

**Peer Team Report
On
COUNSELING AND MATRICULATION**

**Gary Roggenstein, Chair
Jacquelynn Lott
Maricela Marquez
Timothy Richards**

Summer 2008

Area 1. CURRICULUM

Findings:

All Human Development (HD) courses in the Counseling department align with the college mission statement in its commitment to student success and meet one or more of the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). They have been approved by the college's Academic Policies and Procedures Committee (AP&P) and two of the courses, HD101 and HD105, have undergone the rigorous articulation process and been accepted by CSU system to meet general education requirements. The courses are reviewed within a six-year cycle. All courses are currently updated and on the Integrated Course Outline Record (COR). Since the last review one HD course was eliminated due to low student enrollments.

HD courses are offered every term and student access to the courses has been improved by offering HD198 and HD101 to students on-line. Student enrollment in the courses increased by 27% from 2006 to 2007. It is expected that by providing more on campus computer access to students that do not have Internet access at home the numbers will continue to increase.

The department has developed additional HD courses to further support students by providing students with comprehensive information about the college, registration process, career and educational planning and becoming more effective in interpersonal relationships: HD 198A – Assertiveness Training, HD 198C – Choosing A Career, Selecting a Major and Developing an Educational Plan, and HD 198 0 – Orientation to College. These courses were developed based upon student feedback and Counseling faculty assessment of student needs. Program Advisories include members from our college and extended community and meet to evaluate the programs as well as review the content of these courses for further improvement. Student Learning Outcomes were being developed for each of these classes and targeted for completion in Spring 2008. The SLOs have been completed, reviewed and approved by the AVC Student Learning Outcomes Committee. The department will need to develop a plan to clearly articulate the SLOs and assess their effectiveness. Additional courses may be developed and provided in the future as department assessment determines additional needs of students in the areas of access, persistence and success.

The peer team was impressed by the increased numbers of students participating in the Human Development classes and the willingness of the department to explore ways to expand relevant course offerings. The department emphasized the desire to utilize more resources to reach the growing population of students in order to raise student success and persistence.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to develop, assess and evaluate the SLOs for each course to ensure they meet the continuing and changing needs of a diverse student population.
2. Develop a plan to clearly communicate the SLOs to students and the AVC learning community.
3. Explore ways for students to access computer labs on campus to facilitate access of the on-line HD courses and to provide students with access for on-line Web-based course registration.
4. Increase communication to students regarding the purpose of all HD classes and add full-time faculty to teach classes to meet the increased demand of students.
5. Expand the number of HD courses being offered on-line and develop other alternative delivery systems to increase student access and enrollment.

Area 2. STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Findings:

The Counseling department has developed communication resources to provide accurate information for all prospective and current students as well as for staff and the community. These resources include: The **Counselor's Procedural Manual** which is updated regularly to provide counselors with the latest information of all counseling aspects. It is maintained on the Counseling Advising System (CAS) in electronic format for easy access. **Program Sheets** have been developed in conjunction with the academic departments to reflect the current certificate and major offerings and to satisfy students' demand for a comprehensive and concise format. The **Course Catalog** and **Student Handbook** are provided to give comprehensive, detailed explanation of graduation requirements, admissions policies, social and academic policies, refund policies, student conduct standards and complaint and grievance procedures. The department also provides students with **published handouts** that explain individual policies, procedures and programs in a simplified format.

The Counseling department is aware of the importance of identifying and providing academic and social support services to students. The Institutional Research Office (IRO) of the college completed a report that shows students who complete the English and Math assessments as well as receive counseling services are more likely to persist. The IRO has also developed a model for predicting student persistence and that model is used by the department to provide support to students who are at-risk of academic failure and drop-out. The counseling department and college outreach department work closely with local high school counselors to recruit high school students and use a variety of

programs and services to support student success when they enroll in classes. The department also provides an annual college assessment and orientation for seniors in the spring before they graduate.

The Counseling department provides an orientation for all incoming students to explain services that are available to them. The orientation can be taken on-line for students who have computer access. The department has three full-time and two part-time counselors who are fluent in Spanish and have been able to provide college program and service information in both English and most in Spanish through the college website and in person at the Counseling desk. A Title V counselor has been added to support first generation students who fall into the at-risk category and use student assessment data to discuss skill levels with students and provide referrals for support services such as the Learning Center and Human Development classes as needed. Counselors also provide student referrals to student support service programs such as Disabled Student Services, CalWORKs, EOP&S and the Veterans program for additional counseling and support when applicable.

Students can register for classes on-line and book counseling appointments in person or via telephone. With the implementation of the SARS TRAK software students will be able to schedule their own counseling appointments in the near future. The department technical analyst stated that the addition of the SARS TRAK system has greatly improved student access for scheduling appointments. Students can also access the college Transfer Center via an email link on their website.

Students who are placed on academic probation are provided work shops that enlighten the issues surrounding their status and strategies are discussed to improve their academic performance.

To ensure the validity and reduce bias of assessment instruments the Antelope Valley College uses the ACT Compass/ESL computer adaptive assessment for English and math course placement. Compass is currently listed on the Chancellor's website of approved test instruments. A consultant is hired every three years to evaluate and monitor the assessment test(s) validity. In 2006, the Math and Language Arts divisions implemented adjusted cut scores for the assessment tests upon the recommendation of the consultant. Since the adjustment, placement accuracy for English courses is at 82% to 87% and 79% to 84% for math courses. A site Assessment committee also evaluates assessment tests and makes recommendations through the Matriculation committee regarding their findings. Finally, members of the Math department have been advised to review test items from other Chancellor office-approved assessment to ensure the most accurate alignment between assessment prerequisites and curriculum. The ESL assessment is currently used in an advisory capacity only. Prerequisites for Reading 097 and 099 have been recently established.

The entire spectrum of counseling services which includes the Assessment, Career and Transfer centers, is provided for students five days and four evenings per week on the main campus. Limited services are provided on one part-time day per week at the Palmdale site. The accessibility of most counseling services on-line has increased student access. As enrollment increases so does the demand for services. There is clearly a need for improved assessment facilities that more adequately provide for the numbers of students and student confidentiality. The Assessment Center will move to a new location in the Fall of 2008 that should improve the current situation.

Student diversity at Antelope Valley College has increased since 2001 with the Hispanic population showing a more than 50% increase and the African-American population rising over 42%. While transfer rates of students from AVC to four year colleges have increased by 25% since 2001 the greatest number of transfers has been Non-Latino/White students. However, Latino student transfer rates have increased by 85% and African-American students by 50%. All students are encouraged to access the Counseling Center services and make use of the support services and programs on campus. The department is currently researching the need for the development of HD courses that specifically support students with diverse personal and psychological needs.

The Counseling department uses student surveys to evaluate appropriateness, adequacy and effectiveness of its student services. And while the student surveys of 2001 and 2007 indicate high student satisfaction with the department's services there is clearly a need to solicit greater input from students and increase the number of students involved in the survey to more clearly reflect the overall student population. Anecdotal data of the department's effectiveness includes a drop in the number of complaints to the dean's office and students returning to the department for support and follow-up. Also, word of mouth referrals from student to student have increased service requests in the Career-Transfer Center and are a strong indication of student satisfaction with services.

Our team agreed that the department is aware of changing demographics at the institution. Furthermore, that they understand the value and importance of improving support and assistance for all students in an equitable manner.

Recommendations:

1. There is an critical need to increase classified and certificated staff to more adequately meet the demands for student support in the Counseling department.
2. Evaluate Counseling department space and investigate ways to immediately increase the space and address the need to provide for confidentiality for counselors and students.

3. Expand space and address student confidentiality issues in the Assessment Center.
4. Increase student access to assessment instruments by collaborating with high schools to provide the assessments for seniors on their campuses.
5. Expand on-line counseling services and HD classes as well as computer access for students on campus.
6. Establish a permanent full-service counseling center at the Palmdale site.
7. Continue to develop and update all forms of communication to a diverse student population, staff and community.

Area 3. PROGRAM and STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Findings:

The Counseling department has developed Student Learning Outcomes which were forwarded to the AVC Student Learning Outcomes Committee in December of 2007. An assessment of the department's SLOs were conducted during the Spring of 2008. The department has also used student surveys to invite student input into the evaluation of the program and services. The department has had a tremendous turnover in administration in the past ten years and that has made it difficult to develop, sustain and monitor consistency particularly in the area of developing and assessing program and student outcomes. However, the campus-wide emphasis on SLOs should bring a more consistent approach with viable data to the program.

The Student Learning Outcomes align with the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes and address areas consistent with the objectives for student success and persistence.

Currently, the Counseling department's SLOs are not being clearly articulated. There is a need to establish a plan to articulate the SLOs of the department so that students and staff know what they are and understand their importance and whether or not they are effectively being met.

The peer team found that the effort to assess the program and learning outcomes is in the early stages. The department has made significant progress in a short period of time and appears committed to ensure that the program is open and responsive to student input.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a plan to clearly articulate the Student Learning Outcomes.
2. Continue work on SLO assessments and PLOs and take corrective action based on their results.
3. Implement an on-going student evaluation process that reaches a broad spectrum of students relating to SLOs and program development.

Area 4. Personnel and Support Services

Findings:

Since 2001, student enrollment has increased by nearly 30%. During the Fall of 2007, one full-time counselor, one full-time Title V counselor and two fulltime classified staff were hired to better support student demand. These hires improved service but the counselor to student ratio is approximately 1 to 1,100 which is far below the professional standard of 1 to 500. Some members of the department expressed a concern that the current student ratio of 1 to 1,100 should more accurately be established by dividing the current student enrollment by the number of full-time faculty which would establish an even greater disparity of meeting the professional standard.

The department lacks adequate support staff and counseling staff due to lack of funding. Currently, there are 10 full-time counselors and 8 adjunct counselors on staff. Adjunct counseling staff provide services for 17% of the students who receive services in the department. While there is clearly a need for adjunct counseling services, the department is faced with the challenge of finding adequate time to provide training for adjunct staff. The full-time counselors are also involved in campus participatory governance and spend time on committees to serve the institution. They are also in demand to assist with the development of the Human Development curriculum and instruction as well as program development. The demand on their time makes it difficult to meet the many needs of the department and its ancillary services. Staff expressed a need to creatively manage time within the department to meet the many scheduling needs and professional demands. They suggested offering flexible student appointment time schedules, and expanding time opportunities to address professional development needs as well as seeking a more effective schedule balance between student contact hours, AVC FLEX activities, campus committee work and program development.

There is a weekly counseling department meeting that provides some training and information as well as an opportunity to collaborate with counselors from other departments. However, there is an incredible need for more training both in-house and off campus in order to ensure both the efficiency and effectiveness of all counselors and the program. In order to better provide for off-campus training such as the CSU and UC annual conferences the department's budget for professional development must be increased. Some counselors expressed a need to strengthen the practice of developing articulation agreements with the Transfer Center and increasing the hours the Transfer center is open for student access by keeping it open two evenings per week.

The recently retired Dean of Counseling feels that a department restructure placing all AVC counselors and advisors under one dean would eliminate some of the issues and ensure uniformity of services and the development of student education plans. He also believes that student education plans would be more accurate and more easily developed if software such as Degree Audit were purchased for campus wide use. Finally, he stated that the presence of a department chair would allow the dean more time to adequately manage the program and monitor its effectiveness.

There is also clearly a pressing need to add classified staff to support the Counseling department and areas within the department such as assessment during peak periods. Classified staff levels are currently 11% below 2001 levels which had 30% less student enrollment.

Full-time faculty are actively involved in the hiring and evaluation of adjunct and tenured faculty. Full-time faculty serve on tenure evaluation teams and peer evaluation teams. Some appreciate the opportunity to serve in these capacities while others are reluctant.

The evaluation process of staff received mixed responses. Most counselors agreed that evaluations in the past had been sporadic. Several felt that the current performance evaluation was an excellent one. Classified staff stated they preferred the older evaluation instrument that was used for them over the current one and that they would like to see more training provided to staff in areas that were noted for needing improvement. Adjunct counselors felt the evaluation process was too negative and lacked constructive criticism. They expressed a desire to receive immediate feedback when undesired behavior or performance occurred. Adjustments were made during the 2008 Intersession to provide immediate attention and feedback to counselors when errors were discovered on student education plans.

The peer team felt that given the circumstances, the Counseling department has provided tremendous support to students. The sheer volume of students who utilize the counseling program could overwhelm an understaffed team and frustrate students but we observed an extremely committed and resilient staff that works hard to overcome the current circumstances and provide services for students. We absolutely agree that the department is in need of additional staffing support in all areas.

Recommendations:

1. Increase time and funding for staff development.
2. Provide group in-service training and retreats for staff.
3. Establish systematic and consistent staff development opportunities for adjunct counselors.

4. Hire more full-time counseling faculty and classified staff to meet growing enrollment and student demand.
5. Use more full-time faculty to teach HD courses.
6. Analyze current practice of developing articulation agreements with Transfer Center and recommend strategies for improvement.
7. Provide coordinated training in all counseling and admissions areas.
8. Hire half-time classified staff from Basic Skills funds to support follow-up of Basic Skills students and support Assessment Center during peak times.
9. Increase full-time faculty involvement in coordinating and updating HD courses.

Area 5. Facilities, Equipment and Technology

Findings:

All areas of the Counseling department need additional space. Issues such as student confidentiality, lack of adequate space for adjunct counselors, and the inability to operate in an organized and efficient manner were cited. Classroom availability for HD classes and meetings is also inadequate. Classified staff and student workers need upgrades in their work areas as they are confined and their efficiency is impacted. The Assessment Center specifically was noted for its lack of organizational structure and severe limitations in which it was forced to assess 27,000 students with only twenty-one computer terminals during the 2006-2007 year and limited to very little accommodation space and equipment for students who are audio or visually impaired. A modular building has been purchased and is scheduled to open in the fall of 2008 to better accommodate the needs of the Assessment Center. This will most like result in more office space for the counseling department but it will still not adequately meet the current need. There is also a need for a secured storage area for the department Smart Cart and other computer and office equipment.

There is a need to upgrade and increase the data and electrical outlets to maximize the utilization of technology in the department. There is an immediate need for an additional computer at the counseling counter to improve student check in and scheduling services. Computer and copier equipment for counselors is adequate and the student records which are managed on Banner 7.3 will be upgrade to the 8.0 version in the Fall of 2008. This will require training for staff.

Student records are stored and locked down in a vault to ensure confidentiality. The vault is at capacity and the college is currently scanning student documents to accommodate future growth.

Once again, our team was impressed by the ability of the entire staff to work together and support students in a work environment that clearly needs to be

addressed and improved. A high level of cooperation and esprit de corps was observed within the department.

Recommendations:

1. Expedite the relocation of the Assessment Center to the proposed modular building as soon as possible and ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations in the Center.
2. Remodel the current assessment center space into private counseling offices.
3. Relocate counselors from current offices with limited privacy to the remodeled Assessment Center.
4. Relocate the Veterans Coordinator to space outside Counseling area to create additional space for counseling.
5. Evaluate best use of office space in the Career/Transfer Center.
6. Evaluate space at front counter to determine if data lines and electrical capacity is sufficient to implement SARS TRAK and allocate funds to complete its implementation.

Area 6. Fiscal Support

Findings:

The department has used available resources to improve and upgrade equipment, hire additional counselors and support staff and provide additional HD courses and other services for students. While the district has increased its funding support of the department over the past two years there is hope that additional state and district funding to support counseling services with staffing needs, additional space and professional development is forthcoming.

The team found that the use of funding from Matriculation, Title V and additional funding from the institution has allowed for improvement but current funding is not adequate and we believe that an increase in funding will provide opportunities for the department to support student success by improving services. An increase in funds will also provide for the development of revised and new programs.

Recommendations:

1. Provide funding to increase the number of counselors so that the counselor to student ratio will eventually reflect the professional standard of 1 to 500.
2. Provide funding to increase classified support to adequately serve students. A goal of one staff member per 1500 students is an appropriate goal for the department.
3. Increase funds to upgrade and replace computer hardware and software.

4. Increase funding for the expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities to provide adequate facilities for all Counseling department services.
5. Use of matriculation, basic skills and district funding be used to augment the implementation of an imaging system and Degree Audit-type of student educational plan software program.
6. Increase the proportion of matriculation, basic skills and district funds to support counseling services that institutional research has shown to improve student persistence and success.

Area 7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PROGRAM AWARENESS

Findings:

The peer team found that the department was actively engaged in outreach to the community. They have created programs that target the local high schools and increase awareness of the college and opportunity for students to be assessed and registered in an efficient and timely manner. They also use the local media and community events and forums to share the variety college programs and services. The department hosts an annual high school counselor's day at the college to share important information regarding the college and procedures for students to register in classes. Every October the Transfer Center sponsors Transfer Day and the Counseling staff participates in Transfer Night at Highland High School. The department also participates in the Higher Education Consortium which promotes post-secondary opportunities to the Antelope Valley community. The department is aggressive in its efforts to recruit and orientate high school seniors and provides important information to them regarding student support services and programs on the campus that will help them succeed in achieving their career and educational goals. Finally, the department collaborates with other departments on campus and distributes important information about their programs to prospective students and the community at-large.

Programs within the Counseling department use advisory committees who meet regularly to support the development of the program. The Transfer Center Advisory committee consists of members from the college, community, students and university representatives. The Matriculation Advisory committee consists of representatives from within the institution and they meet twice annually. The Assessment committee meets as a standing campus committee. The purpose of the Matriculation and Assessment committee is to assess the matriculation plan and recommend practices and procedures for improving student success.

Recommendations:

1. Expand on the use of Advisory support and continue to use that forum to evaluate and recommend improvement for current practices and procedures.
2. Continue community outreach programs and identify and implement ways to expand the scope of its operation.
3. Expand communication to the community to help shape understanding and opinion of AVC.
4. Expand communication within the college through department and classroom visits by counselors.
5. Explore ways to increase the use of electronic communication with prospective students via SARS, myAVC and online counseling.

Area 8. STATE AND FEDERAL COMPLIANCE**Findings:**

The Counseling and Matriculation programs are monitored, reviewed and revised to ensure they meet all local, state and federal guidelines. Adjustments are made when changes in Title V mandates, matriculation policies or other relevant program changes are communicated from the Chancellor's office. Furthermore, the programs adhere to all Education Code and District Board Policies and procedures to meet local, state and federal regulations that govern the program.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to adhere to all federal, state and local mandates.