Report on The Learning Center Comprehensive Program Review, 2007

The program review team—Alvin Tagomori, Kate Acks, Mikahala Helm, and Eric Engh—met on Thursday, February 7, 2008 to assess the 2007 comprehensive program review report for The Learning Center (TLC) at Maui Community College.

Program Goals

The review team feels that the goals identified in the TLC Program Review align appropriately with TLC's mission as well as Maui Community College's mission and strategic plan. We used these goals, listed on page two of the review (and below) to orient our assessment of the program as represented in the report.

TLC Program Goals:
- To help students enhance their skills in reading, writing, math, and study skills
- To provide tutorial services in content area courses
- To help students become independent learners
- To provide students with computer equipment and software needed to complete their coursework and broaden their learning experience
- To assist students with basic computer skills
- To provide placement, make-up, and distance learning testing services as well as community proctoring services
- To support faculty in meeting student learning outcomes
- To provide a user-friendly study environment conducive to learning and thinking
- To anticipate the academic support needs of our students
- To encourage professional development

Success in Achieving Goals

The review team is impressed by TLC's effectiveness in meeting their goals, especially given the diverse and expanding needs of the students it serves. We perceive a spirit of ingenuity, dedication, and service that has allowed TLC to maintain high quality services in spite of the limited size of the staff and inadequate funding. Following are the program strengths noted the by the team in our review of the report.

Anticipating, accommodating, and responding to student needs. In recent years TLC has effectively met the changing needs of MCC students amidst an evolving educational landscape. Numerous examples are detailed in the report; the following were noted by the review team:
- Maintaining computer labs with a wide variety of educational software

- Online tutoring services for distance education students
- Online COMPASS testing for high school and prospective off-island students
- Student success workshops for underprepared students
- Permission testing that refines placement for writing students
- Sunday hours that help students incorporate schoolwork into diverse lives
- Extra services during the first three weeks of semesters
- Tours and orientations for students from classes campus-wide

Maintaining quality while increasing volume. The team commends TLC for maintaining the quality of their services as they increase and diversify what they do. From the fall of 2004 through the summer of 2007, tutors have expanded their subject areas while the number of students who have sought tutoring has expanded 300%. Demand for testing services has also dramatically increased with 220% more proctored tests over a two year period and significant expansion of placement testing services. In spite of this greater demand for services, appreciative comments and high ratings in evaluations show that students are satisfied with the quality of TLC services.

Succeeding with high risk students. The review team particularly noted TLC's success in developing activities that meet the needs of underprepared and learning-challenged students. Beyond the workshops and extensive tutoring, TLC has developed special programs to identify and tutor students with low-level reading and writing skills who aspire to receive degrees in nursing and dental assistance. Further, the learning center accommodates students with documented learning disabilities with appropriate testing services like distraction free rooms. As they meet these students' needs, TLC demonstrates its critical function in maintaining the integrity of the College's open door mission.

Keeping up with knowledge and trends. The staff is dedicated to keeping up with educational trends and learning center best practices. We particularly commend Acting Director, Debbie Winkler, for her extensive involvement in national educational associations, conferences, and University of Hawaii system-wide groups. These experiences surely inform the development of effective strategies such as those noted above. Further, they help insure that the staff and tutors receive sound advice in the regular training sessions described in the report.

Challenges in Achieving Goals

While the review team is impressed by the versatility TLC has demonstrated in broadening its scope of services and increasing its volume of students served, there are signs in the report that suggest that TLC is stretched to its limit. Meanwhile, demands for its services continue to increase. Below are program weakness noted by the Team.

Inadequate resources and staff size. TLC serves the entire campus with continually expanding services. As noted in the report and evaluation comments, students need more computers with greater software capacity, more tutors available at more hours, and more equipment such as a copy machine. Students also want these services available at more times during the day and week. Further, the significant increase in demand for distance learning services such as online tutoring and test proctoring have placed a strain upon TLC that threatens its sustainability. The report illustrates examples of compromised services that have resulted from understaffing, most notably the integrity of proctored testing that is jeopardized when proctors are forced to multi-task while testing is underway.

Wear and tear. The report documents needed improvement to carpeting and termite eaten cabinets.

Recommendations

Seek increased funding and staffing. Recognizing its essential role in fostering success for students, the team urges TLC to lobby for increased staffing with positions noted in the report, especially TLC Director, Testing coordinator, and student workers. This increased staffing is essential to the viability of TLC as a sustainable, dynamic resource of academic student support.

Collect data effectively. Continue to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Use analysis of this data to illustrate the need for increased staffing and funding.

Perpetuate high quality services. As staffing and resources allow, continue to maintain and improve policies, practices, and services that have resulted in the many positive student learning experiences attested to in student evaluations.

Conclusion
The review team commends the dedication of TLC staff in achieving high quality services in spite of limited staffing and resources, but also acknowledges that the health of this dynamic program is in jeopardy. After closely reviewing the program, we urge decision makers to provide sufficient support to sustain this program's vital role in the educational aspirations of so many of our students.