rate for Latinos, 4%, of any of the recommended institutions.
4. Trade or Certification Program: Los Angeles Trade- Technical College, Southern CA. According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office website, in the fall of 2007 the Fashion Program had a successful credit vocational course completion rate²³ of 69.3% (African-American: 58%; Hispanic: 70%; Asian: 80%) and an overall course retention rate²⁴ of 88% (African-

American: 81%; Hispanic: 89%; Asian: 96%).

5. Vocational: Modesto Junior College (MJC), Central CA. In academic year 2005–06 Modesto Junior College had an annual successful course completion rate for credit vocational courses of 72.8%. During that same timeframe, MJC reported that Native Americans were 1.4% of the total enrollment—significantly higher than any other institution recommended by the Panel—and higher enrollments of African-Americans (3.5%) and Hispanics (28.6%) than all but one of the Panel recommended institutions.
6. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM): Foothill/De Anza College (Northern CA, Bay Area). In academic year 2005–06, Foothill College reported a total transfer rate of 3.7% with De Anza College reporting 3.3%; both of these rates were significantly higher than four of the five other colleges recommended by the Panel of Experts.²⁵

(Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

²² The cohorts for the transfer rate consisted of first-time students with minimum of 12 units earned who attempted a transfer level Math or English course during enrollment and who transferred to a four-year institution within 6 years (Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

²³ For students enrolled in vocational courses during the academic year of interest success was defined as having been retained to the end of the term (or end of the course) with a final course grade of A, B, C, or CR/P (Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office).

²⁴ For students enrolled in the course during the given semester of interest retention was defined as having been retained to the end of the term (or end of the course) with a final course grade of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, I, P, or NP (Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office).

We then contacted each of the six selected community colleges and asked if they would be interested in participating in our examination of promising practices. Beginning in October 2007 we initiated our field research investigation using in-depth qualitative case study analyses of our promising programs.

Data Collection. Following case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994), data collection consisted primarily of one-on-one, semi-structured

²⁵ As noted earlier, in our reporting of outcomes, we deleted those for Foothill/De Anza Colleges for various reasons. Principally, the goals and the functioning of this program made it incomparable to other promising practices that we encountered in the other five programs.

interviews with faculty, staff, and students involved in the six instructional programs, focus groups (primarily with students), participant observation, and document analysis. Relevant faculty, administrators, students, and staff were identified through partnership documents, as well as via a snowballing technique (Merriam, 1998; Mason, 2002) in which each interviewee or focus group participant referred us to other appropriate participants.

Interviews and Focus Groups. Each potential participant was sent an email message that described the purpose of the study and asked if they would consider participating in a focus group or one-on-one interview. Participants were given an option to opt-out or terminate the interview at any time, and all persons received a copy of their interview or focus group transcript in order to check for errors, inaccuracies, and to allow them to delete any information they did not want to be included in our final report. All interviews ran for approximately one hour, and took place in a convenient, quiet, private setting on campus. In some cases, interviews were conducted by telephone when this proved to be a more convenient option for the interviewee. Focus groups ran between one and two hours and also took place in a convenient, quiet, private setting.

Interview questions focused on practices identified in the literature as promising ways to improve student learning and close the achievement gap, as well as the processes and experiences of participants in the implementation and ongoing maintenance of the instructional program. Interviewees and focus group participants were encouraged to talk freely about their experiences, perceptions, and beliefs; informal prompts were used when necessary to gather as much relevant information as possible. Throughout data collection at each institution, interview prompts were revised in order to understand information that emerged in previous

interviews. Interviews and focus group conversations were digitally recorded.

Participant Observation. In addition to conducting interviews and focus groups, members of the research team carried out observations in relevant locations on each community college campus. These locations varied by program type. For example, we observed activity at a transfer center at Santa Monica College where we focused upon the transfer program. Similarly, we observed faculty, students, and staff at the Success Centers of Chaffey College. Sporadically, we observed classroom instruction as well as faculty and student interactions. Throughout observations, members of the research team took field notes on the behaviors and activities of individuals at the research site. Researchers also recorded their observations and reactions through a daily debriefing session in order to identify patterns and to check on researcher bias.

Document Analysis. As a final method of data collection, we collected and reviewed documents related to each instructional and support program under investigation. These documents included grant proposals, written program goals and expectations, written communication among partners, notes from advisory or curriculum committee members, in-house evaluations, funding information, course syllabi, and other materials given to us by college members. Analysis of these documents was intended to triangulate themes identified in interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, and these provided valuable information about the context, processes, and challenges involved in implementing and sustaining such a program.

Validity. We addressed validity concerns in three ways. First, we used several different methods of data collection in order to triangulate themes and provide us with as much information about each instructional and support program and their promising practices as possible. Second, we sent each interviewee

and focus group participant a copy of their transcript in order to ensure that we represented their thoughts and experiences accurately. Finally, after each interview, focus group, or participant observation, researchers recorded their observations, reactions, and potential biases in a field journal. At the end of each day of data collection, research team members convened to reflect upon their experiences and observations and discuss their reactions and potential biases with the rest of the team. Notes from these sessions were digitally recorded, and they helped the team contextualize and make sense of the interview and focus group data, as well as identify any possible researcher bias or reactivity (Maxwell, 1996).

Data Coding and Analysis. After fieldwork was completed for each community college program, we began to transcribe interview and focus group data. Once all of the data were transcribed, coding and analysis began with the software program ATLAS.ti. An international expert provided the research team with training on ATLAS.ti. Subsequent to training, the team consulted with this expert on analysis issues as they arose. Data were coded initially around themes that scholarly literature has identified as a best practice. Ultimately, we coded data using the three dimensions of organizational effectiveness: ecological, historical-cultural, and organizational.

Throughout data coding and analysis, special attention was paid to information pertaining to the context in which each instructional program exists, to allow researchers to identify ways in which promising practices might be transferred to other community college campuses, which may differ dramatically in student population, social context, and institutional history. Data analysis was within site not an across site operation. That is, coding and analysis were specific to each program. Across site analysis arose in the final phase in order to identify transferable

properties and practices that were not program-specific.

Reporting

Findings and conclusions are reported in Promising Practices: California's Community Colleges, a document produced by the California Community College Collaborative, at UC Riverside. In this report, the actual names of colleges are used; however, individual respondents to interview questions are not named as that is required in the research protocol of the investigation. For references to documents and interviews, we use a coding scheme, which, for example, identifies sources as faculty, administrators, staff, or students but does not indicate names of individuals. This coding scheme serves two primary functions. First, it is a short hand designation of authentic sources; and second, it provides the researchers with location of sources in our data bank for further use of the report and the sources. We expect that sections from this report will become or be part of scholarly papers, policy papers, presentations, and guidelines for practitioners.

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APPENDIX A

C4 Advisory Council, 2007–2009

Mr. Steve Bruckman, Executive Vice Chancellor,
Chancellor’s Office of the California
Community Colleges

Mr. Tom Campbell, Presidential Fellow and
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Colleges of Chicago

Literature reviews supporting each of the
promising practices outlined in this report may be
found on the C4 website, www.c4.ucr.edu.