

PEER TEAM REPORT ON BUSINESS, COMPUTER STUDIES, AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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Business, Computer Studies, and Economic Development Division

Area 1: Mission

Findings:

The Mission of the Business, Computer Studies, and Economic Development Division (“BCSED”) is to offer “associate degree programs, career technical programs, transfer/general education courses, workforce preparation and economic development, personal enrichment and professional development.”

BCSED includes the Corporate & Community Services department (C&CS), whose mission is to provide “lifelong learning experiences to our community members through a variety of personal, professional development, and continuing education classes” specific to the needs of the local community.

BCSED offers students a robust variety of 15 certificates and 13 associate degrees. They align their programs and courses closely to the college mission by offering technology driven courses that develop students’ skills for business environments. They also offer two diversity courses that are very popular on campus. Courses emphasize critical thinking, information literacy, and employment enhancement. All of these aspects point to a dedication to the college mission.

Area 2: History

Findings:

The peer review team was impressed with the commitment and desire of the Division to continue to provide high quality instruction and facilities to students in light of devastating budget cuts since the last program review. There are significant areas that have been negatively impacted by the lack of funds in BCSED, but there are also some positive areas of growth.

Consistent with the report and interviews, the most significant change since the last program review is the current budget cutbacks. With the large reduction in course offerings, students have been set back and underserved, and there are some part time faculty members who lost their positions or had their schedules significantly reduced. There is also a serious problem with staff attrition since the last report due to retirements and frozen positions, resulting in a 36% decrease in full time staff in the last two years. Currently, the computer networking program is operating without a full time faculty member, which causes concern among faculty in regards to lack of program leadership.

Since the last program review, the Division’s Dean of 20 years retired. Since 2007, there have been three deans. The current dean is serving the Division of Social & Behavioral Sciences in

addition to BCSED. While there was intent to add department chairs, no progress in this area has been made due to budget cuts.

In terms of programs, the Work Experience Program was discontinued. Faculty are disappointed with this decision, expressing concern both for students who need units to graduate, and the need to provide students with valuable job training.

The Real Estate Program has reduced its course offerings due to lack of demand correlated to the housing market collapse in the community. Similarly, office technology students are having difficulty finding employment.

One positive area of improvement is that many of BCSED's classes are taught online or in a hybrid format to cater to the diverse population of AVC students who have transportation and time scheduling conflicts. This is an area of success that looks likely to continue to develop.

Additionally, despite difficulties in securing equipment funding, BCSED was successful in securing grants for new computers in two labs and all of their classrooms.

Another area of growth has occurred in the C&CS area. There are 45 programs and 75 classes offered. There is a positive response from the community for these courses, and staff and student workers are busy handling the demands. Courses are being added in Pharmacy Technician Training, among others. Public relations efforts in the community have increased and there is increased interest in the program. The growth of this program is noteworthy in that it is run by one classified staff member.

Area 3: Curriculum

Findings:

BCSED consists of the following programs: Accounting, Business, Computer Applications / Computer Information Science, Management, Marketing, Office Technology, and Real Estate. Curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to current educational standards and developing trends in business and technology. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and revisions of Course Outlines of Record (CORs) are being used to encourage teaching of critical skills and new technologies.

BCSED and C&CS meet regularly with Advisory Boards, made up of community members, business members, and AVC adjunct faculty. Faculty and Advisory Boards work together to assure that courses are teaching skills that businesses want and need. Faculty are exploring ways of incorporating newer technologies used in business settings such as Second Life, animation modeling, and social medias. There is a strong collective commitment to teaching new and relevant modes of business technologies to keep AVC students competitive in the job markets.

The curriculum is highly supported by online delivery, and the Division states its goal is to continue to offer more complete and hybrid online classes to serve students' needs and save college resources.

Area 4: Student Support and Development

Findings:

The use of technology is a driving force in BCSED's programs and course deliveries. MyAVC and Blackboard are commonly used by instructors to offer students many resources and support systems, such as class materials, communications, and college support services (e.g., library databases, Smarthinking, etc.). Blackboard successfully allows for online teaching and hybrid course formats. The division reports that they (and their students) are pleased with these services. Overall, there is satisfaction with the upgraded systems made possible through grants. However, there is also an expressed need for continual upgrading.

Through faculty interviews, it was found that individual instructors track student success through a variety of methods: current student evaluations, SLOs, continued contact with former students, and feedback from transfer institutions. There is no formal method of tracking student success once they leave the program. There is no mention of established Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) in the report or interviews.

Area 5: Data Analysis and Environmental Scan

Findings:

The majority of students in BCSED are female (58%) and younger (24 and less). Success and retention rates have held steady and are high. In the last 5 years, there has been an increase of 29.4% of certificates and degrees awarded. The most popular courses reflect economic trends, i.e., Accounting, Business, Computers, and Management, in addition to the basic keyboarding class. Most students are taking introductory courses, suggesting that they are being used as transfer and general education requirements.

Including the current round of retirements, only 14% of BCSED instructors are full time. There is great concern both in the report and interviews that the shortage of full time instructors results in a lack of program leadership. This has an impact on continual program maintenance as well as program growth and development.

Student diversity is most salient in the difference between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants." While the division reports responding well to the needs of younger students in terms of newer and more uses of technology, it is not clear from the report how the Division responds to the needs of the older, or "digital immigrant," student population.

Since the last program review, there is concern that the recommendation to implement regular meetings between faculty and the college's student services and instructional support areas to coordinate more effectively has not been realized. Additionally, there has been no implementation of reassigned time for a divisional academic advisor, as recommended. SLO and PLO compliance is another concern. Recommendations for rectifying imbalance of full to part time ratio, availability of professional development funds, and additional clerical support have not been implemented due to budget constraints.

Recommendations regarding staffing and equipment management of the computer labs are moot because the responsibilities have been transferred to Information Technology Services.

Area 6: Student and Program Learning Outcomes Assessment

Findings:

Although all courses have SLOs written and assessment methods in place, BCSED has only had a 25% compliance rate with the SLO process. SLO compliance is difficult without full time program leadership and so many adjunct instructors, despite their best intentions. Also, given their numerous programs and the directive to create PLOs, this is undoubtedly an onerous task given the paired down numbers of full time faculty available for this project.

Area 7: Collaboration with Other Programs

Findings:

BCSED collaborates regularly with The Writing Center, the Library, Office for Students with Disabilities, and refers students to the Counseling Office as part of their assignments.

Area 8: Outreach Activities

Findings:

The division does a remarkable job interfacing with community stakeholders. This includes articulation meetings with local high schools, regular meetings with advisory boards, and involvement of local industry in the redesign of the networking program. Additionally, C&CS has done an excellent job in marketing to the community with a high presence at local events.

Area 9: Goals and Objectives

Findings:

BCSED's goals include developing a consistent process of assessing and reflecting upon SLOs, writing new courses to keep the programs responsive to contemporary needs, reinstating the Work Experience Program, and including technology-based courses at the Palmdale campus.

C&CS strives to increase its course offerings and to target them towards diverse community members.

Area 10: Long Term Resource Planning

Findings:

There are two main long-term goals. The most consistent theme among the report and the interviews was the concern over the low numbers of full time faculty and soon to be vacated positions. Three important programs are currently without full time leadership. The division needs four replacement and two new full time instructors.

Regarding facilities and technology, there is agreement that the status quo is fine as long as they can continue to upgrade when necessary. There were also several comments expressing the hope that ITS will now lead this effort. Additionally, student learning at the Palmdale campus needs to be improved by providing funding for staffing and upgraded technology.

Recommendations:

- When budget permits, fill the needed full time faculty positions (retirement replacements and new positions) and bring back sufficient course offerings for students.
- Reinstating the Work Experience Program, which is considered valuable for students to apply their skills learned in BCSED's courses to lead to professional success.
- If the current Dean structure is going to remain in place, secure adequately funded chair positions to effect smoother division functioning and handling of administrative workload by faculty.
- Assurance of funding for continual technological upgrades to keep up with educational and professional demands such as *Second Life* and other new medias relevant to contemporary business practices both at the Lancaster and Palmdale campuses.
- Develop a formal tracking system of student program success through development and assessment of Program Learning Outcomes.
- Fulfill clerical and instructional staffing needs according to evaluated program priorities when the budget becomes available.
- Develop alternatives to professional training when possible

- Faculty should review their SLOs and assessment methods to assure that they are not overly burdensome to gain more compliance.
- Regular and frequent communication about SLOs at division meetings and through email reminders with full and part time faculty can help increase compliance.
- Assign full time faculty members (regardless of area specialty) as “point persons” to be responsible for gathering assessment data from full and part time instructors, and entering SLOs and data in WEAVE.