

Peer Team Report
On
Outreach/Information and Welcome Center

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Summer 2008

Area I. CURRICULUM

N/A

Area II. STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Findings:

Student support is the primary goal of the Outreach/Information and Welcome Center's activities. Outreach provides the community at large with new information about the college; its existence, programs, services, benefits and opportunities. Its function is for awareness as well as direct recruitment.

The Information and Welcome Center provides telephone and in-person assistance to prospective and current students, faculty, staff, administrators and the community regarding programs, services, policies, procedures and events. Its function is to accurately and effectively communicate and to make appropriate referrals so that clients may accomplish their tasks on campus.

Information for prospective and enrolled students is provided Monday through Friday throughout the year with additional fielding of inquiries during the first week of the semester. Community events are also attended to provide information and permit recruitment. Presentations are given at schools, booths are set up at community events and promotional packages are made available to those in attendance at school and career fairs.

Programs developed to address the needs of prospective students include the High School Senior Orientation Program, which has been implemented for seven years now, the High School Counselor workshop and several newly implemented programs such as iCAN, a Title V funded initiative to prepare high school students for entry into college. The Ushindi program is another recently created program, with the aim of increasing retention, persistence and success rates of African American students. Targeting younger children, in 2007, the "I'm Going to College" introduced information about college attendance to audiences of 4th and 5th graders and their parents.

Outreach services eight cities within the Antelope Valley and surrounding area. Along with the Lancaster and Palmdale campus locations, and local high schools, many community agencies within the Antelope Valley are targeted, and local festivals and fairs are attended.

Information gathered from the outreach initiatives at these many events is presently compiled within a database for analysis through the Banner Recruitment module. Work is in progress to build tables and analysis tools, which will circumvent much of the record

maintenance presently done by hand. Staff training to facilitate use of the computer modules is imperative and adequate numbers of trained staff members are essential.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning assisted with implementation of Survey Monkey to survey current student level of satisfaction and awareness of the activities of the Outreach/Information and Welcome Center in Fall 2007. Prior to this time, analyses have been the sole responsibility of the center itself. A high level of satisfaction was reported and students also had the opportunity to include specific constructive criticisms, which were noted and discussed by Center staff. Continued collaboration with Institutional Research is planned to reduce the time and expense needed for survey data analysis.

Recommendations:

Analysis of the success rates in recruitment initiatives at community events has been difficult and time consuming for staff members. Incomplete data sets have made reaching conclusions on which events are most successful impossible at this time. The Peer Team recommends continued close collaboration with Institutional Research to facilitate data collection and analysis.

Advances in technology available for tracking student recruitment, retention and success are urgently needed. Assistance from ITS and a Sunguard HE consultant would permit development of the statistical infrastructure required. Training for clerical staff in use of the software is also essential. After the initial software development, ongoing staff training will remain a constant necessity.

Continued dialog is recommended to clarify whether the "I'm Going to College" event should focus more on college in general or the specific Antelope Valley College environment and services. Both approaches have considerable merit, but it is not entirely clear that a consensus on the emphasis has been reached.

Area III. PROGRAM AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Findings:

The Outreach/Information and Welcome Center has developed a series of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), which are correlated to relevant Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) formulated by the college. Evaluation tools and corrective actions are clearly defined and any corrective actions, which appeared necessary, have already begun.

Recommendations:

The Peer Team recommends ongoing surveys of student satisfaction with the performance of the Center to ensure SLOs are reached successfully in this area. Effective analysis of survey data is essential. Ways to ensure ongoing analysis of the data in an efficient and cost-effective manner would include continued liason with Institutional Research, and the implementation of new software packages within Banner to allow better tracking of student progress. Recommendations made in the Peer Team report at the end of the Area III discussion cover these recommendations in detail.

Area IV. PERSONNEL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Findings:

The extensive outreach and communication initiatives taken by this group are undertaken by a small and hardworking group, composed of the program director, two program specialists, a clerical III assistant and student ambassadors. Extensive staff restructuring changes have impacted the department, which includes the Outreach/Information, and Welcome Center in recent years, making retention of experienced staff members challenging. In addition there has been the addition of significantly greater Palmdale campus activity and a near doubling of events attended. Hiring of two program specialists has allowed this increased outreach activity to move forward successfully, but the addition of an additional clerical III assistant is needed to support over 150 events occurring each year. The present clerical III assistant supports three staff members and manages 10-15 students. Additional work is expected with the continuing growth of the Palmdale campus and the need to develop a Welcome Center at this site.

Recommendations:

The Peer Team recognized the vital role in student support that is played by this center and recommends the hiring of a second clerical III assistant to facilitate outreach on both campuses. The increase in personnel is supported in the Educational Master plan (p.288).

Funding for the training of student ambassadors is also strongly recommended. The ambassadors provide a valuable and cost-effective presence at both campus locations and community events.

Area V. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Findings:

The Outreach/Information and Welcome Center presently shares space with Financial Aid within the Student Services lobby. The present arrangement makes it difficult for the

Center to provide a “first contact” presence to help orient students towards the areas where their diverse needs for assistance can be met. The director of the center has devised a “DMV” approach, which would greatly enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the Welcome center. The plan proposes the creation of a central kiosk within the student lobby, from which direction could be given to the various services provided by Financial Aid, Counseling, registration computers etc. An architectural plan has been drawn up for the proposed new SSV building but the construction timeline for this building is unclear and indefinite.

Crowding within the lobby is evident and storage areas within the SSV building have been deemed unsafe at present, particularly SSV 174. The condemnation of this area has created many challenges in storing and accessing equipment and creating a quality presence when delivering customer service.

Recommendations:

With no indications that the new SSV building construction will be slated in the near future, the Peer Team recommends immediate remodeling of SSV 174 to remove potential safety issues and increase storage space.

An ongoing analysis of the layout of the current lobby area in SSV is also suggested so that the facilities as they presently exist are arranged as effectively as possible for the creation of a clear and positive “first contact” for all students using student services. The central kiosk model appears to be potentially effective and finding a way to create such an area is encouraged.

Area VI. FISCAL SUPPORT

Findings:

Budgetary needs for the Outreach/Information and Welcome Center have been adequately covered in past years. A well-defined outline of prioritized ongoing promotional budgetary needs has been provided and is included below:

Item	Amount
I'm Going to College event	\$15,000
College: Making it Happen event	\$15,000
Outreach & Recruitment Events and Activities Fees and Promos	\$10,000
Welcome Center Promo Package	\$2,000
Copier	\$12 –15,000

A copier has been requested to allow the center more autonomy in producing brochures and informational flyers. Space for its installation is also needed. As the college

continues to attract more students, additional projector and computer needs may be identified.

Salaries for all staff presently hired are not guaranteed indefinitely. Grant funding which expires 2010-2011 supports one Program specialist position.

Recommendations:

The Title V grant supporting the salary of one of the Program specialists will end in 2010-2011. The Peer Team recommends additional funding to maintain this position. Funding to create an additional clerical III assistant position is recommended to meet immediate needs.

Funding for the well-defined promotional budgetary needs outlined above is also recommended. The Peer Team additionally encourages ongoing analysis of the costs involved in expanding services as the college population grows and economic influences and financial support opportunities change.

Area VII. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PROGRAM AWARENESS

Findings:

Strong links to community have been made and maintained by the Outreach/Information and Welcome Center. An impressive 270,695 contacts were made in 2007-2008 showing a 4.1% increase over the previous year. Diverse and expansive contacts with schools, business activities, community events and community services are described in the Center's self study. Additional presentations are also planned and close collaboration occurs with the Public Relations and Marketing Task force. These collaborations have assisted in the development of a suite of brochures for Technical Education programs and a variety of informational handouts for high school distribution. The Center director plays an advisory role on ten college event committees and three higher educational and community committees. This participation ensures a high level of awareness of the present community needs and perception of the Center's effectiveness.

Recommendations:

The Peer Team acknowledges the highly active role played by the Center and the excellent job being done in community outreach and recommends continued activity.

Area VIII. STATE AND FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

Findings:

The Outreach/Information and Welcome Center appears to comply with State and Federal college guidelines.

Recommendations:

The Peer Team recommends continued diligence in these areas.

SUMMARY

All members of the Peer Team learned a great deal from the self-study regarding the work and goals of the Outreach/Information and Welcome Center. We were universally impressed by the Center's ambition and effort. We found that event data was extensively documented, studied and reported to back up statements made throughout the self-study document, which was conscientiously created. We strongly support the provision of additional analytical assistance to the Center, through Institutional Planning collaborations and creation of Banner recruitment modules. It is predicted that a time may come where the level of activity of the center may be such that prioritization of event attendance will need to be based on analysis of success at past events. Statistical software packages are needed to allow this, and adequate staff levels and staff training are imperative.

The Peer Team also feels that reorganization of the existing student lobby to allow a stronger visibility of the Welcome Center team could greatly reduce disorientation for new students and would increase the throughput and satisfaction levels of students, particularly in the first weeks of the semester. With the present uncertainty regarding new SSV building plans, we recommend as another priority that a new look be taken at the present lobby configuration with the goal of creating better "first contact: with newly entering and continuing students.