

The Basic Skills Initiative: Student Success Continuum is funded by a grant from the Chancellor's Office

Basic Skills Initiative

March 2008 | Newsletter

Issue I



MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

Welcome to Issue 1 of the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) newsletter. The BSI Steering Committee, made up of faculty and administrators from around the state are in the process of planning professional development, research projects, and activities to help our colleges better prepare our students for success.

As many of you know, Phase I of the Basic Skills Initiative produced *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Success in California Community Colleges*, a literature review of effective practices in basic skills, also known as “the Poppy Copy.” If you do not have a copy of that publication, you may download it off the BSI web site: <http://www.ccbpsi.org>. In Phase II, Teams of Specialists from around the state conducted Regional Meetings to engage college faculty and administrative leaders in the findings contained in the literature review and how they could be applied to their own institutions.

This year, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is working in collaboration with Foothill-De Anza CCD on Phase III of the Basic Skills Initiative through a \$1.6m grant from the System Office. This phase, *Basic Skills Initiative: Student Success Continuum*, addresses the needs of California, the California Community College System, and our local campuses in addressing the success of our changing student population through five goals. This first BSI Newsletter highlights these five goals.



GOAL 1

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

Building on the BSI Phase II training, a team of pedagogical experts will develop a process to demonstrate and make visible student progress through basic skills objectives towards successful basic skills outcomes. Using the following definition of “Basic Skills” from the literature review, “Basic Skills are those foundation skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language, as well as learning skills and study skills, which are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work,” the experts have begun to develop a set of model basic skills Student Learning Outcomes, rubrics, and assessment tools to provide a uniform starting point for colleges as they implement this assessment process. The data collected through the outcomes assessment tool will be stored in a database, where college faculty can access their own institutional data and see their results in relation to aggregated statewide data. This will contribute to addressing statewide interest in research about basic skills development in California community colleges and to improving processes to address basic skills student needs and faculty pedagogy. The tools will be available by July and posted on the BSI website.



As an important secondary benefit, this process will provide an opportunity for colleges to complete an entire assessment loop, a key component of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accreditation standards not yet realized on many campuses.

GOAL 2

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2007-08, over 1600 administrators, faculty and staff attended BSI Phase II training events, which gave colleges a brief introduction to the literature review of effective practices described in *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* and provided them with an opportunity to begin their action plans, which are due in May 2008. However, it became apparent that there was a need to provide colleges with real examples and strategies for implementing their action plans, particularly to help them find ways to integrate their instruction and student services and other program improvement strategies. Phase III will support colleges in implementing their action plans through a series of training opportunities including a statewide conference, regional meetings, “workshops to order,” and site specific assistance. These opportunities will assist colleges with curriculum design and alignment across the disciplines, integration of instruction and student services, teaching strategies and methods of instructional delivery using instructional technologies, and effective strategies for helping students successfully transition from high school, particularly underprepared and diverse students. Importantly, this training will target the large numbers of part-time faculty that teach the majority of ESL/basic skills courses.



Planning for these professional development activities has already begun. The schedule of events is as follows:

- ◆ Two-day regional meetings will be held across the state June 3-4, June 5-6, June 6-7, and June 9-10. The regional meetings will focus on integrating counseling and student services into basic skills courses and programs, developing interactive learning and teaching, applying various assessment techniques and discussing case studies. Registration for this event is free. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided each day. For those teams within the region that travel more than 100 miles, hotel rooms will be covered. More information about the policy for reimbursement can be found on the BSI website.
- ◆ A statewide conference will be held on August 10-13, 2008. This training will concentrate on teaching pedagogy. It is open to teams of one full-time and four part-time faculty members from each college attending from reading, writing, ESL, mathematics, and/or CTE disciplines. Registration, hotel and meals for this event are free.

More information about the regional meeting locations and registration can be found on our website. Please note that all events are based on

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first come first served and will be limited to 200 people.

The project will also be developing “Workshops to Order” and site specific assistance. Watch our website as more information is posted.

BSI Phase III will work with other organizations and colleges already applying effective practices to their courses and programs to provide models. In particular, the events above will showcase groups with projects that have demonstrated change in the developmental education arena such as the Equity for All, Lumina Foundation Dream Act, Strengthening Pre-Collegiate Education in Community Colleges (SPECC), Student Support Partnership Integrating Resources and Education (SSPIRE), and the Career Ladders Project.

GOAL 3

STUDENT EQUITY

Too often, college efforts to address student success are done in isolation. To assist colleges in integrating the work they are already doing with the work they are doing under the Basic Skills Initiative, BSI will integrate college Student Equity Plans into the processes for addressing student success in ESL/basic skills. With 80% of first time freshmen assessed as needing to take pre-collegiate coursework in English, mathematics, and/or ESL, issues of student equity are central to ESL/basic skills efforts and success at every

college. The intent of the Student Equity Plans, developed by colleges in 2005, is to ensure that the composition of students who enroll are retained, transfer, or achieve their occupational goals mirrors the diversity of the population of the college's service area. It seems a natural extension, therefore, to incorporate work done for the Student Equity Plans into the development of local assessment criteria of student learning outcomes in ESL/basic skills. Phase III has already begun to examine the plans and aggregate statewide student equity data for ESL and basic skills completion to identify any areas of adverse impact on the overall statewide student population and for individual demographic groups of students in ESL/basic skills. Based on this review, strategies will be developed to address any adverse impacts that are found. A report documenting these findings and strategies will be produced and incorporated into the regional and statewide meetings.



needs of targeted populations and transitioning high school students to college. An addendum to the literature review will be developed to address the additional strategies for targeted populations.

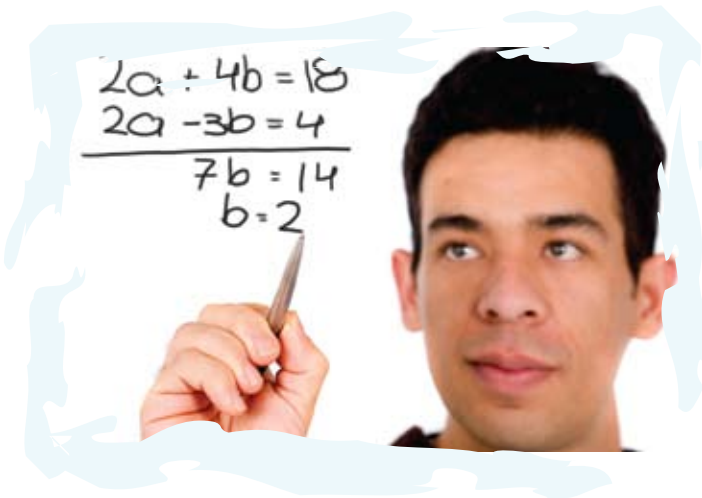
While more research is needed, we know that strengthening the academic connection between community colleges and high schools has multiple benefits, including making expectations clear to students, sharing expertise and resources, and streamlining course progression. Common understanding regarding course expectations, course sequencing, and student academic performance at the community college and high school levels is part of the academic connection that facilitates transfer. Since high numbers of students fail in

GOAL 4

HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TRANSITION

Colleges need resources to help them develop clear strategies to address the needs of our diverse students, particularly those transitioning from high school. While the literature review of effective practices in *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* had the underlying goal of improving access to underrepresented students, it did not provide effective practices for specific populations. BSI Phase III has already begun to research these effective practices. We have reviewed national and statewide activities in this area and have found that there are a number of excellent projects across the nation in the area of basic skills education, particularly in addressing the

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their first term, especially in mathematics courses, faculty should be actively pursuing the development of competencies and skills for each course. BSI Phase III proposes to strengthen the connection between high schools and community colleges through several activities. First, the project faculty will work with the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) to review and revise the mathematics competency statements for entering college freshmen. The competency statements are used across California to provide high school teachers with clear expectations of students as they transition to college and are used to train incoming secondary teachers. The mathematics statements were last updated in 1997, and since that time, the Department of Education has revised the standards for high school curriculum. This work will begin this spring.

Simultaneously, the project faculty will work with such groups as the Statewide Career Pathways Project and CalPASS to form faculty discussion groups in the areas of mathematics and English in hopes of creating a common understanding of those competencies that students need to transition to the college level. Both projects understand that if pedagogical change is to occur, faculty must be engaged in the discussions, and both have had experience developing collaborative environments for faculty exchange and curricular development. Building on the success of the Statewide Career Pathways Project and CalPASS, the BSI anticipates

that these faculty discussion groups will develop strategies for high schools and colleges to prepare students to successfully transition.

In addition, K-12 Adult Education and Noncredit instruction provide a gateway to postsecondary education for many ESL/basic skills students, which, in turn, provide a bridge for many students to credit courses/programs and then to transfer. BSI Phase III will form a group of noncredit, credit, and adult education faculty to research strategies for how Adult Education and Noncredit faculty can aid in the transition of students from noncredit to credit, including topics such as course rigor, teaching and assessment methods, and facilitating student transition from Adult Education to college. This work will also begin this spring.

GOAL 5

WEBSITE AND ELECTRONIC SHARING

There are a number of resources available for improving student learning and completion rates of basic skills students. Still, there is a need to make these resources easier to access and disseminate. Phase III proposes an electronic infrastructure to provide a central depository to share strategies for

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working with ESL and basic skills students. The Academic Senate has begun to develop such an infrastructure. The cccbsi.org web site already has resources available such as publications, links to other projects doing work in this area, and effective practices. Phase III will expand the current website by developing a repository of resources, as well as a menu-driven source of effective practices. Existing effective practices employed in our community colleges will be gathered, reviewed, and posted for use by colleges seeking examples of effective practices. In addition, other electronic sharing strategies will be explored and implemented such as blogs, listservs, newsletters, and other electronic methods of communication. This webpage will be housed on the Chancellor's Office website and also available from cccbsi.org.



need you to get involved. Attend the upcoming Regional Meetings and/or the Summer Institute. Encourage your colleagues to attend. Read the *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Success in California Community Colleges* publication. Learn how to become a more successful educator as well as work on systematic transformation in our colleges.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

The Basic Skills Initiative will succeed if our students succeed. We know that we cannot keep doing more of the same—it's not working. We

Remember: It's all about the students!

Regional Meetings

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges will be training faculty, staff and administrators around the state on institutional, counseling and pedagogical methods that research has proven to help improve success not just for basic skills students, but for all students. These two days will be focused on interactive learning, testing out various assessment techniques and case studies. You will learn strategies and techniques that you can apply to classrooms and other student interactions immediately. The Academic Senate is holding regional meetings across the state on the following dates at these locations:

June 3-4

Chaffey College
Sierra College

June 5-6

Los Angeles Southwest College

June 6-7

Fresno City College

June 9-10

Cañada College
San Diego Mesa College

Please visit our website www.cccbsi.org to register for the regional meetings. Email info@asccc.org with any questions