

Learning Skills Center

Self-Study

Spring 2006

THE LEARNING SKILLS MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of the Learning Skills Center is to provide services to Sacramento State students that will promote their academic success. The Learning Skills Center prepares students for their college coursework by offering two levels of preparatory coursework. Learning Skills also facilitates the academic transition of students from high schools and community colleges by providing diagnostic testing and placement, academic advising and articulation, and by participating in educational equity efforts.

THE HISTORY OF THE LEARNING SKILLS CENTER

In 1976-77 Student Affairs received a grant to set up a center to assist students with learning needs. Professor Charles Moore, who had founded the English Tutoring Center in 1969, was hired half-time to assist in the start-up, with Joe Aiello, a lecturer in the English Department, as his assistant. After visiting learning centers around the state, they decided on a tutorial model using more advanced students to help their peers.

The new Learning Skills Center opened in Fall 1977 in space shared with the Testing Center in the new Student Services Center, formerly the library. Joe Aiello was Director with Kit Cropper as Associate Director. The Center was established to offer tutorial and individualized instruction in Basic English, Basic Math, Reading, and Study Skills. English as a Second Language (ESL) was soon added to the program. The next year the Center moved to its current space, formerly belonging to Psychological Services/Counseling.

In 1977 the English Placement Test (EPT) and subsequently the Entry Level Mathematics Test (ELM) in 1983 were created by the CSU Chancellor's Office to assess students' basic skills and determine which students needed remedial coursework. These assessments revealed the need for additional courses to serve the most underprepared students in basic writing and ESL and to help prepare students to pass the ELM. Nancy Tooker, the Reading/Study Skills Coordinator, and David Haas, ESL Coordinator, developed parallel courses for native speakers and ESL students in the bottom quartile of the English Placement Test. Nancy Jim Poxon, the Mathematics Coordinator, developed a course to prepare students to pass the ELM. Learning Skills also housed a learning disabilities specialist who coordinated the Learning Disabilities Program providing testing, tutorials, and other assistance for Learning Disabled students in the university.

In 1977, the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) was established to ensure that students graduating from university had adequate writing skills. Sacramento State decided to measure writing proficiency with a holistically scored essay exam; in 1979 the university began assessing students' writing skills at the junior level with the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE). The WPE highlighted the needs of the ESL population, primarily transfer students, who initially failed the WPE at a 75% rate. In response, David Haas and Charles Moore developed the English Diagnostic Test (EDT) to assess the language proficiency of ESL students and place them appropriately.

In 1985 the Chancellor's Office inaugurated the Intensive Learning Experience (ILE) in an effort to ensure that students in the bottom quartile on the EPT and ELM received adequate instruction. At the same time, the ELM was revised to include intermediate algebra. Additional funding enabled Learning Skills to offer three levels of pre-collegiate courses in math, English, and ESL, reduce class sizes, offer additional tutorial support, and track the progress of these neediest students. The Sacramento State program tripled in size and was subsequently selected as a model by an independent evaluating agency. Learning Skills continued to adhere to the spirit of ILE even after separate funding no longer existed.

Learning Skills throughout its history has provided support for university educational equity and retention efforts. The Center has worked closely with the Science Educational Equity (SEE) program, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and the Minority Engineering Program (MEP) to support their efforts to help retain and graduate students, many of whom are from underrepresented groups. An especially successful effort has been the Summer Bridge program which began in 1985 to help high school graduates make the transition to college. The Learning Skills Center has collaborated with EOP to provide a rich mix of social, academic, and orientation activities. The program has grown to 170 resident and commuter students who take two university courses during the six week session. Another highly effective initiative has been the adjunct program which offers supplemental instruction in study skills for students enrolled in General Education courses.

Nancy Tooker became Acting Director of Learning Skills in 1987; she became Director in 1988 when Joe Aiello moved to the English Department due to poor health. She led the department during the lean budget years of the early 1990's. Sue McKee took her place as Coordinator of Reading and Writing. Robby Ching, who had replaced David Haas as ESL coordinator in 1985, continued in that capacity. During these years the focus of the department shifted from offering a broad array of academic support in the form of adjuncts to General Education (GE) courses, tutorials, and workshops as well as pre-baccalaureate courses to a focus primarily on coursework to prepare students for their GE-level courses in math and English. In 1995 Learning Skills piloted Academic Systems, offering computer-mediated instruction in mathematics in a lab staffed by student instructors under the supervision of Learning Skills faculty. The lab currently serves 300 – 400 students a semester using ALEKS software for the multimedia version of LS 10A: Elementary Algebra and Geometry. A tiny writing lab with seven Apple computers has evolved into a specially designed computer writing lab for students in first-level preparatory writing classes (LS 15 and LS 86). Graduate students in the English and TESOL programs help students to write and revise their essay assignments, do computer-based activities and use the Web for assigned research. A small reading lab enables students in reading classes to use computer programs to build their reading speed and efficiency.

In Spring 1998 Nancy Tooker became Associate Dean of Arts and Letter, and Robby Ching, ESL Coordinator, took over as Director. At the same time, the department

was planning the implementation of Executive Order 665. EO 665 grew out of concern on the part of the CSU trustees that over half of all incoming freshmen required remediation and was designed to reduce the need for remediation over a ten year period. It requires students to take their placement tests prior to enrolling, enroll in all required preparatory classes in their first semester in the university, and complete their remediation before beginning their second year.

Fall 1998, the first semester of EO 665, was a watershed year for the Center as Learning Skills became the program charged with ensuring that students complied with the EO 665 requirements. Learning Skills grew to an enrollment of 3000 students and close to a hundred faculty and student instructors. Through the combined efforts of Learning Skills faculty and staff in collaboration with numerous other university departments and programs, Sacramento State became one of the most successful CSUs in ensuring that students had reached GE level before beginning their second year in the university.

Part of EO 665 requires closer collaboration between the Sacramento State and the high schools to better prepare high school graduates to meet university expectations. Learning Skills faculty have played a leadership role in working with high school teachers and students. Learning Skills faculty have forged relationships with faculty in target high schools that send many underprepared students, working with them to improve instruction in writing and mathematics and have offered workshops for students to prepare for the EPT and ELM.

In Fall 2000 Roberta Gehrman, long time coordinator of the LSC Mathematics program, moved to the Math Department. Stan Barrick, the new math coordinator, replaced the tutorial format classes with lecture/discussion classes taught primarily by lecturers. He developed a drop-in math lab to provide additional support and offered intersession workshops to enable more students to meet the EO 665 deadline. In Fall 2002 the ELM was radically revised, deemphasizing intermediate algebra and emphasizing problem solving without a calculator. Sacramento State was one of the first CSUs to completely redesign its curriculum to align with the new ELM and enable many more students to complete their preparatory math requirement within one semester.

A major development for Learning Skills began in 1999 when the program was authorized to hire its first full time lecturer. Since then Learning Skills has hired eight additional full time lecturers to serve as coordinators in the math, English, and ESL programs. In addition to spreading the work of running a large and complex department, these new hires have enabled Learning Skills to collaborate more effectively with area high schools as well as work with departments and programs on campus to develop strategies for providing academic support and improving retention and graduation rates for students.

Since the last program review, full-time faculty in Learning Skills have developed new courses and services. Faculty have been involved in a number of programs designed to “reduce the need for remediation” as called for under EO 665. These have included

College Academic Preparation Initiative (CAPI) and its current incarnation, the Early Assessment Program (EAP). Tina Jordan coordinated the academic portion of CAPI in a joint appointment with University Outreach. She also coordinated the Saturday Scholars program which helped high school students and their parents get ready for college. For the last four years she has coordinated the Reading Institute for Academic Preparation. Faculty have worked both with high school students and with teachers to orient them to the EPT and ELM and the expectations of university faculty. Robby Ching has served on the 12th Grade Task Force, helping develop a curriculum for 12th Grade English classes that focuses on expository reading and writing and is intended to narrow the gap between the literature focus of traditional high school English and the expository focus of university English. Sue McKee and Elaine McCollom have participated in training teachers to deliver the curriculum. Stan Barrick has helped design the MathSuccess website and a program to enable high school seniors to upgrade their math skills using ALEKS, a diagnostic and instructional web-based mathematics program aligned to the ELM.

Learning Skills also has worked increasingly closely with EOP and CAMP to offer Summer Bridge and Learning Communities tailored to the needs of their students. Learning Skills has assumed a greater role in advising students, particularly EO 665 students. Faculty have worked in the Advising Center, helped train Orientation leaders, staffed a table at Orientation and on Priority Admission days, supervised Peer Advisors who contact students who have not attended Orientation to help them register for their EO 665 classes and build an appropriate schedule. Learning Skills has created a position whose function is to intervene when students in first-level EO 665 classes encounter difficulties and to provide academic advising as they prepare to register for the next semester's classes. Most recently, Sue McKee has developed a program to help students in the Multiple Subject credential program or desiring to enter it to prepare for the California Subject Exam for Teachers (CSET) exams which have recently become an entrance requirement for credential programs in the CSU.

Learning Skills also has a long record of being forward thinking and fast-moving. In a recent *New York Times* article about the decline of General Motors and Ford, an industry analyst wrote, "It's good to be small, because you can move quickly. . . . the whole large-company culture is a burden" (Maynard, 2006). It is good to be small when you are an academic department for the same reason. Unburdened with the culture of a large department, Learning Skills has developed into a unique resource to the university, especially in its efforts to retain and educate diverse students. Because this is its primary mission, the department is committed in a way that no other department is or can be to underprepared students, students of color, students from backgrounds of poverty, and students for whom English is not their primary language. Learning Skills faculty and staff are widely recognized for the passion which they bring to this task.

When EO 665 came on the horizon, Learning Skills quickly planned ways in which to implement the fairly draconian (by 1998 standards) requirement while doing the least possible damage to students. What emerged was a student-oriented program with a strong advising component and a variety of options to ensure that all but the most-ill

prepared or least motivated students could complete the program. When the Faculty Student Mentor Program (FSMP) was redirected to serve sophomores and transfer student, Learning Skills campaigned actively to ensure that the freshmen in first level courses who had previously received advising through FSMP would continue to be advised. Eventually the department created an advising program run by one of its full time lecturers as well as providing faculty to work in the Advising Center.

After the CAPI program was ended by the Chancellor's Office, Learning Skills faculty moved quickly to work at the statewide level to offer high school seniors options to prepare to meet CSU expectations. Its faculty helped to create the 12th Grade Expository Reading and Writing course, develop the MathSuccess website, and create the ELM-aligned ALEKS program for computer-assisted math instruction. When asked to negotiate with Sacramento City College to "outsource" remediation, the Learning Skills chair and math coordinator came up with a plan that would have enabled the college to have a role in preparing high school seniors. When that plan foundered because of a lack of qualified reading teachers in the community colleges, Learning Skills faculty helped to create a reading certificate program to fill the need for more community college reading teachers.

When enrollment in the College of Education declined by a third, in part because students could not pass the CSET, Learning Skills created courses to prepare students for the exam. Although individual faculty in Learning Skills deserve credit for their initiative in these areas, the flexibility and responsiveness of the department is partly institutional. Because it is small, not burdened by a large committee structure, and not divided along programmatic lines (although it once was), it can respond to needs in ways that larger and more unwieldy departments cannot. It also has a "can-do" culture that has evolved over the years as well as a total commitment to serve students, especially the most vulnerable ones in the university.

THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF PREPARATORY MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH, AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The faculty in Learning Skills are committed to offering a curriculum in both math and English that is focused on developing the critical thinking skills of students who often have been academically successful in their high schools but who have not been exposed to a rigorous curriculum taught by highly qualified teachers. In order to bring students to college level in these areas as quickly as possible, the curriculum is also accelerated. In the writing program the emphasis is on critical literacy, the critical reading and analysis of a variety of texts and the construction of argumentative essays in response to those readings. Students in all courses write whole essays which are then revised and edited in response to feedback from teachers, tutors, and peers. In the math program, the focus is on developing problem solving skills that can be applied to multiple step problems. In both programs, students are taught to logically analyze problems and arrive at a solution or a position. Unlike many developmental programs where the emphasis is on discrete skills, the preparatory courses in Learning Skills focus on higher level thinking. The underlying skills, whether how to set up an algebraic

equation or how to edit for grammatical errors, are taught as means to the end of successful communication rather than as ends in and of themselves. The pedagogy in the classes reflects the belief that learning is a social activity. Classes are interactive, teachers encourage peers helping each other, and tutoring enhances the amount of individual attention that students receive. The tutorial and adjunct programs are based on the same philosophy. Although more attention is paid to particular skills, these skills are always taught in communicative contexts.

Research confirms that reading and writing abilities are highly correlated and that reading plays an integral role in the composing process; therefore, our classes use texts from a variety of genres, including essays, narratives, both fictional and biographical, popular journalism, and academic writing. Students must demonstrate understanding of the issues presented in the readings, reflect on the effectiveness of these texts and the credibility of their authors, respond to the arguments and ideas in the texts, and document sources of ideas and quotations in their writing. Grammar instruction emerges from the needs of the writer and in response to the reading; lessons are designed using reading passages and student writing as a base for the instruction. These courses serve students who must meet the EO 665 timeline for completing preparatory courses; LS 86 also serves multilingual students who must meet the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

In 1998 the constructivist mathematics program in LS 7A and LS 7B required a great deal of reading and reading comprehension to access the mathematics. This was a major roadblock for multilingual students. The Mathematics Coordinator quickly identified this problem and changed the mathematics curriculum in LS 7A and LS 7B to a more traditional approach. As a result the mathematics achievement of multilingual students increased to a level where there was no significant difference between the multilingual students and the native speakers. Additionally, the Mathematics Coordinator selected ALEKS to deliver the LS 10A multimedia curriculum. ALEKS can be changed to Spanish at the click of a button. In addition, the LS 10A multimedia curriculum can be completed at a slower pace allowing students to spend time outside of class mastering the material in a lab with a tutor or a friend. LS 10A lecture added on-line aids for the homework which include computerized hints and video lectures. All of these changes have aided the multilingual students in mastering the mathematics.

THE MISSION OF THE LEARNING SKILLS CENTER

The primary mission of the Learning Skills Center is to prepare students for their college coursework by offering courses for students who place below college level on the English Placement and Entry Level Mathematics tests. Learning Skills offers a sequence of courses in mathematics and English as a second language, and the first of a two course sequence in English for students who are under-prepared for college level work. Executive Order 665, the CSU Trustees' mandate to reduce the need for remediation in the CSU system, has greatly increased the urgency of this mission. Beginning in Fall 1998 students must meet the following requirements: (1) they must take their math and English placement tests in order to enroll in any classes; (2) they

must begin required preparatory classes in their first semester; (3) they must complete all required preparatory classes in both math and English before the beginning of their second year. Students who fail to complete these required classes within one year are counseled to continue their education elsewhere unless there are extenuating circumstances such as an officially diagnosed learning disability.

Sacramento State ranks among the top five CSU's in ensuring that students are prepared for college level work within one year. In Fall 2004 2116 first time regularly admitted freshmen enrolled at Sacramento State. 1392 or 65.8% required remediation as identified by EPT and/or ELM. 44.5% were proficient and ready to go to freshman English or GE math at the end of Fall Term. An additional 39.7% were proficient at the end of Spring Term and another 2.4% at the end of Summer Term. Thus 86.5% of these freshmen achieved proficiency within one academic year. For the mission of the Learning Skills Center the 209 Special Action first time freshmen (out of 227) are equally important. 75.1% of them achieved proficiency within the one year EO 665 time limit, an impressive number considering that they did not meet minimum CSU admission requirement and many had serious social and economic hurdles to overcome as well as academic challenges.

The Learning Skills Center makes a major contribution to the university commitment to test and place students in courses designed to meet their needs. LSC writing specialists scored seven local administrations of the English Placement Test. These local tests are offered to give students as many opportunities to take the tests before enrolling as possible. They also evaluated those tests and tests from three other administrations for possible ESL placement. In this way, they can identify students who would benefit from courses designed for multilingual students without needing to give them an additional test. They also administered 1175 English Diagnostic Tests in 2005-06 to identify transfer students who were eligible to take the multilingual administration of the Writing Proficiency Exam (the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement exam at Sacramento State) and who would benefit from multilingual courses if they do not pass the exam.

The Mathematics Coordinator facilitates placement for students who take the ELM exam and is advisor to the chair of the Mathematics Department on ELM questions; the chair of Mathematics is the official ELM coordinator. Unlike the EPT, the ELM may be retaken, so the Math Coordinator and his faculty have developed review tests and provide information about other review options to students planning to retake the test. Periodically, math faculty have also offered review workshops for students who hope to abbreviate their remediation by retaking and placing higher or out of the preparatory course sequence. The mathematics faculty also administer the Elementary Geometry and Algebra Diagnostic test as part of the final exam in their courses and advise students about future mathematics course taking.

Although offering courses in the preparatory sequence leading to freshman composition and GE math is the main focus of the Learning Skills Center, it also serves other groups of students in need of developing reading, writing, math, and study skills.

Learning Skills offers a limited number of non-preparatory courses including test preparation courses for the new test for elementary credential candidates, the CSET. They also offer a limited number of college-level reading and ESL grammar courses and small-group tutorials for reading, ESL oral skills, and Writing Proficiency Exam preparation for ESL students. Adjunct courses for courses such as beginning biology, government, and history are designed to help students develop study skills for specific disciplines. Learning Skills faculty also teach two sections of Freshman Seminar.

Over time, advising has evolved to become an important function of the Learning Skills center. Much informal advising occurs when students come to Learning Skills with questions about writing or mathematics requirements. Coordinators, faculty, and staff deliver clear, accurate, and helpful advice, and LSC faculty in both mathematics and English do formal advising about EO 665 and university English and mathematics requirements. Starting in 2003, Learning Skills faculty members have worked in the Academic Advising Center where they not only do general advising but are a resource to both advisors and students about EO 665 and preparatory English and math requirements. At the same time, another Learning Skills faculty member serves as advisor for students in first level preparatory classes (LS 7A, LS 86, and LS 87) who are not served by advisors in other programs such as EOP, Athletics, or CAMP. Students can come to her for both academic and personal advising; teachers also refer students in their classes who seem to be disengaging so that she can intervene and try to get the students on track to be successful. Learning Skills coordinators and the chair also staff a table at Freshman Orientation to respond to the questions of prospective students and their parents about the EO 665 requirement, the ELM and EPT tests, and preparatory courses. Learning Skills continues to recruit, train, and supervise Peer Advisors, graduate students who contact incoming freshmen during the summer who did not enroll in courses or did not attend Freshman Orientation. The Peer Advisors help students to enroll in their required preparatory classes and select other classes appropriate to their skill levels as measured by EPT and ELM. The chair of Learning Skills regularly participates in orientation workshops for faculty and staff assigned to advise EO 665 students in academic departments and special programs such as CAMP and EOP.

During the time period covered by this study, Learning Skills faculty took the lead in identifying upper-division students who enrolled at Sacramento State prior to 1998 and the implementation of EO 665 and had not completed their math remediation. Over 400 students were identified who were enrolled at the university. Students initially received advising to inform them of the urgency of their beginning their remedial math coursework (and English remediation for a small number) in order for them to be able to take GE math and be able to graduate. One student had accumulated 200 units toward graduation without finishing her remedial math. Subsequently, EO 665 registration controls were placed on these students which forced them to enroll in their remedial courses in order to enroll in any classes. Over several semesters students were helped to complete their remedial math and many went on to graduate. Learning Skills continues to monitor this group of students since a handful enroll each semester after stopping out for several years.

The EDT Coordinator and the Chair, who serves as university ESL Coordinator, also provide advising to upper-division and graduate students who are multilingual. The EDT Coordinator makes a presentation at the International Student Orientation and meets with many students who have questions about their EDT placements. The Chair works with GVAR students who have failed their multilingual classes and may not be allowed to continue in the multilingual program at Sacramento State. She advises them individually and arranges and supervises one-on-one tutoring for them and for freshmen who are repeating multilingual classes. Both also serve on the Reading and Writing Subcommittee, one charge of which is to review GVAR student appeals to be allowed to take GVAR classes (LS 86, Engl 109M and Engl 109W) for a third time.

An important effort to improve preparation and retention of incoming freshmen is the Summer Bridge Program. The Learning Skills Center works collaboratively with the Educational Opportunity Program/Academic Achievement Center to offer a six-week summer program for students admitted for the upcoming fall. Learning Skills offers a range of preparatory courses enabling students to complete two required courses, in most cases, prior to their first semester in the university. EOP supplements the academic program with enrichment and social activities that allow both commuter and residential students to become acquainted with the campus and its services, learn strategies for coping with campus life, and form bonds with students, faculty and EOP staff. The Learning Skills chair and Mathematics and Reading/Writing coordinators help plan the program and oversee the curriculum and testing for the summer classes. They also participate in some of social activities during the program.

The Learning Skills Center also collaborates with the EOP Learning Community program which links Learning Skills preparatory classes with GE classes, an EOP version of Freshman Seminar taught by EOP counselors, and a tutorial class that supports the GE class. Learning Skills coordinators and the chair work with the EOP Learning Community coordinator to schedule classes and assign teachers who are especially sensitive to the needs of the EOP student population. They participate in Learning Community functions and consult with EOP counselors regarding any student issues. One section addresses Pan African issues and is taught by an African-American member of the Learning Skills writing faculty.

Another program that Learning Skills closely collaborates with is CAMP. Two Learning Communities are dedicated to CAMP students and a bilingual member of the Learning Skills writing faculty has designed a special curriculum that is sensitive to their background and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs. In addition, she is the advisor to a Latino fraternity and Latina sorority and provides informal advising that contributes substantially to these students' success and retention in the university. She coordinated a week-long summer program in Summer 2005 for Latino high school students that provided a combination of orientation to college and introduction to the expectations in college English and mathematics.

A close connection between Learning Skills and Services to Students with Disabilities enables coordinators and faculty to identify students with learning

disabilities and ensure that they are tested and served. Learning Skills houses both a staff person who works with students with dyslexia and other disabilities that impact English and a person who works with students with dyscalculia who encounter difficulty in math. For a group of those students, Learning Skills offers LS 8A, 8B, and 8C which offer the algebra and geometry preparatory curriculum at a slower pace and with special accommodations depending on the nature of the students' disabilities. Learning Skills also consults with SSWD about students in regular classes. Although not designed specifically for students with disabilities, the Learning Skills reading classes and tutorials are a vital resource for students with dyslexia.

Yet another way in which the Learning Skills Center serves under-prepared students is in the training of teachers and in curriculum innovation for this population. Full time faculty in the Reading/Writing/ESL Program regularly teach graduate courses in ESL pedagogy in the MA TESOL program in the English Department. The Reading/Writing coordinator will be developing a graduate reading practicum for Spring 2007 as one of five courses in the new joint Reading Certificate offered through the English and Teacher Education departments. The coordinator of the LSC Math program occasionally teaches EDTE 222: Mathematics in the 21ST Century or EDTE50: Educational Research. The tutorial spaces, labs, and classrooms of Learning Skills are training grounds for graduate students preparing to become teachers in high school, community college, and university. Learning Skills faculty train and supervise student assistants, graduate assistants, and teaching associates. They also are in the forefront in the development of innovative curriculum including the use of computers in both mathematics and writing instruction and the teaching of text-based academic writing and critical thinking. Through participation in conferences and professional organizations, publication, and one-on-one meetings, Learning Skills faculty disseminate these innovations to high school and community college teachers as well as university colleagues.

The Learning Skills Center has a mission to work with other departments and faculty in helping them learn how to work with students who enter the university under-prepared. Learning Skills faculty are active on college and university committees where they ensure that the special needs of this group of students are addressed. They also are on call when departments or individual faculty members need support in working with these students and have participated in and offered workshops through the Center for Teaching and Learning. They work especially closely with the Mathematics and English departments to facilitate the smooth transition of students from Learning Skills classes to classes in those departments.

In 2001 an educational consulting firm was hired by Sacramento State to evaluate its equity programs. In their final report, the external evaluators summarized the achievements of the Learning Skills Center in carrying out its mission:

Among the best practices of the Center are a consistently welcoming environment, hiring and training personnel who are open to that "welcoming" philosophy, a strong sense among Center leadership that collaboration in the

services of students is essential, an exemplary, carefully integrated curriculum, an openness to student feedback, and a constant search for ways to improve teaching, testing and placement practices. Additional strengths are the close interface with other equity programs . . . (Davitto and Ebeling, 22)

They commended the department's "close interface with other equity programs" (Davitto and Ebeling, 22) and quoted the Dean of the College of Arts as Letters, William J. Sullivan, Jr., in characterizing the department as "overworked, understaffed and accomplishing miracles" (Davitto and Ebeling, 22).

PROGRAM GOALS OF THE LEARNING SKILLS CENTER

The program goals of the Learning Skills Center are as follows

- **Superior accomplishments in teaching and learning.**

The Learning Skills Center is a teaching department first and foremost. Its primary goal is to continue to provide the highest quality of teaching to students who are academically underprepared for university level work while at the same time working aggressively to reduce the number of students who arrive at the university underprepared. Crucial elements in achieving this goal are the development of innovative developmental curricula in English and mathematics, the recruitment, professional development, and supervision of teachers highly qualified to offer the curricula and sensitive to the special needs of a diverse population of underprepared students, tutoring and other support mechanisms to help students in courses, placement and assessment instruments that ensure that students take appropriate classes and have appropriate skills at the end of the classes, and careful advising to facilitate student success.

- **Enhancement of teaching as a dimension of professional development**

The Learning Skills Center ARTP document assigns 60% of the evaluation criteria to the area of teaching and allows full-time faculty to reflect on teaching and coordination activities in addition to more traditional means of assessing effectiveness. Faculty are encouraged to participate in scholarly activities that enhance their work with underprepared students and their preparation of teachers to educate such students. Participation in faculty development or teacher education activities is specifically mentioned in the category of service to the institution, and participation in articulation and outreach activities with schools, community colleges, and other universities is specifically cited in service to the community as being valued by the department. The part-time faculty ARTP document notes that part-time lecturers are rewarded for "currency in the field demonstrated through in-service and/or continuing education such as attending professional conferences or workshops (on or off campus), participating in program development activities or contributing to professional publications."

Learning Skills program coordinators meet regularly with faculty to discuss curriculum and share ways of delivering it more effectively. Mathematics coordinators

hold required monthly meetings. Writing faculty attend a pre-semester curriculum development meeting as well as a pre-semester planning meeting. They also participate in holistic scoring of two midterms and a final exam; these grading sessions double as professional development activities. The Learning Skills Center draws on the teacher training courses offered in the Mathematics and English departments. The Learning Skills mathematics coordinator encourages student instructors in LS math courses to take Math 196G in order to help them develop pedagogical skills beyond those imparted in the LSC training program. Graduate students hired to work in the Learning Skills computer writing lab must have completed either Engl 410A: Internship in Tutoring English or Engl 410B: Internship—Teaching ESL. TESOL teaching associates are required to have completed Engl 410B and either Engl 215A: Teaching ESL Reading and Vocabulary Development or Engl 215B: Teaching ESL Writing before applying to be T.A. They must complete Engl 215B, another English 215 course and a third required TESOL course while serving as TAs. Basic Writing TAs must have completed Engl 220A: Teaching College Composition or Engl 215B and either Engl 410A or 410B. Oral Skills tutors must have completed or be enrolled in Engl 215D: Pedagogy of the Spoken Language. Reading tutors must have completed or be enrolled in Engl 215A: Teaching ESL Reading and Vocabulary Development.

- **Use of advanced technological tools for teaching and learning.**

The Learning Skills Center has been a pioneer in the use of computer-assisted and computer-mediated instruction in preparatory mathematics and English classes. As such, it contributes to the establishment of a climate where technology is viewed as an essential instructional tool. The Learning Skills mathematics program currently offers students the option of taking LS 10A in a computer format using the ALEKS program. The lab has gone from 20 to 30 stations with Pentium computers and a three hour format so that up to 12 classes can be scheduled each semester. The LSC mathematics lab is a model not only for the campus but for other Sacramento State and community colleges.

The LSC computer writing lab has 20 stations and offers students a chance to use word processing in developing, revising, and editing their essays with the assistance of trained writing tutors. Even beginning level preparatory students are also introduced to the internet in the context of class assignments.

- **Academic programs characterized by high quality, serious attention to outcomes, recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge, commitment to life-long learning and preparing an educated citizenry, and responsiveness to regional needs.**

The preparatory courses offered by the Learning Skills Center are the foundation on which this university goal rests. To that end, Learning Skills offers accelerated, intensive courses to give all entering students necessary academic literacy and mathematical concepts; this foundation enables faculty throughout the university to offer more rigorous courses. Learning Skills courses have carefully structured assessment of outcomes (see Learning Skills Center Assessment Plan). The writing courses utilize an expository reading/writing curriculum that includes readings by writers who reflect the

diversity of the students' own experiences. They focus on teaching students to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing and emphasize critical thinking. Writing assignments often focus on current issues including ballot measures and policy issues that give students tools to participate in civic life. The mathematics courses teach students problem solving and the ability to think logically. They also encourage students to reflect on how mathematics is used across a variety of disciplines and in the workplace.

Other courses and tutorials offered by Learning Skills address this goal in a significant way. Reading tutorials and courses provide skills that will support students in all their coursework and beyond; GVAR courses and tutorials for second language students help students develop literacy skills they will need in the job marketplace and for advancement.

- **Contribution toward developing a campus community whose diversity enriches the lives of all and whose members develop a strong sense of personal and community identity as well as mutual respect.**

Although all Learning Skills courses facilitate community building among student as an element in successful instruction, the Freshmen Seminars have the particular task of building students identity as university students and introducing them to academic life and university resources in a very explicit way. The Learning Skills advisor works one-on-one with students to accomplish the same goal.

- **Expand University support systems to improve retention and graduation rates of underrepresented students.**

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The Learning Skills Center is actively engaged in efforts to improve retention and graduation rates of students who are underprepared for university level work. Because of the close connections among socioeconomic level, race, and academic preparation, many of the students served by Learning Skills come from underrepresented groups. Learning Skills provides the following:

Courses for Underprepared freshmen

- Preparatory coursework for all students assessed as underprepared based on EPT and ELM except for those who place into English 1
- Preparatory classes for EOP Summer Bridge Program
- Collaboration with EOP Learning Communities
- Arts and Letters Freshman Seminars
- Dedicated courses for CAMP and PanAfrican Learning Communities

Advising for Underprepared students

- Summer peer advising and enrollment in preparatory classes
- Learning Skill advising program for students in the bottom quartile on EPT/ELM
- Learning Skills faculty serving in the Academic Advising Center
- Coordination with campus advising programs (EOP, Athletics, etc.)

Outreach to High School Teachers and Students

- Professional development for high school English teachers
- 12th Grade Reading and Writing Task Force Professional Development
- ALEKS computer math program for Senior Year Math Experience
- Collaboration with EAP (local and system)
- EPT and ELM workshops for high school students
- Workshops for high school teachers, principals, and counselors.

Assessment Programs

- Local scoring of EPT
- Multilingual evaluation of EPT essays
- Administration of EDT (local placement test for multilingual students)
- Multilingual administration of WPE

Academic Support

- Adjuncts (supplemental instruction) for GE courses
- Reading tutorials and courses

Support for Multilingual Students

- WPE Preparation for multilingual students
 - Oral skills for multilingual students
 - CSET test preparation courses and workshops
 - Participation in International Student Orientation
- **Develop a campus that is welcoming, inclusive, vibrant, and intellectually stimulating for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and University visitors.**

By offering preparatory courses and other academic support services to underprepared students, the Learning Skills Center ensures that the university can meet its goal of creating an inclusive student body. The Learning Skills Center is one of the first contact points for many new freshman students and others who have not completed their preparatory coursework. Learning Skills staff, faculty, and peer and faculty advisors make it their highest priority to provide a welcoming environment and go out of their way to see to it that students receive the help that they need not only from Learning Skills but from other campus offices. Learning Skills also plays an important role in serving other offices, such as Academic Advising, Admissions and Records, and EOP, CAMP, and academic departments, especially English and Mathematics. Learning Skills is a resource for these programs and departments, providing services to students, faculty and staff, acting as a conduit for information, and facilitating their work with preparatory students.

In order to best serve its highly diverse student population, Learning Skills works constantly to ensure that its faculty and staff are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic

needs of its students. It actively recruits faculty and staff who are open to other cultures and equipped to respond to the needs of students who speak languages other than English and non-standard dialects. In the writing program all faculty must have training in second language acquisition and pedagogy; most of those who teach native-speaker classes and all those who teach multilingual classes have Master's degrees in TESOL. Student instructors in both the Mathematics and English programs represent a variety of cultural and linguistic background, and Learning Skills prepares many of them for future careers in community college and K-12 teaching. The Learning Skills faculty is also a resource to other departments and individuals who need assistance in better serving diverse students. Learning Skills faculty are frequently invited to do workshops for faculty and tutors in other departments including EOP, Social Work, and Communications Studies.

The curriculum of Learning Skills writing classes is multicultural in its content, using readings from a variety of cultures and encouraging students to draw on their own diverse cultural backgrounds to evaluate what they read and support their positions in writing. The classes also encourage group work and student-student interaction to increase communication across cultures and to foster a sense of participation in an academic community.

- **Establish partnerships and programs of mutual benefit to the University and the Sacramento region.**

Learning Skills faculty also play a leadership role in the CSU Chancellor's Office initiative, part of the EO 665 mandate, to reduce the need for remediation by helping high schools statewide better prepare students for college and specifically reduce the number who need remediation when they enter the CSU. The chair of Learning Skills serves on the EPT Development Committee. In that role she writes items for the EPT and the EAP test, advises members of the Chancellor's Office about policies related to EO 665, university writing requirements, and EAP test. A high enough score on the EAP test earns an exemption from EPT and ELM and direct placement into the GE courses if the student subsequently enrolls at a CSU. In math students can also earn a conditional exemption; if they pass a course in senior year with intermediate algebra as a prerequisite, they too can go directly into their GE math course. Faculty in the Learning Skills Center also participate as readers for the essay portion of the exam which was taken by 270,000 high school juniors in 2005.

Unfortunately, the majority of students in 11th grade do not earn these exemptions. They are strongly advised to work on building their English and math skills during senior year so that they will be able to place into GE math and English if they enroll in a CSU. The same skills will obviously help them if they attend a University of California or a private university or begin their education at a community college. As it became clear that no avenues existed for students to build these skills during their senior year, the chair of Learning Skills and the mathematics coordinator became actively involved in efforts to provide these resources.

The CSU English Council proposed the creation of a Task Force to develop a 12th grade course to be offered as an alternative to the traditional 12th Grade British or World Literature course. The chair of Learning Skills joined the CSU 12th Grade Task Force at its inception and continues to serve on it. This group, composed of CSU English faculty and high school teachers and administrators, has developed, piloted, and rolled out statewide a 12th Grade Expository Reading and Writing Course. The course can be offered in its entirety in 12th grade or integrated across 11th and 12th grade. It is aligned with the California Standards for 11th and 12th Grade Language Arts and with the standards represented by the EPT. The fourteen assignments that make up the course demonstrate how non-fiction expository texts in a variety of genres ranging from newspaper articles to full-length books can be read from a critical rhetorical perspective with attention to the strategies that good readers apply before reading, during reading, and after reading. Students are asked to evaluate, analyze, and bring to bear their own knowledge and experiences, to think about who the writer is, how he or she is appealing to the reader, and what the purpose of the text is. The assignments then offer a range of writing topics that require students to explore what they have read and incorporate the texts into their own writing, a model of academic writing expected by university faculty. The curriculum also offers samples of student writing aligned to the scoring ranges on the EPT in an effort to enable teachers to more accurately assess the quality of their students' output in the light of university standards. A series of professional development efforts have taken place over 2004 and 2005 with more planned for the upcoming year, including the development of a website with a moderated discussion board facilitated by the Task Force members. Faculty in Learning Skills, English, and Education have also been prepared to do additional training sessions for teachers who last year piloted and this year are implementing the curriculum.

The Learning Skills Mathematics Coordinator was recruited by the Chancellor's Office to assist in developing the MathSuccess website to help students prepare for the ELM and college math. The CSU also allocated resources to the campuses to hire an EAP coordinator whose task is to provide information to high schools in the campus service area about the EAP testing program and the interventions being offered by the CSU including the 12th grade course, the MathSuccess and EnglishSuccess websites, and a new course in math that is underdevelopment. Both the chair and the Mathematics Coordinator have worked in tandem with the Sacramento State EAP coordinator in this effort which included a conference for faculty and administrators hosted at Sacramento State in spring 2005.

In another effort to close the preparation gap of high school students, the Learning Skills chair and faculty have worked closely with the Center for the Advancement of Reading to offer the Reading Institute for Academic Preparation (RIAP) in 2003, 2004, and 2005. A member of the Learning Skills writing faculty has teamed with an adolescent literacy specialist from the College of Education to offer an 80 hour professional development program designed for teams of high school faculty across the disciplines to improve their ability to teach academic literacy within their discipline. They have drawn on the expertise of faculty in Learning Skills and English to offer the workshops that integrate the 12th Grade Reading and Writing Course

curriculum and the rhetorical approach to academic reading and writing to prepare teachers to deliver reading instruction across the curriculum.

Learning Skills faculty have been involved in training Sacramento State students to work as tutors in the middle and high schools in the Sacramento area. They have held test preparation workshops for prospective students to help them perform at their best on the ELM and EPT. They have also held workshops for teachers to help them understand entry level expectations and to open a dialogue about how we can best work together to improve the preparation of high school students. Learning Skills faculty have also participated in articulation efforts with feeder community colleges including workshops and joint group grading sessions. The Mathematics Coordinator, the Reading/Writing Coordinator, and the chair all worked intensively with administrators and program coordinators at Sacramento City College to develop courses based on the ALEKs program and the 12th Grade Expository Reading and Writing Course that could be offered to area high school students or recent graduates to improve their preparation for enrollment at Sacramento State and thereby reduce the need for remediation. Despite a good faith effort on both sides, neither effort actually materialized.

- **Support the educational mission set forth in the Strategic Plan by providing valued services to internal and external constituencies through continual implementation of effective and efficient practices.**

Although Learning Skills has always made the development of effective and efficient practices a priority, Executive Order 665 has multiplied the areas in which such development has needed to take place. The Learning Skills chair and program coordinators serve on the EO 665 Committee and the department is the program center responsible for advising and tracking EO 665 students, with peer advisors who help students enroll in classes during the summer and a faculty advisor who is focused on helping those in the first level classes during the academic year. The chair collaborates on EO 665 Advisor Training along with the Director of Academic Advising and the Director of Special Programs and Enrollment Analysis. Learning Skills also orchestrates the collection and distribution of Course Report forms to give advisors feedback on the performance of their EO 665 advisees in preparatory classes, ensures that only students who are not attending their preparatory classes are disenrolled at Census, and verifies that repeating students who are in good standing in their courses are allowed to enroll for the next semester.

Learning Skills has been inventive in coming up with new ways to more efficiently serve a greatly increased population of students, while at the same time helping to increase the amount of advising and support for students under pressure to complete their preparatory coursework within the one year timeline. The Writing Program in collaboration with the English Department offers Spring Semester blended sections of Ls 15/ Engl 1 and LS 86/LS 87 classes. These “combo” classes offer students a seven-unit intensive course to enable them to complete the two-course writing sequence in a single semester. The Mathematics Program offers LSK 600 tutorials through Continuing Education so students who meet certain criteria can complete their mathematics course in a three week intensive format. In addition, Learning Skills has

effectively collaborated with EOP and the CAMP program to include or attach Learning Skills classes to EOP and CAMP Learning Communities.

The chair of Learning Skills has worked with the staff of the Testing Center so that the campus could administer the EPT and ELM on a monthly basis and the EPT could be scored locally. Through this effort the campus has been able to offer additional exam administrations, including immediately before the beginning of classes in both Fall and Spring semesters. Local scoring means that scores can be immediately available for purposes of Summer Bridge admission, Summer Orientation advising, and enrollment of out-of-state and out-of-country students arriving on campus just before the beginning of the semester. The high campus compliance rate with the test-taking requirement of EO 665 has occurred in part because of these additional administrations. The chair and reading/writing coordinator have also developed a system to evaluate the EPT essays of students reporting a first language other than English. Students can receive a multilingual placement based on their EPT rather than having to take a separate multilingual placement test.

The Mathematics Coordinator has worked closely with the CSU Chancellor's Office, ELM Committee chair, and ALEKS Corporation to produce two versions of a CSU approved mathematics curriculum.

- An ELM version of ALEKS that aligns closely to the ELM curriculum for CSU and approved by ELM committee
- Selected ALEKS intermediate algebra curriculum used for the SYME in high schools and approved by the ELM committee

The ELM version of ALEKS is used by the CSU Math Success website to deliver on-line tutoring to student who are not exempt from the ELM requirement and need extra help to pass the ELM exam. The CSU intermediate algebra version is used for the CSU e-learning course for those students who cannot participate in the Senior Experience at their local high school. Dr. Barrick supervised the CSU e-learning course that was offered at four CSU campuses. This CSU effort was downsized to one site during its second year due to low demand for the course. In addition, the ELM version of ALEKS is used as the courseware for LS 10A multimedia in the Learning Skills Center.

- **Writing new courses and continual improvement of existing courses based on program evaluations, measures of student learning and course evaluations.**

Learning Skills has been responsive to several university needs and developed courses to address them. We developed Freshmen Seminars to capitalize on our faculty's extensive experience in working with entering freshmen and to meet the university's goal of better freshmen retention. We also developed classes at the request of the Deans of Education and Arts and Letters to serve students unable to pass the CSET in order to enter or remain in the multiple-subject credential program. These courses are unique in the CSU as a response to relatively high fail rates for some groups of students on this newly required test. The department also developed LS 10X to enable qualified students

to begin Math 9 immediately while taking a 1-unit geometry adjunct which provided their required remediation. We also experimented with LS 10I, a self-directed version of LS 10A but found that most students preferred the semester-long course.

Both the writing and the math programs have coordinated assessments to measure student progress during the semester and to ensure that students have met rigorous standards at the end of the semester. Curriculum is constantly evolving to meet students' needs as measured by these assessments. The math program piloted a new textbook for LS 10A in Fall 2005 with an on-line homework component; finding this feature successful, they adopted the text for the whole program. In response to a growing problem with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty, the writing program piloted a new format for the midterms and final exams in all the writing classes during Summer Bridge 2005. Students receive several articles on a topic which they read and discuss in class with their teachers and classmates. At the time of the exam, they receive a short argumentative passage on the same topic and are asked to evaluate the argument and explain their own position. This change has been adopted for the whole program and is driving a change throughout the curriculum to address rhetorical issues more directly, thus increasing the rigor of these preparatory classes.

Response to Program Review Recommendations

At the time of the last program review in 1999-2000, the Learning Skills Center was going through a major upheaval in the administration of its mathematics program. The Program Review confirmed many problems that the Chair had been trying to address in the curriculum and coordination of the program. The math coordinator resigned in Fall 1999 and a new coordinator stepped into her shoes on very short notice just as the review process was coming to a close. With the complete support of the Chair, he made it the first order of business to address the Program Review recommendations and in doing so thoroughly revamped the math program.

1. The Program Review Team recommends that the University funding centers insure that the LSC has sufficient resource support to implement the provisions of E.O. 665.

Until very recently, resource allocation has been sufficient to implement E.O. 665 in a principled and student-centered way. The Learning Skills Center has been able to offer enough sections of classes, support students through mandatory and optional tutoring, serve students who fail classes in ways that enable them to meet the requirement timeline by the year, and provide advising and office staff to make sure students are assisted in completing the requirement. The recent increases in class size, however, have begun to undermine the department's efforts. Teachers and coordinators are stretched thin as they try to give students the same amount of help even though classes are 25% larger. Students complain about overcrowding in classrooms, and lack of office space makes it harder for teachers to meet individually with students.

2. The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC, the Students with Disabilities Program and appropriate University officials continue exploring ways by which students with diagnosed disabilities may make substitutions to GE requirements.

The chair and coordinators strongly oppose substitutions for GE requirements for students with disabilities. They believe that the current system of providing accommodations, individualized and slower paced instruction in mathematics, and tutoring in math and English provided by disabilities specialists is in the best interests of students with disabilities. These supports give disabled students access to the same curriculum as students without disabilities, a more productive response than simply exempting students from GE requirements.

3. Given the mandates of E.O. 665, the Program Review Team recommends that the LSC in conjunction with appropriate University officials explore ways of providing acceptable levels of LSC services to meet the needs of a broad sector of Sacramento State students.

The LSC remains unable to serve the needs of a broad sector of Sacramento State students despite the university's growing focus on student retention. The department believes that it is well-positioned to help the university provide tutoring and supplemental instruction to a much larger group of students. The LSC adjunct program is a model for providing discipline-specific study skills support in key GE classes; the LS 60/60M classes could readily be modified to provide discipline-specific academic literacy support; the CSET classes (LS 64 G, H, and I) and WPE tutorials (LS 6B) are models for providing test-preparation; and the Freshman Seminars (AL 21) are models for providing orientation to the university. A number of students have completed GE-level math in the past but would benefit from additional review as they enter math-dependent majors or prepare for professional exams. The LS 10I-independent study course could readily be adapted as an algebra review course using the ALEKS computer program for students in programs such as nursing and the multiple subject credential program. In addition, the expertise of Learning Skills coordinators in training tutors in mathematics, reading, and writing make the department a logical resource for training tutors for other programs such as educational equity programs.

4. The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC review its course numbering system for purposes of clarifying its sequential offerings.

The department believes that the Review Team did not fully understand the distinction between courses numbered 1 – 49 that do not receive baccalaureate credit and courses numbered 50 and above that do. This accounts for the numbering discrepancy between LS 15 and LS 86. Since the Review all the ESL courses have been renamed “multilingual” to better indicate that they serve a broad spectrum of students whose first language is not English; at the same time, the courses have been given the same name as the native-speaker courses at the same level to emphasize the equivalency of the curriculum. The LSC chair coordinated with the English department so the same name changes were made for their ESL courses. Any additional renumbering must be a whole

university effort. The department alone cannot address illogicalities such as LS 10A preceding Math and Math 1 or LS 86 and LS 87 preceding Engl 2 which is the equivalent of Engl 1A since that would require renumbering courses across departments.

- 5. The Program Review Team recommends the LSC explore, develop and implement additional instructional strategies which will provide high quality instruction and decrease the seat time in required LS writing courses. Among the strategies we suggest is included allowing students to challenge the ELM and EPT placement exams.*

Students are able to take the ELM as often as they want to challenge their math placement, and the math coordinators have regularly offered workshops to help students prepare for the test. This has sometimes backfired, however, for students in the LS 7A/7B series (ELM = 34 or below) when students score high enough to go into LS 10A and then struggle with a faster-paced curriculum and less tutorial support. Reducing seat time for students who lack basic skills is counter-productive. On the other hand, the LSC math program also created a one-unit LS 10X class that enables students scoring 44 – 48 on the ELM to enroll directly in Math 9.

Since the last Program Review, several changes have been made regarding the EPT placement process. The Learning Skills writing program in cooperation with the English department has developed a process for identifying students in first-level classes (LS 15 and LS 86) who are eligible to challenge the second-level class (Engl 1 by a portfolio and LS 87 by a holistically scored exam). Students who pass are able to go directly to the freshman level course (Engl 1A or Engl 2) in their second semester; subsequent data has shown the large majority of these students are successful. The cut-score for initial placement into Engl 1A and Engl 2 has been lowered in two stages; a score of 147-148 now places students into the freshman course with a 1 unit writing workshop (Engl 1X); students at 149-150 go into the freshman course with no additional support. Again, data has shown these students to be highly successful. Data is still being gathered to determine the advisability of changing the cut score for English 1 and LS 87 (currently 142). Finally, the chair of Learning Skills and the coordinator of Composition in the English department are advocating that the CSU system as a whole change the cut score for freshman composition to 146 or 147 in recognition that many campuses have already made the change on an ad hoc basis, that the Sacramento State data supports such a change, and that unnecessarily labeling students remedial is harmful to the students, the CSU system, and the high schools that are criticized for failing to prepare them for college level work. Unfortunately, at the Spring 2006 meeting of the CSU English Council, the composition coordinators decided not to recommend making the change systemwide and instead to support individual campus autonomy in modifying the cut score required for freshman composition.

- 6. The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC review the numbering sequence for its mathematics curriculum for the purpose of clarifying the sequential offerings.*

See #4 above.

7. *The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC director and mathematics coordinator develop strategies for increasing the pool of available mathematics tutors. Strategies including possible incentives for keeping qualified tutors on staff should also be considered.*

This recommendation was a response to numerous criticisms about math tutors who were International Engineering graduate students. They lacked preparation in or commitment to teaching developmental mathematics and their English often lacked comprehensibility, but they declined opportunities to further develop their oral skills. The new mathematics coordinator quickly developed a pool of well-qualified tutors who were majors or graduate students in mathematics, had comprehensible English, and had a commitment to teaching developmental mathematics. He identified potential tutors and actively recruited from the math department, rather than Engineering, and offered prospective tutors a clear “career ladder” beginning with student assistants and progressing through Lead Student Assistant to Teaching Associate. He expanded the TA program to five positions. Student instructors at all levels received careful supervision and caring mentoring. Testimony to the effectiveness of this strategy is that tutors now often begin as undergraduates and remain as Learning Skills employees until or even after they have earned MA’s in Mathematics or Math Education.

8. *The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC institute measures insuring that all instructional staff and especially tutors are given training appropriate to insuring their maximum effectiveness in the classroom; this includes cultural sensitivity instruction.*

The department ensures that tutors, as well as other instructors, are sensitive to the diversity of our students. This begins with recruiting and hiring diverse tutors and faculty who act as role models; coordinators also address sensitivity issues as needed in their regular training meetings. Regular reviews of student evaluations indicate few problems in this area since tutors began to be recruited from the Mathematics department. The coordinators serve as discipline specialists to train and mentor student instructors.

9. *The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC receive additional faculty resources to hire a specialist in training instructional staff.*

The LSC department has been puzzled by this recommendation since the chair and program coordinators are specialists in training instructional staff; they believe that this recommendation was a response to the highly negative evaluations coming out of the mathematics program under the previous math coordinator. After she was replaced, student evaluations immediately improved and remain high in both the writing and math programs. The department was also able to hire full-time lecturers beginning in 1999 to serve as course coordinators for the LS 7A/B courses, LS 10A lecture, and LS 10A multimedia courses as well as LS 86. Lecturers also coordinate the tutor training for the LS 86 computer lab, LS 5, and LS 6A, run the GE adjunct program, and administer the English Diagnostic Test program. In each case, they along with the chair and program coordinators provide high quality tutor training and professional development for faculty.

10. The Program Review recommends that Professor Ching and Dr. Barrick evaluate the instructional strategies used in 7A/B and the extent to which additional and more effective methods are needed.

Under the leadership of Dr. Barrick, the LS 7A/B, the elementary algebra/geometry sequence for students who place at 34 or below on the ELM was completely revamped. The CPM curriculum was based on a social constructivist approach to mathematics instruction that required students to “discover” mathematical principles through the use of manipulatives and exploration. Student evaluations documented a high level of student dissatisfaction with the approach and the textbook. Typical comments included, “I really hate this book, it doesn’t give you a thorough explanation of how to do the problems.” “What I would like is for the teacher to teach instead of working just in groups. “Lose the book, it didn’t have good instruction on how to do each problem.” “The way the problems were presented confused me and I felt more lost and unsure about my algebra knowledge than any time before. I feel very discouraged and feel like I have wasted many hours on 7A and B and gained nothing.” The CPM curriculum was eliminated and a new textbook reflecting a more traditional approach to mathematics instruction was selected for Fall 2000. Student evaluations have dramatically improved.

Although not recommended by the review team, the LS 10A curriculum has also been evaluated and modified through the use of new textbooks and the implementation of the ALEKS courseware in multimedia sections of the course. The program has retained both the lecture format and the computer-based format for LS 10A in recognition that many students prefer the lecture format while a smaller group respond well to the more individualized ALEKS approach.

11. The Program Review Team recommends that the mathematics coordinator continue to identify and implement strategies which place more trained instructional staff in 7A/B and 10A/B classes.

All classes are taught by “trained instructional staff.” The chair and math coordinator successfully argued for increasing the number of math classes taught by lecturers and TAs. In Fall 2005, LS 7A had 13 sections taught by lecturers and 2 by TAs; LS 7B had 3 sections, all taught by lecturers, LS 10A-Lecture had seven sections taught by lecturers and 3 by TAs, and LS 10A-Multimedia had 9 sections, 1 taught by the course coordinator and 8 taught by student instructors under her supervision. The program was able to make these improvements by strategically increasing class sizes by using lecture format rather than tutorials and by scheduling multimedia classes more efficiently.

12. The Program Review Team recommends that the math coordinator and the LSC director assess the extent to which additional teaching strategies can be employed in the 7A/B classes which better take into account the diverse learning strategies of students.

Strategies used within the LS 7A/B classes are much better balanced with a combination of lecture, tutorial, pair, and individual work employed. Regular instructor

meetings and oversight by coordinators ensure that all teachers approach the materials in a reasonably consistent way and are sensitive to the diverse learning styles of their students. Likewise, the LS 10A program has retained a dual-format system, offering the course content both in a lecture format and in a computer lab using the ALEK program so students can choose the format best suited to their learning style.

13. The Program Review Team recommends that the LSC mathematics program develop a methodology for following the progress of E.O. 665 students through their required General Education mathematics courses.

The mathematics coordinator regularly tracks student success in Math 1. Students who have completed LS 10A tend to outperform students who place directly into the course; students who have completed LS 7A/B tend to perform just under the level of those placing into the course (see Learning Skills Assessment Plan for annual data.)

14. The Program Review Team recommends that the Provost initiate a process of collaboration involving the deans of Arts and Letters and Natural Sciences and Mathematics for the purpose of crafting a workable relationship between the LSC and the department of Mathematics.

Neither the Provost nor the deans of the Arts and Letters and Natural Sciences and Mathematics needed to take any action at all. Once it was clear that the Learning Skills mathematics program was not going to be moved to the Math department and that Dr. Barrick was firmly in charge of the program, the two departments developed a sound working relationship. When the ELM was redesigned to eliminate most intermediate algebra material, the Learning Skills department cooperated with the Math department's desire that Learning Skills no longer offer LS 10B: Intermediate Algebra and Geometry. Dr. Barrick also developed a system, similar to the English 1A/1X package, that allows students in the 44 – 48 score range on the ELM to go directly into MATH 9 with a one-unit LS 10X that provides geometry instruction and the EO 665 component. Dr. Barrick has also kept the Math department apprised of developments with ALEKS and the EAP exam and the conditionally exempt designation. Dr. Barrick has worked with Math and Math Education faculty in local EAP outreach efforts, providing professional development for high school mathematics teachers.

Major Trends

The Learning Skills Center and Underprepared Students

Remediation has always been a somewhat controversial issue in higher education, and nowhere more than in the California State University system. However, a report from The Institute for Higher Education Policy (December, 1998) made a carefully reasoned case for the centrality of remediation in higher education, calling it “a core function of higher education” (The Institute for Higher Education Policy, 6) and noting that not only has it always had a role, but that that role will continue as a larger and larger percentage of the population seeks higher education. The report points out that the cost

of remediation is “modest and generally comparable to or lower than the costs of other academic programs” (The Institute for Higher Education Policy, vii). It also contends that the failure to provide remediation could have major social and economic consequences for individuals and for society, ranging “from unemployment and low-wage jobs to welfare participation and incarceration—or any of a number of other options in between that are far more expensive for society” (The Institute for Higher Education Policy, 17). Institutions that offer remediation benefit financially as well as in more intangible ways because of greater student retention and success (The Institute for Higher Education Policy, 17).

Educational reforms, while producing some improvement in the elementary grades, have had little impact on the high schools; therefore, the need to serve underprepared students at the university level is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The vast majority of students requiring Learning Skills preparatory courses have graduated from severely underperforming high schools, and their need for remediation can be directly attributed to that fact.

Two recent national reports suggest disturbing trends with respect to academic literacy. The report *Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals about College Readiness in Reading* (ACT, Inc., 2006) notes that “Only 51% of 2005 ACT-tested high school graduates are ready for college-level reading—and, what’s worse, more students are on track to being ready for college-level reading in eighth and tenth grade than are actually ready by the time they reach twelfth grade.” Further, the report points out that “Male students, African American students, Hispanic American students, Native American students, and students from families whose yearly income is below \$30,000 are less likely than the ACT-tested population as a whole to be ready for college-level reading—in some instances, as much as one and a half to two and a half times less” (ACT Inc., 2). It documents that “Student readiness for college-level reading is at its lowest point in more than a decade” (ACT Inc., 2). This confirms the data gathered by the English Placement Test that shows that the reading and composing skills scores on the EPT account for 75% of the placements of students into remedial English classes. In other words, as flawed as student writing may be, their academic reading skills are much worse.

Another report, the *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (2005) defines literacy as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (*National Assessment of Adult Literacy* 2). It found that prose and document literacy declined between 1992 and 2003 for high school graduates, AA degree holders, college graduates, and students in graduate programs or with graduate degrees (*National Assessment of Adult Literacy*, 14). Quantitative literacy in the same time period improved by two points for high school graduates and held steady for Associate degree holders, but declined for college graduates and students in graduate programs or with graduate degrees (*National Assessment of Adult Literacy*, 14).

Historically the CSU system has been the entry point for students from working class families to enter the mainstream of economic and social life in California. A decision to alter CSU policy from “reducing the need for remediation” to “reducing remediation” by outsourcing our remedial program to the community college or redirecting remedial students to the community college would be a major change in the mission of this university. At Sacramento State, we could potentially lose 66% of the freshman class—the most diverse part--and become in effect an upper-division institution. The close connection between the lower-division curriculum and the upper-division would be eroded. Likewise, we know that 30% of the students who enroll in Los Rios community colleges hope to transfer, but only 4% actually do transfer. CAMP, a program that serves Latino students, has a 70% retention rate as Sacramento State; in the community colleges it only has a 17% rate. Therefore, it’s not simply a question of postponing students’ enrollment; many students would never survive the “sink or swim” culture of the community colleges, a culture created by their lower funding rate. Community college basic skills classes cost much less than university classes—although not less than classes offered in Learning Skills--but this savings comes at a cost—class sizes of up to 45 students, lack of adequate program coordination, and reliance on “freeway flyers.” In contrast, the Sacramento State program currently has all the elements that foster retention of underprepared students—a strong academic program with highly committed teachers, cutting-edge curriculum, support for program coordination, rigorous standards, supplementary academic support, advising, and mentoring. Serving these students in the CSU should remain a high priority even in times of budget crisis.

The faculty in Learning Skills have been on the cutting edge in developing ways to close the narrow the curricular gap between high school English and mathematics and university courses in those subjects. In doing so, they are not responding to a trend but rather setting a new course nationally for collaboration between secondary and postsecondary segments at the statewide level. The Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum developed by the 12th Grade Task Force has attracted the attention of the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, in Washington, DC, as well as educational leaders in states such as Ohio and Kentucky that are hoping to learn from the CSU experience how to align curriculum and standards to better serve their students. Learning Skills is also doing pioneering work in establishing courses to enable students entering the credential program to pass the CSET, the standardized subject-matter test that is now required for multiple subject candidates. Sacramento State can rightfully take pride in and promote its innovative programs of accelerated instruction math and English, including multilingual English, as a selling point in its effort to become a destination campus. Students from across the state can prosper at Sacramento State, in spite of the variability of their high schools, because of the strong academic preparation and support offered by the Learning Skills Center.

Underpreparation of Students as Measured by ELM, EPT, and CST

In Fall 2004 37% of students who took the ELM and 47% of those who took the EPT were judged in need of remediation. The mean score on the EPT as a whole was

146, but the mean score on the Reading Subtest was 142 indicating that students continue to face challenges in critical reading. Although it may seem perplexing that students who rank in the upper one-third of high school graduates and meet the qualifications for admission to the CSU are under-prepared for university level work, recent reports of performance of California students show that California high schools continue to struggle to prepare students to meet rigorous academic standards. The Academic Performance Index (API) is the state's accountability system that measures the academic success of a school on the basis of how much it improves. Only 12% of high schools in 2004 met the Academic Performance Index (API) performance target score of 800 (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr05/yr05rel103.asp>). For comparison, 32% of elementary schools met the target.

Many students served by Learning Skills spent their elementary and secondary school years in urban or rural districts plagued by poverty. Under-prepared students frequently come from families who are poor and they often have attended impoverished schools where they may have had uncredentialed or inexperienced teachers. These schools are often marked by lack of appropriate textbooks and materials, high rates of truancy, high student turnover, lack of parent involvement and violence. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students fared even worse. In 2004-05 80% of socioeconomically disadvantaged 11th graders were basic or below in English-Language Arts and 85% in Algebra II. Only 5% in English-Language Arts and 3% in Algebra II were Advanced.

Student performance on the California Standards Test demonstrate even more graphically the underpreparation of California high school students for academic work. In English-Language Arts 64% of students in 11th grade were basic or below and only 13% performed at the advanced level. In Algebra II 73% of 11th graders were basic or below and only 6% were advanced (<http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2005/Viewreport.asp>).

It's not surprising that when these same students take the EPT and ELM a year later in 12th grade their score indicate that they will require preparatory work as freshmen to enable them to perform successfully at the university level. In 2004, 85% of the Sacramento State entering freshmen who required preparatory classes were regularly admissible students, but although they are in the upper one-third of their high school class, they still have missed major pieces of education which their better prepared peers received. Thus, their preparatory classes are not re-teaching material previously learned but introducing them for the first time to academic literacy and mathematical concepts.

Underprepared Students and Language Background

Students who require preparatory courses in Learning Skills often began school speaking only a language other than English. The table below shows the number of English Learners enrolled in 2003-04.

Enrollment and English Learner (EL) Students By Grade in Public Schools						
	2003-04 Click for graph.			2002-03 Click for graph.		
	Enrollment	EL	% of Enrollment	Enrollment	EL	% of Enrollment
Kindergarten	456,961	166,248	36.4%	456,940	172,828	37.8%
Grade 1	481,049	179,123	37.2%	486,186	183,892	37.8%
Grade 2	482,631	177,561	36.8%	489,124	171,167	35.0%
Grade 3	489,656	161,301	32.9%	493,128	165,935	33.6%
Grade 4	493,425	151,207	30.6%	491,510	149,832	30.5%
Grade 5	492,531	131,026	26.6%	488,150	127,525	26.1%
Grade 6	490,096	113,809	23.2%	495,238	117,563	23.7%
Grade 7	500,413	107,745	21.5%	500,138	105,526	21.1%
Grade 8	500,145	95,547	19.1%	473,553	91,322	19.3%
Grade 9	528,561	98,852	18.7%	522,108	101,471	19.4%
Grade 10	490,214	81,369	16.6%	471,648	80,592	17.1%
Grade 11	440,540	63,603	14.4%	428,117	62,052	14.5%
Grade 12	395,194	49,067	12.4%	385,181	48,756	12.7%
Ungraded	56,997	22,077	38.7%	63,382	21,081	33.3%
Total	6,298,413	1,598,535	25.4%	6,244,403	1,599,542	25.6%

Report up to 2 years with the most current year being: [1993](#), [1994](#), [1995](#), [1996](#), [1997](#), [1998](#), [1999](#), [2000](#), [2001](#), [2002](#), [2003](#), [2004](#).

<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/Navigation/fsTwoPanel.asp?bottom=%2Fprofile%2Easp%3Flevel%3D04%26reportNumber%3D16>

It is useful to know that 49,067 (12.4%) of 12th grade students are classified as English Learners, even though most of them will not attend a CSU as freshmen; instead they will begin post-secondary education, if they begin at all, in a community college. However, the 166,248 English Learners in kindergarten are much more significant when looking at future trends in remediation. These students will almost certainly join the 1,064,578 students in K-12 (16.8%) who have been classified or reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP), often in early elementary school. By fourth grade when reading and writing demands are dramatically ratcheted up, many will begin struggling to keep up with the academic demands as they are simultaneously developing their language skills. These students are now being called Generation 1.5. They have had all their education in California (or other U.S.) public schools, but the language spoken in their home is not English. Without English language support at home, they don't have adequate literacy in English, and they usually have not had an opportunity to learn to read and write in their first language so those resources are not there to fall back upon either.

Instead they have oral fluency, often in a non-standard variety of English used in their community, and a certain amount of cultural knowledge. Once they have been reclassified as Fluent English Proficient, they are no longer eligible for special instruction. The problems faced by these English dominant, bilingual students have been documented in a study of second language students as they move from level to level public schools in *California Pathways: The Second Language Student in Public High Schools, Colleges and Universities*. Their literacy needs may not be identified until they enter college, at which point they may receive inappropriate remedial instruction rather than the English language development that they need (ESL Intersegmental Project, 1996).

Further light is shed on the issue of Generation 1.5 in a recent report from the Legislative Analyst's Office (Hill, 2004). It emphasizes the length of time—7 years—it takes students to acquire enough English to be mainstreamed and the continuing impact that the need for ongoing language acquisition has on their academic success (Hill, 16). The report also estimates that 60% of students who begin attending school in California never become reclassified by twelfth grade (Hill, 17). These students have to develop foundational skills in math, reading, and writing at the very time they are learning the language. It notes that “students who are still learning English in grades 4, 5, and 6 risk falling behind in academic proficiency and failing to master the skills needed for success in middle and high school” (Hill, 17). It's not surprising that they enroll in the university still having gaps in those areas.

Feeder High Schools and Underprepared Students

The following chart demonstrates the percentage of students coming from feeder public high schools in the Sacramento area who require remediation in math and English. The red numbers were the percentages in 1998 at the beginning of EO 665; the blue numbers are for 2004, the most recent year available. During the time period, the ELM was modified causing some of the apparent improvement for some schools in math preparation. The effects of EAP are not reflected since its effect only began to be felt in 2005. The chart also illustrates the variability in preparation related to the socioeconomic make up of the school. John F. Kennedy High School serves a relatively affluent suburban population. Only 19% of its graduates who attended Sacramento State in 2004 were under-prepared in mathematics. Grant High School's population is predominantly poor with large numbers of minority students. 84% of the students it sent to Sacramento State were under-prepared in mathematics. Encina High School has a large multilingual population; 73% of its students who entered Sacramento State in 2004 were under-prepared in English; in contrast, only 30% of students from Rio Americano, another affluent, suburban school, are under-prepared in English.

Percentage of CSU-bound graduates of Sacramento area high schools under-prepared for college-level math and English

	Math <u>1998/2004</u>	English <u>1998/2004</u>
Bella Vista	49%/19%	24%/16%
C.K. McClatchy	60%/36%	40%/53%
Casa Robles	50%/44%	33%/56%
Center High	42%/36%	35%/37%
Cordova	44%/42%	28%/61%
Del Campo	42%/21%	31%/23%
El Camino	29%/23%	12%/24%
Elk Grove	50%/20%	35%/39%
Encina	57%/55%	71%/73%
Florin	77%/53%	50%/68%
Folsom	48%/22%	27%/26%
Foothill	55%/31%	25%/62%
Galt	56%/54%	31%/38%
Grant	91%/84%	68%/88%
Highlands	78%/54%	61%/54%
Hiram Johnson	53%/50%	61%/76%
John F. Kennedy	29%/19%	41%/53%
Laguna Creek	61%/40%	39%/43%
Luther Burbank	67%/40%	78%/43%
Mesa Verde	44%/33%	0%/67%

Mira Loma	10%/20%	28%/35%
Natomas	75%/40%	67%/60%
Rio Americano	50%/15%	24%/30%
Sacramento	66%/48%	57%/62%
San Juan	55%/11%	38%/44%
Sheldon	NA/34%	NA/37%
Valley	70%/63%	61%/84%

<http://www.asd.calstate.edu/performance/elm-ept/1998/county>

<http://www.asd.calstate.edu/performance/elm-ept/2004/county>

Underpreparation and Community College Transfer Students

Another group of under-prepared students served by the Learning Skills Center are transfer students from community colleges who have English as a second language. Although in order to transfer they must have credit for freshman composition or its ESL equivalent, they often still need intensive language development. Most are long-term immigrants who have resided in the United States for an average of seven years and have attended California public schools before community college. A major factor contributing to their under-preparation is lack of consistency in placement processes. Each community college develops and validates its own placement instrument so consistency of placement is lacking among community colleges and between them and the CSU. Also, in community college, ESL students can opt to take the native speaker placement test and never be evaluated for ESL instruction. At that point they enroll directly in native speaker classes where they tend to be passed along based on factors like attendance and improvement. The community colleges are actually forbidden to assess proficiency at completion of a course and use that assessment to determine if a student passes or fails the course. (ESL Intersegmental Project, 1996).

In mathematics the situation is quite different. Students in the community college must pass a rigorous intermediate algebra course before taking General Education mathematics. This requirement, fully enforced at most Sacramento region community colleges, ensures that students are generally well-prepared in math when they transfer. However, this policy may also contribute to the dismal transfer rate of community colleges including those that send large numbers of students to Sacramento State. A report by the Little Hoover Commission in 2000 reported that “statewide just 22% of students who enroll in basic skills math courses advance to a higher level math course” (Little Hoover Commission, viii). The report indicated that 31% of students entering community college declare that their goal is transfer to a four year university; however only 3% transfer in a given year. (Little Hoover Commission, 5). By contrast,

Sacramento State only requires students to complete elementary algebra and geometry and 85% of students enrolling in prebaccalaureate courses, English and/or mathematics, complete them by the end of their first year.

Academic Programs

Learning Skills classes provide the academic skills students need to be successful in General Education courses and in fulfilling subsequent requirements such as the WPE. Other classes and small-group tutorials provide student with strategies for academic success in a several areas including university orientation, reading, editing, oral skills, and test preparation.

Writing Program

The writing program in the Learning Skills Center is part of a sequence of classes offered in cooperation with the English department to fulfill the General Education writing requirements. All first time freshmen who are not exempt (based on a qualifying score of the SAT, ACT, AP or EAP exams or completion of ENGL 1A at another institution) must take the English Placement Test. In Fall 2005 50% of students placed into preparatory courses below the college level. 26.2% scored 120-141 placing them into LS 15 or LS 86 (multilingual); 16.6% scored 142-146 placing them into ENGL 1 or LS 87(multilingual); 7.2% scored 147-148 placing them into ENGL 1A or ENGL 2 (multilingual) with ENGL 1X providing the preparatory component. Students are placed into the equivalent multilingual classes based on an assessment of their EPT essay if they take the exam at Sacramento State. Otherwise, they will be assessed based on their first week diagnostic essay and may be moved if space is available in a multilingual class at that point.

During the first semester of their junior year, all students are required to take the WPE. Multilingual students take the same tests as native speakers, but they receive a special reading and extra time. Students who pass the WPE take a writing intensive class to complete their writing requirements. Students who do not pass the WPE after two attempts must take ENGL 109W (for native speakers) or ENGL 109M (for multilingual students). LS 86 is a prerequisite for ENGL 109M for students who need the additional preparation. In addition Learning Skills offers WPE preparation tutorials and, in collaboration with English, workshops for multilingual students.

CSUS WRITING PROGRAM

Placement

Freshmen and Sophomores

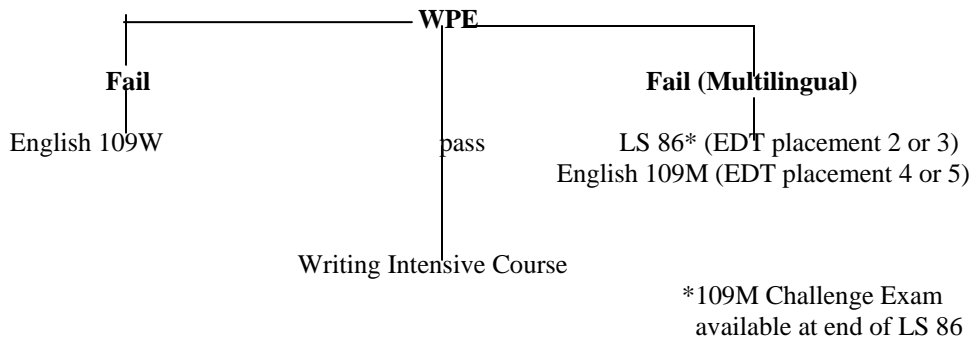
If you do not have English 1A credit and are **not** exempt from the English Placement Test (EPT), you must take the EPT for writing course placement before enrolling at CSUS. (Exemption equals a score of 550 on the SAT or 24 on the ACTE.) If English is not your first language and you take the EPT at CSUS, your EPT will be evaluated to see if you could benefit from a writing course specially designed to meet your needs. If you place into a preparatory class (pre-English 1A or pre-English 2), you must enroll in the course in your first semester at CSUS and complete the preparatory course sequence within one year. If you take the EPT at another CSU campus, you must take the English Diagnostic Test at CSUS.

	EPT SCORES					
	Preparatory (CR/NC)			Multilingual Students		
	120 – 141 ↓ LS 15 (4 units) Engl 1 (3 units)	142 – 146 ↓ Engl 1 (3 units)	147 – 148 ↓ Engl 1A (3 units)& Engl 1X (1unit)	120 – 141 ↓ LS 86 (4 units) LS 87 (3 units)	142 – 146 ↓ LS 87 (3 units)	147 – 148 ↓ Engl 2 (3 units)& Engl 2X (1 unit)
149+	/			/		
<u>G.E. Level</u> Freshman (Multilingual)	English 1A			English 2		
Sophomore	English 20			English 20M		

Juniors & Seniors

1) You must take the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) during your first semester at CSUS. If English is not your first language, you need to take the English Diagnostic Test (EDT) in the Learning Skills Center to qualify for extended time and a Multilingual reading of your exam.

2) If you fail the WPE twice, you must enroll in the appropriate course listed below.



Philosophy and Goals:

- We believe that all students can become proficient readers and writers with the guidance and support of caring, knowledgeable instructors.
- We believe that students develop academic literacy best in small classes where they can interact with peers and their teachers.
- We believe that students learn best when they are challenged to understand and explain the arguments of others in the texts they read and to construct their own arguments in response. Critical thinking is the most essential skill.
- We believe that students develop writing skills best when they write complete essays on expository topics using the writing process including idea generation, revision, and editing.
- We believe that students develop grammatical literacy best by learning grammar to apply in editing their own writing.
- We understand that acquiring academic literacy takes time and that different students learn at different rates.
- We believe that students learn most effectively when offered academic support in the form of labs, tutorials, and supplementary classes.
- We believe that composition classes should provide a safe place for students to develop their academic identity and become familiar with the expectations of the university.
- We believe that regular assessment of students' authentic writing in response to reading is the cornerstone of an effective composition program.

Description of Classes

LS 15: College Language Skills - Students completing LS 15 are expected to be able to comprehend academic texts and write clear and organized papers with a reasonable command of mechanics. Although their reading selections will be shorter and less complex than those in ENGL 1 and 1A, LS 15 students should be able to comprehend texts in a variety of genres, including essays as well as a full-length book, popular journalism, and academic writing. Their papers are to be expository, to respond to assigned readings, and to begin to address the increasingly complex writing assignments they will receive in ENGL 1 and ENGL 1A as well as their general education courses. Students should be able to summarize and respond to the views of others, establish a thesis of their own, and develop their ideas fully. They should be able to revise and edit these papers effectively.

LS 86: College Language Skills for Multilingual Students - Students completing LS 86 are expected to be able to comprehend simple academic texts and write generally clear and organized papers with developing competence in grammar. Although their reading selections will be shorter and less complex than those in LS 87 and English 2, they should be able to comprehend simple texts of various genres, including essays, as well as a full-length book, popular journalism, and academic writing. Their papers should be well organized, generally clear, and use some effective development. Students should be able to summarize and respond to the views of others, establish a

thesis of their own, and develop their ideas. Students should be able to revise and to edit their writing, though their papers may still contain an accumulation of grammar errors.

LS 87: Basic Writing Skills for Multilingual Students - Students completing LS 87 are expected to be able to comprehend academic texts and write clear and organized papers with a reasonable command of mechanics. Their reading selections will be longer and more complex than those in LS 86, including essays, as well as a full-length book, popular journalism, and academic writing. Their papers are to be expository, to respond to assigned readings, and to begin to address the increasingly complex writing assignments they will receive in English 2 as well as their general education courses. Students should be able to summarize and respond to the views of others, establish a thesis of their own, and develop their ideas fully using examples and data from outside sources. They should be able to revise and edit these papers effectively.

Tutorial Classes: LS 5, LS 6A, LS 6B

LS 5: Reading and Vocabulary Development - a developmental reading class for students scoring below college level on reading tests

LS 6A: Oral Skills Development – a multilingual class to assist students to improve oral communication skills

LS 6B: Writing for Proficiency – a multilingual class to assist students with the Writing Proficiency Exam

Adjunct Classes: LS 55: Academic Strategies Adjuncts

Learning strategies for selected GE courses.

LS 55A: Academic Strategies: History

LS 55B: Academic Strategies: Biology

LS 55C: Academic Strategies: Chemistry

LS 55E: Academic Strategies: Philosophy

LS 55F: Academic Strategies: Chemistry 4

LS 55G: Academic Strategies: Physics

LS 55H: Academic Strategies: Government

LS 55I: Academic Strategies: English

Test Preparation Classes: LS 64G, LS 64H, and LS 64I

LS 64G: Preparation for CSET I

LS 64H: Preparation for CSET II

LS 64I: Preparation for CSET III

Reading Classes:

LS 60: Reading Speed and Efficiency - a class for college-level readers to improve efficiency as well as speed (includes practice in reading lab)

LS 60M: Reading Speed and Efficiency for Multilingual Students- a class for multilingual college-level readers to improve efficiency as well as speed (includes practice in reading lab)

Grammar Class: LS 85: Grammar for Multilingual Writers – a class covering the major systems of English grammar for editing purposes

Strengths of the Reading and Writing Curriculum

Integrated Courses: The core courses offered by the Learning Skills Center-- LS 15, LS 86, and LS 87-- integrate reading, grammar and critical thinking.

Assessment: In each of our core courses, students must successfully complete the requirements of the course: they must submit a passing portfolio of class writing and pass a final exit exam. These exams are holistically scored in a final grading session by all instructors teaching the course. Teachers of students who do not pass may present their portfolio to be evaluated by a review committee.

Student Support: Students enrolled in LS 15 and LS 86 complete one unit of the class in a computer writing lab. In this session they work with graduate assistant tutors from the composition and TESOL program to revise and edit their essays for class and complete other activities assigned by their instructors. The tutors meet weekly with the reading/writing and LS 86 coordinators to discuss tutoring strategies, look at sample student papers, and share concerns about the lab. The practical experience they receive in this work provides a valuable supplement to the classes they are taking in their graduate programs.

Students needing additional development in reading are strongly encouraged to also enroll in LS 5, a reading/vocabulary tutorial. In these tutorials, they receive intensive work on reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

Other Courses: Learning Skills also offers courses to provide academic support to students in a variety of areas including freshman seminars to orient new students to the university, test preparation tutorials, adjunct classes for selected GE classes, and classes in reading and grammar for editing.

Recently the Learning Skills Center has also collaborated with the College of Education to provide support for students who need to pass the CSET (California Subject Examinations for Teachers). The California requirement that all elementary (Multiple Subject) teaching credential candidates must pass a standardized subject matter exam (the CSET Multiple Subject) prior to their last semester of student teaching has made a cumbersome teacher credentialing system even more costly and difficult to navigate for students. Most if not all of the California State University campuses have reported a drop in multiple subject credential program enrollment that coincides with the CSU Chancellor's requirement that all applicants must have passed the CSET exam *prior to* admission to a multiple subject credential program. The Chancellor's Office admissions guidelines allow campuses to individually decide whether they will use a 15% "exception" admissions clause to admit students who have not yet fully passed the CSET but who possess "compensating strengths in other required areas" for admission (CSU Executive Order #758, October 6, 2000). The caveat? If a campus admits students who

have not yet passed the CSET, then the campus must provide assistance to those students so they fully pass the exam in a timely fashion.

As part of the effort to provide support for students who have failed the CSET, the Provost has provided funding for a series of courses developed and taught in the Learning Skills Center. Three courses, LS 64G, LS 64H, and LS 64I, were developed, one for each CSET exam. In Spring 2005 all three courses were offered, in fall 2005 LS 64G (CSET I) and LS 64H (CSET II), were offered, and in spring 2006 LS 64G (CSET 1) was offered. In addition, the Reading/Writing coordinator has worked with the Director of Teacher Preparation and Credentials and the Equity Coordinator for Teacher Preparation and Credentials to provide periodic CSET orientation workshops and test prep workshops before each CSET exam.

Weaknesses of the Reading/Writing Curriculum:

Reading Program: Currently the Learning Skills Center offers only four one-unit sections of the reading course, LS 60: Reading Speed and Efficiency and LS 60M, the multilingual version. 50 students in Learning Skills classes are served annually by a small tutorial program, LS 5, taught by graduate tutors where they receive instruction. Although these classes and tutorials are highly rated by student evaluations and department evaluators, they are inadequate to meet the needs of a 26,000-student university. The department believes that expanding this program and developing discipline-specific college-reading classes would be a cost-effective way to improve the success and retention of students. The department will be experimenting with ways to strengthen the program by developing internships for students in the new multidisciplinary Reading Certificate Program which has been created by the collaboration of faculty in Learning Skills, English (TESOL and Composition), and Education.

STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM: MATHEMATICS PROGRAM

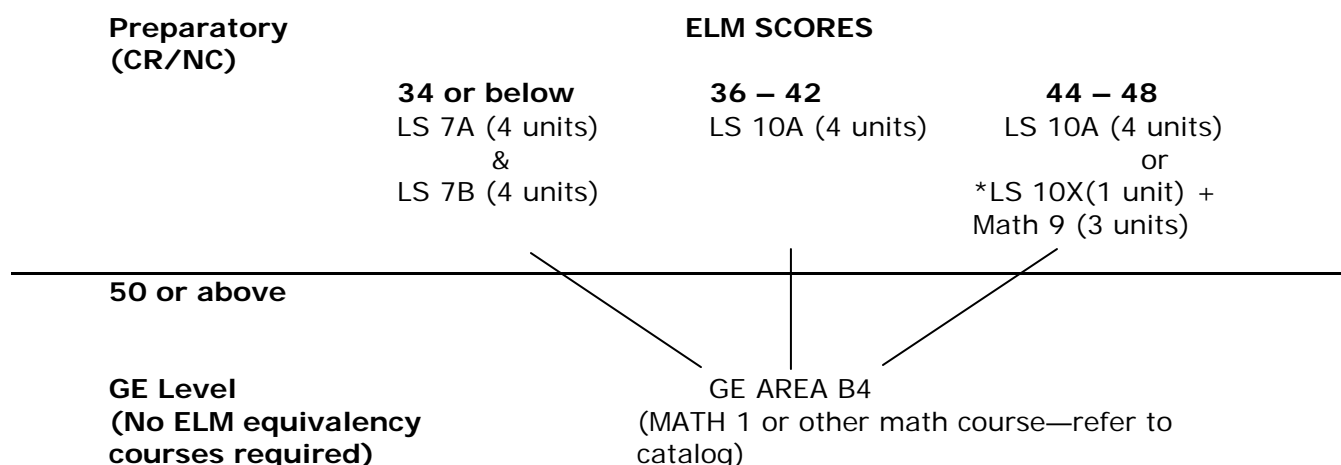
Introduction – Overview of the Curriculum

The Mathematics Program of the Learning Skills Center primarily offers courses to fulfill Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) equivalency for students who are nonexempt from the ELM Test (See the list of exemptions on the attached list which is also published in the schedule book of classes). The LSC mathematics program also offers a few other courses for test preparation.

Initial placement into these courses is determined by ELM Test score and major. Please refer to the chart below for initial placement information. After students have enrolled in the class, they may be moved to a higher level by taking a diagnostic exam, the Second Year Algebra Exam (Mathematics Diagnostic Placement Test by a joint UC/CSU Workgroup). The rationale for placing students into different course sequences is our belief, based upon many years of experience and analysis of program data, that students who score 34 or below on the ELM Test need a course sequence that offers an

emphasis on concept development rather than simply review, whereas students who score 36–48 need more review with less emphasis on concept development. Students may also complete ELM equivalency by taking MATH 9: Intermediate Algebra with a 1 unit tutorial, LS 10X, that covers measurement geometry and provides EO 665 advising. The mathematics department chair and the coordinator of the mathematics program of the LSC meet to discuss advising and curriculum issues. The coordinator of the mathematics program also attends Math Department curriculum meetings to be informed of curriculum issues that may impact the LSC mathematics program.

Initial Placement based on ELM Score



Philosophy and Goals

- We believe that all students can learn mathematics with the guidance and support of caring, knowledgeable instructors and assistants.
- Our goal for all students is the development of mathematical skills and understanding.
- We believe that students learn best when they are taught by skilled teachers who emphasize conceptual understanding and who use carefully selected curriculum based on careful diagnosis of the gaps in student understanding.
- We understand that learning mathematics takes time and that different students learn at different rates.
- The understanding of mathematics happens over time; teachers must allow for those different rates by supplying extra tutoring, videos, and appropriate text..
- We expect students to spend time learning mathematics and complete assignments given by their instructor.
- We expect instructors and assistants to be kind to students, knowing that learning mathematics can be challenging and anxiety producing.

Description of Classes

LS 7A: Making Sense of Algebra: This is the first course in a two semester sequence of courses intended for students who score 34 or below on the Entry Level Mathematics Test and who need to satisfy the ELM requirement. The course develops students' understanding of algebra and geometry. It is taught with both lecture and group methodology using instructor facilitation of mathematical thinking. 4 units with 5 scheduled hours. Assessment with in-class work, group quizzes, exams, and a comprehensive final exam.

LS 7B: Making Sense of Algebra: This is the second course in a two semester sequence of courses intended for students who score 34 or below on the Entry Level Mathematics Test and who need to satisfy the ELM requirement. The course develops students' understanding of algebra and geometry. It is taught with a both a lecture and group methodology using instructor facilitation of mathematical thinking. 4 units with 5 scheduled hours. Assessment with in-class work, group quizzes, exams, and a comprehensive final exam.

LS 10A: Elementary Algebra with Geometry: This course satisfies the ELM requirement in one semester intended for students who score 36 – 48 on the ELM Test. The course includes a review of elementary algebra and measurement geometry topics. The course is taught with two different methodologies, a lecture format and a multimedia tutorial format. 4 units with 4 scheduled hours. Assessment with in-class work, quizzes, exams, and a comprehensive exam.

LS 10X: Geometry Adjunct to Intermediate Algebra: This course satisfies the ELM requirement in one semester intended for students who score 44-48 on the ELM. This must be taken concurrently with Math 9: Intermediate Algebra. The course includes a review of factoring and solving first and second degree equation with applications in metric geometry. 1 unit with 1 scheduled hour. Assessment with homework, quizzes, exam and final.

LS 8 A – C: These courses offer Entry Level Mathematics equivalency for students with disabilities related to learning mathematics. Curriculum and instruction is provided in very small groups with the use of manipulatives and visual aides. When necessary, the pace of instruction is reduced and the curriculum may be adjusted to accommodate special learning difficulties. 2 units each.

Strengths of the Mathematics Curriculum

Our curriculum design, as indicated above, separates students into two different course sequences based upon curricular needs. The rationale for placing students into different course sequences is based on our belief, gained through many years of experience and analysis of program data, that students who score 34 or below on the ELM Test need a course sequence that offers an emphasis in concept development along

with a review of skills, whereas those students who score 36 –48 need more review of skills with guidance of mathematical thinking. In-service meetings provide curricular instruction for all of our mathematics courses. Student issues, methodology, and interaction with students are also discussed. In addition, instructors spend many office hours helping students while a tutoring lab staffed by math majors is available thirty-six hours a week.

Weaknesses of the Mathematics Curriculum

The Mathematics Coordinator has solved many of the problems addressed in the last Program Review. A new problem has arisen which threatens the integrity of the mathematics program, namely the increase in class size due to budget cuts in the last two academic years. The class maximum of LS 7A/B has increased from 22 to 28 and the class maximum of LS 10A has increased from 24 to 34 since the last Program Review. The classrooms dedicated to Learning Skills math classes were designed for the smaller class sizes (initially 12 students at the start of the ILE program in 1985). The increase has resulted in overcrowding causing several different problems. The atmosphere often becomes high school-like, and the students revert to behaviors that produced their low ELM scores: not attending class, not turning their homework, talking during the instruction, sleeping in class, text messaging, and not actively engaging in the instruction. The teacher spends less time with individuals and is more likely to address the class as a whole, causing more disengagement of the learning. The overcrowding makes it difficult to accommodate a student with a handicap. The LS math teachers should be commended for overcoming these difficulties to sustain a high success rate, but these problems can require intervention by the Mathematics Coordinator or result in the change to less effective teaching strategies to accommodate the overcrowding.

Teaching Strategies

Learning Skills instructors maximize the advantages of relatively small class sizes to individualize instruction whenever possible. In addition to teacher-led discussion and lecturers, students work in small groups and individually. Teachers conference regularly with students in class, in the labs, and during office hours. Teachers give regular feedback on writing and math assignments. The writing lab component also enables teachers to incorporate other types of assignment such as web-based activities, peer-response, vocabulary and grammar activities, and group discussion. The use of tutors enables both programs to further individualize instruction.

Assessment

The Learning Skills Center assesses student learning through programmatic examinations coordinated by course coordinators. Students must demonstrate that they have met the criteria of the course in order to pass. Overall pass and fail rates are evaluated to ensure the consistency of the assessment process from semester to semester. The department also receives and reviews data reflecting EO 665 completion rates. Course evaluations enable faculty and program coordinators to identify strengths and

weaknesses of individual teachers and to address individual and programmatic needs for professional development. Assessment data confirms that the Learning Skills Program is highly successful in enabling students to meet rigorous standards in both the mathematics and English courses.

EO 665 data also show that even with those rigorous standards, students at Sacramento State complete required preparatory classes at one of the highest rates in the state:

Percentage of Sacramento State Freshmen Proficient Before Second Year

	Regularly Admitted First Time Freshmen	Special Action Freshmen
1999	83.5%	59.8%
2000	83.6%	57.6%
2001	85.0%	68.3%
2002	85.6%	67.4%
2003	87.2%	68.8%
2004	86.5%	75.1%

In comparison, The CSU statewide average for 2004 was 82%. Particularly impressive are the rates for the specially admitted freshmen, most of whom are served by the CAMP and EOP programs. Clearly those programs deserve credit for the support they provide their students; however, Learning Skills rightfully shares that credit. It offers the academic portion of the Summer Bridge program which helps get approximately 170 students off on the right academic foot with most students completing preparatory courses in both math and English. It also contributes dedicated sections of English and sections of math classes for EOP Learning Communities in the fall, including special sections for the Pan-African and CAMP Learning Communities.

The mathematics program collects data that verifies that students who complete preparatory courses are nearly as successful, in the case of LS 7A/B, or more successful, in the case of LS 10A, when they take their Math 1 class as students who place directly into the class by way of ELM or one of the test exemptions. The department is also working with the Director of Special Programs and Enrollment Analysis to assess the success of students who take Math 1 or English 1A/2 based on an EAP exemption.

Learning Skills goes to great length of maintain consistency across multiple sections of courses. In the writing program, course coordinators develop uniform diagnostic essay topics, two midterms, and a final exam topic. Teachers administer these in classes. Grading of the diagnostic essay provides an opportunity to “norm” teachers to the grading criteria which are then applied during the course. Midterms and final exams are group graded. Students receive an assessment from someone other than their teacher to ensure that the criteria are applied objectively. Students also prepare a portfolio of course work; teachers submit the portfolio of any students whom they feel should pass the course but who failed the final exam. A committee reviews the portfolio and recommends whether or not the student should pass.

In the mathematics program, teachers and course coordinators go to great lengths to maintain consistency across multiple sections of courses. In LS math courses, the course coordinators provide sample syllabi and schedule of assignments for MWF and TR. All like courses use the same department curriculum. Each new curriculum is piloted by one of the coordinators before the curriculum is adopted. Discussions at the monthly meeting revolve around teaching techniques and standardized grading. Each Teaching Associate or Instructional Student Assistant is mentored by their course coordinator, often meeting weekly. The course coordinator always teaches one of the sections of the course that they supervise with an eye for improvement. The Math Coordinator rotates his teaching assignment to further monitor areas in need of development. Finally, department-wide finals are constructed in several forms and are scored on mutually agreed criteria.

Students and Student Diversity

Learning Skills has a highly ethnically and racially diverse population of students as the chart below illustrates:

Ethnic Distribution in Learning Skills Fall 2004

Ethnicity	Gender	Math	Writing	Study Skills	Total
AmInd	Female	5	2	0	7
	Male	3	1	1	5
Asian	Female	141	162	64	367
	Male	51	100	34	185
Black	Female	128	54	21	203
	Male	49	21	7	77
Filip	Female	43	26	4	73
	Male	23	19	5	47
Hisp	Female	199	126	44	369
	Male	79	79	36	194
Other	Female	74	36	15	125
	Male	32	23	6	61
PacIsl	Female	16	15	1	32
	Male	3	2	0	5
White	Female	235	52	31	318
	Male	125	36	11	172
Total	Female				
	Male				
Total	All students	1206	754	280	2240

(Prepared by the Sacramento State Office of Institutional Research)

Learning Skills faculty are highly sensitive to this diversity and skilled in working with these students. They are trained in implementing a curriculum that will ensure that that underprepared students gain the academic literacy and problem solving skills

needed to give them full access to courses in the university. Other courses such as the Freshman Seminar courses and tutorials and the advising efforts of Learning Skills faculty all contribute to accommodating differences and providing access. Faculty in Learning Skills courses are also adept in creating communities of learners within their classes. Students learn to get along with a diverse group of fellow-learners and to collaborate with each other in order to learn most effectively. These are skills that employers in the 21st century are looking for, whatever the field, along with the communication and problem solving skills that are the heart of the Learning Skills curriculum. Faculty work equally well with students who are prepared for undergraduate or even graduate work but need to further hone their skills.

Enrollment Patterns

Since all EO 665 freshmen and transfer students are required to enroll in preparatory courses in their first semester and must finish their coursework within one year, the enrollment planning of the university directly and powerfully affects Learning Skills enrollments. We had a doubling of enrollment when EO 665 went into effect in Fall 1998. The change in the content specifications of the ELM exam and the elimination of LS 10B as a preparatory course caused a reduction in students in the mathematics program with. Likewise, the change in the cut score for English 1A caused a drop in students in the second level courses. The chart below reflect a small growth in the percentage of students placing at the different score levels while absolute numbers grew as the freshman class as a whole increased from 2,207 in Fall 2000 to 2,511 in Fall 2005.

EPT	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
120 – 141	530	24%	535	22%	613	25%	623	26%	610	26%	659	26%
142-146 (142-148 before F04)	515	23%	575	24%	563	23%	590	24%	361	15%	417	17%

ELM	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2 - 34	353	16%	391	16%	472	19%	456	19%	434	19%	436	17%
36 - 42	480	22%	552	23%	345	14%	373	15%	328	14%	366	15%
44 - 48	355	16%	432	18%	240	10%	287	12%	304	13%	310	12%

In Fall 2004 a change in cut scores used to place student into preparatory English classes resulted in a drop in the percentage of students requiring second level English remediation from 24% in 2003 to 15% in 2004. This has reduced enrollment of first time freshmen in LS 87. The percentage of students requiring first level remedial English classes has remained fairly constant.

In Spring 2002 the content of the ELM was changed to focus on elementary algebra, measurement geometry, and problem solving in the belief that these elements would better align with math instruction in the high schools. This change accounts for the drop in the total percentage of students requiring remediation between Fall 2001 (57%) and Fall 2002 (43%). Because of the change in the content of the ELM, the Learning Skills math program in collaboration with the Sacramento State math department decided to no longer require intermediate algebra (Learning Skills 10B) as a prerequisite for GE math beginning in Fall 2002. This caused a dramatic drop in the number of students served by the math program, particularly in the spring semester when LS 10A students previously enrolled in LS 10B. In Fall 2005 students who were conditionally exempt on the 11th grade EAP exam and took a Senior Year Math Experience (SYME) earned exemption on the ELM; 6% were exempt on that basis resulting in a total of 44% requiring math remediation.

It is still too early to tell what effect the implementation of the 12th Grade Expository Reading and Writing curriculum will have on students' preparation for college English although a pilot study carried out by the Chancellor's Office indicated an improvement in preparation for students who had completed several assignment sequences before taking the EPT. However, many schools are choosing not to implement the full course, but are instead "dropping in" assignments into their regular literature-based curriculum, a decision that is likely to weaken the effectiveness of the curriculum. At the same time, multilingual students who face the greatest challenges in mastering academic English are a growing segment of the high school population. Based on extensive work with the high schools, particularly the ones that send substantial numbers of underprepared students to Sacramento State, the faculty in Learning Skills remain convinced that many students will continue to need preparation in math and English for the foreseeable future.

In the writing program, the largest group of students served are freshmen, but students at all class levels use the resources of Learning Skills, and the Writing Program serves a significant number of students at the upper-division and graduate levels because LS 86 is a prerequisite for English 109M, the course that fulfills the GWAR. In the tutorial program LS 6B and LS 6 primarily serve upper-division students, those preparing for the WPE and those repeating LS 86 or 109M. Most upper-division students in LS 86 and LS 6 are transfer students from community colleges; many are underprepared for the rigors of upper-division university writing requirements and require one or more semesters of coursework in order to pass the WPE or be ready for the Multilingual GWAR course, English 109M.

In the mathematics program, again the majority of students are freshmen, but students at other levels also utilize math preparatory courses, including a small number of lower-division and upper-division transfers who have been admitted without GE math. Some students who do not require remediation also enroll when their Intermediate Algebra Diagnostic (IAD) Test indicates that they need instruction in prealgebra and elementary algebra.

Academic Support

Learning skills centers traditionally offer academic support for students across the entire university in the form of tutorials, supplemental instruction, reading and study skills classes, and other services. The Learning Skills Center at Sacramento State has instead evolved into an academic department charged with offering the majority of preparatory courses in the university (with the English department offering one level of writing and the Mathematics and Statistics department enrolling some preparatory students in one level of math). However, Learning Skills does offer a variety of academic support services for its own preparatory students as well as a very abridged range of support for other students.

- **Course tutorials:** tutorials are a mandatory component of all of the preparatory classes except for LS 87 (English 2A prior to Fall 1998) and LS 7A/B where the tutorial is part of the regular class. The entire LS 10A/B program is offered in a tutorial format; in the multimedia format students have a required lab hour. Both LS 15 and LS 86, the two lowest level writing classes, have a mandatory tutorial in the Learning Skills computer writing lab attached to the class. Open lab hours in both the writing and math computer lab allow students who need extra help to work with trained tutors.
- **Reading tutorials:** students in LS 15 and LS 86 who are identified as having poor reading skills are strongly encouraged to enroll concurrently in LS 5 which offers instruction in reading skills and comprehension using materials from the courses. Special sections are offered for native speaker and multilingual students.
- **Reading courses:** LS 60 and LS 60M are college-level reading courses that help students improve their reading rate and comprehension. A lab component enables students to use computer software to develop their reading skills.
- **One-on-one tutoring:** multilingual students repeating LS 86, LS 87 or English 109E can sign up to work with a TESOL-trained tutor to improve their reading, writing and editing skills.
- **EO 665 Interventions:** In response to the pressure of EO 665, Learning Skills offers LSK 600, an intensive three week tutorial at the end of each semester, to give students who are close to completing their math course (LS 7A, LS 7B, and LS 10A) a chance to finish remaining tests and take the final exam. Successful passage of the exam earns the student credit in the course as well as the tutorial. In the writing program, Learning Skills in collaboration with English offers “combo” classes in the spring for students who failed to complete their first level preparatory composition classes in the fall. These are seven unit classes that enable students to pass both the first and second level courses (LS 15/Engl 1 and LS 86/LS 87) by the end of the

second semester, thus meeting the EO 665 one year time limit. Learning Skills also has been granted Educational Equity funding to provide one unit of supplementary instruction (LS 55I) for at risk students in the second level multilingual class, LS 87.

FACULTY

The Learning Skills Center has a year-round Director/Chair, Professor Roberta J. Ching, and two tenured full professors, Stan Barrick, Coordinator of the LSC Mathematics Program, and Sue McKee, Coordinator of the Reading/Writing Program. These programs serve a huge number of students:

Program Coordination:

Description	Units of Assigned Time	Students in Program
Math Program Coordinator and Asst. Math Coordinator	6 units 3 units	1657
Reading/Writing Program Coordinator	6 units	1137

In Fall 2005 they, along with the Chair, were responsible for supervising 58 instructional employees:

	Math Program			Writing/Study Skills Program		
	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female
Full-time Lecturers	3	0	3	4	0	4
Part-time Lecturers	7	3	4	14	1	13
Teaching Associates	4	3	1	2	1	1
Graduate Assistants	--	--	--	7	1	6
Instructional Student Assts.	10	4	6	--	--	--
Adjunct Facilitators	--	--	--	7	2	5

The task of running a department as large and complex as the Learning Skills Center with only three full time faculty, including the chair, is monumental. Full time faculty are particularly hard pressed to deal with all the business of the department, including heavy advising, scheduling, and personnel demands, which in most departments are spread among a number of faculty.

Since the last Program Review, the department has hired eight full-time lecturers who have shared the work involved in department governance and in coordinating the various courses and programs offered by the department. The department has been exceptionally well served by this cadre of full-time lecturers who act as coordinators for courses and programs; they have served in these capacities with dedication and effectiveness, and it is clear that the department could not continue to function without them. They serve a vital role in helping train and supervise the large number of student and graduate student instructors, an enormous job because of the high turnover rate. In the writing program they are also a major resource in helping develop and grade the numerous holistically scored writing exams which are essential in the program's assessment process.

Supervisory assigned time: 21 units of assigned time in Learning Skills is devoted to the supervision of student instructors. With the exemption of the LS 15 Lab/TA Coordinator, a position filled by the Reading/Writing Program Coordinator, all of these positions are filled by full-time lecturers:

Description	Units of Assigned Time	ISAs Supervised
LS 5/6A/6B Tutorials	6 units	12 - 15
LS 7A/B Coordinator/Lab	6 units	12 - 15
LS 10A Multimedia Coord.	3 units (fall only)	10
LS 15 Lab/TA Coordinator	3 units	8 - 10
LS 86 Lab/TA Coordinator	3 units	6 - 8
GE Adjunct Coordinator	3 units	10 - 15

Part-time faculty provide the core of instruction in the LS 7A/B program and in the writing program. In addition to their teaching loads, they attend program meetings, participate in group grading sessions, provide advising for students about the preparatory program, and act as a conduit for letters and announcements that come to EO 665 students from Academic Affairs, Admissions and Records, and the advising programs. Their commitment to underprepared students and their sensitivity to their special needs contribute greatly to their success and retention in the university. Highly qualified and carefully supervised teaching associates also teach in the writing program, both in basic writing and in multilingual classes, and in the math program.

Much of the instruction in Learning Skills is offered by student instructors, either graduate assistants or student assistants. In the mathematics program this staffing practice is a result of the historical evolution of the LS 10 program from a course to prepare students for the ELM to a course that offers ELM equivalency. Since the last Program Review, the number of part-time faculty teaching in the math program has grown. Courses are no longer offered in a tutorial format, and all lecture courses are taught by full or part-time faculty with outstanding expertise in working with underprepared students. Student instructors, under the supervision of a full-time lecturer, teach the LS 10A multimedia classes. It is greatly to the credit of this program that it achieves excellent results while being extremely cost effective. In the writing

program graduate students staff the Computer Writing Lab as well as the reading, oral skills, and writing tutorials and study skills adjuncts

One of the benefits of using as many student instructors as possible is that they can be drawn from a more diverse pool than the faculty, who must have MAs or doctorates. Thus, in Fall 2005 student instructors included 7 Asians (three Chinese, two Southeast Asians, and two Indian Asians), 6 Latinos, and 2 African/African Americans. The ability of the department to recruit these diverse students, most of whom want to become teachers, also means that they are receiving mentoring and guidance as they develop teaching expertise.

Since EO 665 was implemented, class size has grown dramatically because of budget pressures.

**Class Size for Preparatory Courses
1998 to 2005**

Course	1998 Class Size	2005 Class Size	% Increase
LS 7A	20.3	26.7	32%
LS 10A	18.7	31.6	60%
LS 15	15.11	18.87	25%
LS 86	16.75	17.77	6%
LS 87	15.38	19.83	29%

Although students continue to be extraordinarily well-served, the stress on faculty to continue to provide the individualized instruction and extensive advising and conferencing has been significant. Over time, the increase in class size is likely to erode the effectiveness of the department in assisting these students to fulfill the EO 665 requirement and be retained in the university. The department strongly advocates reducing class size back to 2002-03 levels as soon as practical.

The chair and faculty coordinators help instructors in Learning Skills classes to implement current pedagogy in their classes through meetings where new developments in pedagogy are modeled and discussed. Faculty are encouraged to collaborate in incorporating these developments into their teaching as the curriculum evolves. For example, teachers using MathZone in the LS 10A classes are collaborating on ways to assist students to learn how best to utilize the software. In the writing classes, a mini-conference at the beginning of Spring 2006 gave teachers an opportunity to share assignments that they had developed to incorporate more rhetorical analysis into their classes and to prepare students for the new writing topics being used for midterms and final exams. A joint assessment workshop is planned for Fall 2006.

Faculty are sensitive to the diversity of their students and their learning styles. They present the curriculum in a variety of modalities including lecture, discussion, individual and group work. Students in first level courses in both math and writing participate in tutorials where they can get individualized assistance from trained tutors.

Students in both programs have access to computer labs and open labs where they can get additional help. An increasing number of faculty use the smart classrooms to enhance their instruction with the use of computers and web-based materials.

The Learning Skills Center assesses teaching effectiveness in its classes in several ways. Teachers in all sections of all classes administer student evaluation surveys which are read and discussed by the chair and the program coordinators. Full time faculty visit classes and meet with faculty afterwards to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. These meetings are followed by letters of evaluation. Data on grade distribution are regularly gathered and reviewed. Full-time faculty also are involved in the assessment process in the classes. In the writing program the faculty write the midterm and final exam writing topics and lead the holistic scoring of the exams. The teachers read each others' student writing during grading sessions. In the process everyone becomes aware of the areas where students appear to need further instruction, and coordinators and teachers plan activities and assignments to address the needs. Assignments are then distributed to all the teachers and may be added to the course materials for the following semester. In this way, this continuous feedback loop leads to constant innovation and improvement in instruction. Lecturers maintain currency in their fields by attending conferences and meetings focusing on pedagogy.

The department expects tenure-track and tenured faculty to be active in their professional organizations and to disseminate pedagogical developments through publication and conference presentations. The emphasis in the department is on pedagogy and curriculum development rather than on theory or large-scale research. The tenured faculty in Learning Skills are on the cutting edge of developments in math education, developmental instruction in writing, and English language development. Evidence of this is their leadership on the 12th Grade Task Force and professional development for high school teachers. The expository reading and writing curriculum for the high schools shares many features with the curriculum developed by the faculty in Learning Skills as they increasingly moved to text-based writing with a strong emphasis on the critical reading of expository texts as a basis for writing. The math coordinator in Learning Skills led the way in the development of the ALEKS program modified to fit the specifications of the ELM. This program was pretested in Learning Skills classes and now is being offered to high school seniors across the state. He also provided his expertise in the development of the MathSuccess website. The full-time tenured faculty have maintained an exemplary record of professional activities and are recognized at the state and national levels as leaders in their fields.

The tenured faculty are also actively engaged in university and community service. They regularly serve on a variety of college and university committees where their expertise in issues related to remediation, student support, retention, and educational equity are valued. These committees include the EO 665 Committee, the Senate Reading and Writing Subcommittee, the Academic Standards subcommittee, the General Education Committee, the Writing Proficiency Exam Question Committee, the Arts and Letters Budget and Curriculum Committee, and the Faculty Senate. Given the faculty's heavy load of departmental governance divided among three members, their continued

service on a broad range of college and university committees is remarkable. In addition, the chair served on the board of the California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages board for thirteen years and is a member of the English Test Development Committee which writes items for both the EPT and the new 11th Grade EAP exam which was administered to 300,000 high school juniors in 2005. Full-time lecturers also serve on university committees as well as making an invaluable contribution to the departmental governance.

Governance Process at the Program, College and University Levels

Learning Skills is governed in a highly collaborative way by the department chair and the Mathematics and Reading/Writing Coordinators. As the only tenured or tenure-track faculty in the department, all decisions about budget and personnel matters are ultimately made by them. The second tier of governance is in the hands of the full-time lecturers, all of whom are or have been coordinators of courses and programs. The chair hosts a lunch meeting with the full-time math faculty and the full-time writing faculty on a weekly basis where most decisions regarding the programs are made. Department meetings are held at the beginning of each semester and as needed otherwise, but most decisions are made by the full-time faculty. With only three full-time tenured/tenure track faculty, Learning Skills does not have formalized rules or procedures. Because it has a transitory student population and no majors, students are not involved in the departmental governance process.

Learning Skills has always worked closely with and been highly supported by the College of Arts and Letters and the University. They also have a collaborative relationship with the English Department, particularly the TESOL and Composition programs, the Mathematics Department, and the College of Education. They work extremely closely with programs in Student Affairs, especially Academic Advising and Testing. They function as an Educational Equity program and have a close partnership with other equity programs, especially EOP, CAMP, and SEE. The department and the Director of Special Programs and Enrollment Analysis collaborate on implementing the policies of EO 665.

Institutional Support/Resources

Library and Technological Resources

Since Learning Skills is not a traditional academic department, its faculty and students do not rely heavily on the resources of the library. To the extent that faculty have needed to use the library collection for their research and teaching, it has been adequate or materials have been available through inter-library loan, and services have been provided efficiently. Most of the needs of the department now are met through the Internet and the use of other electronic tools.

The technological resources that are available have been adequate in the past, but if enrollments continue to grow, the department will need another computer lab to be

shared by the math and writing programs. With the advent of the computer based homework and computer based tutorials in mathematics, the need for additional space in the math lab for students who are completing their homework in LS 10A lecture has increased. For each homework assignment, the student has the following available: 1) text, 2) video lectures for the assignment, 3) step by step solutions, and 4) a java script lesson. This enhancement of the assignment puts mastery of each concept within the grasp of each properly placed student. The computerized homework also frees the teacher to spend more time on preparation and office hour help. However, 10A students now have trouble finding time in our labs to do their on-line homework. The curriculum of LS 7A/B could be modified to offer computerized homework help as well as give teachers a more detailed computerized assessment of student skills. But, the computer lab is used nearly to the maximum by LS 10A multimedia and LS 10A lecture and occasional use by the writing program. Another well equipped computer lab would be a major asset to the department.

Services provided to faculty and students are adequate; however, an orientation to the services available for students and faculty, possibly delivered on-line, would be helpful. Freshman Orientation and Freshman Seminars could direct students to such services; they are often unaware that help exists.

Classrooms and Equipment

Increases in class size due to budget cuts mean that classrooms are overcrowded. Teachers have little room to move around to help students or to have students form groups, and it is more difficult to use student-centered pedagogy. Teachers also report more classroom management problems; freshmen in overcrowded classrooms tend to revert back to counterproductive high school behavior. The popularity of websites such as MySpace and I-pods is growing; the inability to move among students makes it harder for teachers to monitor such behavior and keep students engaged in learning. Learning Skills cooperated fully in increasing class size due to economic pressure; however, the university should reduce preparatory class sizes back to 2002-03 levels as soon as possible to increase the success of students and their retention in the university.

Classrooms are generally adequately equipped, and faculty are relying more on technology in Smart Classrooms. Overhead projectors would benefit from more maintenance. Math faculty prefer rooms equipped with white boards while writing teachers prefer blackboards in their classrooms.

Learning Skills desperately needs more office space. Currently, 8 – 10 part-time lecturers share a single office, making conferencing with students very difficult. On the other hand, additional offices must be in Lassen Hall or very close by; one of the strengths of the Learning Skills program is the curricular collaboration of our teachers; any change that would isolate teachers would be counterproductive. Also, past experience indicates that Learning Skills students will not go across campus to meet with their teachers.

Financial Resources

Learning Skills is run by three tenured faculty, all of whom are approaching retirement age. The remainder of the services and courses offered by the department are provided by fill-time and part-time lecturers and student instructors who must be hired, trained, and supervised by faculty. We believe that we must begin planning for a transition period as these faculty retire, so that new tenured or tenure track faculty can be in place before the current faculty retire. Because of the size of the department and its centrality to the university's goal to ensure that students are retained and able to graduate, it is essential that this transition be as seamless as possible.

To accomplish this, we are requesting that the Learning Skills Center be allowed to begin the search process for a new tenure-track or tenured faculty position in the 2006-07 academic year. Soon after making this first hire, the department will request one and possibly two additional hires to bring the department back to three tenure track or tenured faculty as soon as feasible. In the meantime, all three tenured faculty are willing to continue working in the department after retirement in supervisory and/or coordinator positions as needed.

Program staff

The Learning Skills Center is widely regarded as having one of the highest performing offices on campus. The department secretary of Learning Skills and her staff are extraordinary; three staff are now accomplishing what formerly required four, and the department is running more smoothly than ever.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Learning Skills Center Reading/Writing/Multilingual and Mathematics programs regularly updates their assessment plans (see the Learning Skills Assessment Plan). The Reading/Writing/ESL program uses a combination of holistically scored essay exams and course portfolios. The mathematics program is in the process of developing uniform assessments. It regularly gathers data on student success in Math 1.

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