

Serving Underprepared Students Well: Recommendations for Improving College Prep and EAP/ESL Education at Broward Community College

Foreword

Broward Community College is an open door institution with an inescapable obligation to provide a quality College Prep and ESL education for entering students. While 42 percent of community college students across the nation enroll in at least one remedial course, that percentage approaches 85 at BCC. Though recognized as a leading institution in many areas in the State of Florida and in the nation, BCC falls far below the performance data from peer institutions with regard to credit developmental/remedial course retention and success rates (*National Community College Benchmark Project: Revised 2006 Aggregate Data*). Internal data of student performance also clearly bespeak our mandate: we must provide the necessary tools to ensure the academic success of our developmental students. As an institution, we cannot run business as usual or we will set up our students for a continued cycle of failure

BCC recognizes this increasingly urgent challenge. For the past three years, faculty, student affairs staff, learning support staff, and the administration have taken on related initiatives through the identification of the issue as one of our Education Master Plan priority goals; participation in the *Achieving the Dream* initiative; and focus on student success in College Prep and EAP/ESL by Title V SOLO grants, aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

In 2005, a collegewide committee, headed by Dianne Lamb and Joyce Nemeth, Associate Deans from South Campus, recommended a series of administrative structural changes with regard to the organization and coordination of developmental programs at the College. Building upon the work of this committee, a subsequent College Prep Steering Committee, co-chaired by Ken Ross, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Shouan Pan, Provost of South Campus, has engaged in further review and study of the issue since fall 2006. During this time, a number of recognized national experts on developmental education, including Dr. Thomas Angelo and Dr. Hunter Boylan, have been invited to work alongside our own faculty and staff developmental experts. Led by Janice Stubbs and Jose Macia, Directors of Title V SOLO grants at South and Central Campuses, faculty leaders in Reading, Math, and English have focused on revising the developmental and EAP/ESL curricula and clarifying learning outcomes.

At the same time, Professor Trish Joyce, the Holcombe Associate for Learning Communities, together with the campus Faculty Coordinators for Learning Communities, have been exploring adopting successful aspects of developmental learning communities such as the model from Kingsborough Community College. BCC has hosted KCC visiting teams and sent our faculty and staff to KCC campus to learn their best practices. Through support from the BCC Foundation, scholarships have been and will be leveraged to attract and retain first-generation students who predominantly enroll in College Prep and EAP/ESL programs.

The convergence of all these institutional efforts has led to thoughtful reflection, discussion, and recommendations of short- and long-term solutions by many in the institution. The ensuing recommendations reflect the work of the College Prep Steering Committee and many faculty and staff who work with under-prepared students. These recommendations are not exhaustive or final because more campus and departmental work is pending. Although plans will need updating as we learn from implementation, they are now sufficient to move the institution forward in important ways.

Recommendations

The current College Catalog states that BCC is dedicated to fulfilling six primary functions, which includes “**provid(ing) college-preparatory instruction for those students who need to enhance their basic academic skills prior to attempting college-level work, and to guide students whose first language is not English to the master of communication skills.**” Goal 3 of the Educational Master Plan requires the College to “**target increased success rates for students placed in college preparatory curricula.**”

To fulfill this institutional promise to our students, the College Prep Steering Committee recommends that the College adopt the following philosophy and goals for College Prep and EAP/ESL education:

Philosophy of College-Prep and ESL Education

As an open access institution, Broward Community College views providing effective College Prep and ESL education as a critical component of its institutional mission. The College fundamentally believes in the ability of all students to learn and to achieve their full potential. Inspired by students’ dreams and determination to achieve a college education, the College is unwaveringly committed to assisting all students to overcome any obstacles that stand in the way of their personal and academic success.

With support from the Board of Trustees, Broward Community College dedicates institutional resources, energy and creativity to address the challenges associated with College Prep and EAP/ESL education. The College’s faculty, administration, and staff are resolved in providing innovative and high-quality instruction as well as student support services to enable students to successfully transition from College Prep and EAP/ESL programs to college-level studies. Our ultimate aim is to support FTIC and developmental students through their programs of study to graduation and, if desired, students’ eventual transfer to a four-year institution.

Goals for College Prep and EAP/ESL Programs

1. Establish College Prep and EAP/ESL education as a top institutional priority by solidifying college-wide commitment (with regard to leadership, funding, personnel hiring, faculty and staff professional development) to student success in everyday operations.

2. Provide systematic academic support for College Prep and EAP/ESL students so that they can successfully complete the College Prep and EAP/ESL curricula and transition to college-level studies.
3. Assist College Prep and EAP/ESL students with developing effective self-management skills, including identifying strengths and weaknesses, setting realistic learning goals, and building self-confidence, self-respect, and self-efficacy.
4. Instill in College Prep and EAP/ESL students a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning and academic success.
5. Provide comprehensive and holistic student support services to help at-risk students overcome personal and/or learning barriers.
6. Ensure appropriate placement of entering College Prep and EAP/ESL students.

Institutional Commitment

Successful College Prep and EAP/ESL education does not happen by chance. It requires institutional commitment and support from top leadership; systematic and planned coordination; curricular and service integration; and inter-campus collaboration.

Specific recommendations include:

1. All new faculty hires in Math, English, and Reading, should be equally adept/capable of teaching at both the developmental and college level. Through well written job descriptions, candidates for positions in developmental areas will be advised of this prerequisite. Upon employment, these new faculty will be routinely assigned college-prep courses as part of their teaching load.
2. Form discipline-based faculty learning communities through which faculty members teaching Prep and upper-level courses will meet and consult regularly on course articulation issues to effect necessary curricular changes where appropriate. College Prep and EAP/ESL Coordinators will be responsible for facilitating the formation of such faculty learning communities.
3. Offer an integrated professional development series for all faculty members, including adjunct members, focusing specifically on classroom assessment, learning outcomes, adult learning and adult development, learning styles, classroom management, and best practices in College Prep and EAP/ESL education.

Communication

1. Publicize and encourage faculty discussions of College Prep and EAP/ESL issues through regularly scheduled forums and discussion groups. College-wide faculty meetings, faculty learning communities, Faculty Senate, and the Employee Marketplace and discussion forums on the Intranet will also become venues for ongoing conversations.
2. Create and maintain a College Prep and EAP/ESL webpage that hosts resource information and links to state and national sites, such as NADE, FDEA, FLATESOL, TESOL, FTYCMA, TYCA, etc.
3. Publish a newsletter on College Prep and EAP/ESL initiatives every quarter by the Office of the AVP for Academic Success (see reference below).

Coordination

1. Create and hire an Associate VP of Academic Success to provide college wide supervision and coordination of College Prep and EAP/ESL student success initiatives. The AVP will report to VP Academic Affairs but will work closely with VP Student Affairs, campus deans, associate deans and disciplinary faculty on all related initiatives.

(Note: The literature generally recommends centralized developmental education programs with all of the instructional units operated separately from the rest of the educational programs in the institution. Based on BCC's situation, the Steering Committee recommends campus-based College Prep and EAP/ESL programs with central coordination through the offices of AVP for Academic Success and VP of Academic Affairs.)

2. Institutionalize the College Prep Steering Committee, with the AVP serving as the Committee Chair.
3. Establish campus College Prep councils, chaired by respective Academic Deans, to address campus-specific issues.
4. Continue to hire, train and develop disciplinary coordinators for each of the Prep disciplines and EAP/ESL program (four per campus).

Student Placement

Proper student placement is critical to student progress and learning outcomes. Numerous discussions are taking place regarding existing placement scores, about which faculty members in English, EAP/ESL and Math have expressed concerns. Much more work is pending. The following recommendations are tentative:

1. Explore a new assessment tool for placing student into English courses.

2. Math Prep Coordinators are reviewing MAT0012, MAT0024, MAT1033 and MAC1105 with the intention of realigning the curriculum. In addition, they will make recommendations for the new placement scores for MAT0012 and MAT0024.

Orientation

1. Hire and train eight (8) Student Success Specialists who will use a Case Management approach to gather all new students who are placed into college-prep in two (2) or more areas and guide throughout the orientation and registration process and beyond. Two (2) Specialists will be assigned on each of the three campuses; one (1) for the Willis Holcombe Center; and one (1) for Pines/Weston Centers. Each of the Specialists will be responsible for managing approximately 300-400 new students.
2. Develop and implement a specialized orientation for the first-time-in-college (FTIC) students who test into two or more development courses. The specialized orientation will cover the following and additional appropriate content:
 - Welcome to BCC
 - Meeting campus and center counseling/advising faculty and staff
 - Understanding differences between high school and college
 - Meeting college standards and expectations
 - Following the Student Code of Conduct
 - Getting involved in Student Life and other leadership opportunities
 - Succeeding at BCC; connecting with student support services
 - Building peer support networks
 - Joining developmental Learning Communities

Advisement

1. FTIC students testing into two or more developmental courses will be assigned to a Student Success Specialist who will use a case management approach in advising and mentoring students. For students who are registered in part-time learning communities, the Student Success Specialist will provide case management for two consecutive semesters. For students enrolled in a full-time learning community, the Student Success Specialist will provide case management for the first semester only.
2. FTIC students who test into two or more developmental courses will be required to register for SLS1001 (3 credits - Strategies for Student Success). All faculty members teaching SLS1001 will be required to complete Coach Training to enhance their skills for engaging students in the classroom and fostering student persistence.

Social Integration

1. Provide appropriate cultural, educational and social events and activities on campuses and centers that facilitate quick integration of College Prep and ESL students into institutional life. It is recommended that Student Life consider offering activities during the hours of 12:00noon-3:00pm and 5:30-6:00pm for evening students.
2. Promote on-campus events using nontraditional, more aggressive approaches, e.g. using technology in the form of electronic marketing and scheduling events in the activity centers where students congregate.
3. Schedule evening meetings for clubs and organizations so that evening students have the option of getting involved.
4. For FTIC students testing into two or more developmental courses and who are also registered in learning communities, provide social and co-curricular activities for the group to enhance their 'feeling of belonging' to the college. Encourage campus supervisors to hire learning community students in work-study positions.
4. Secure special scholarships for learning community students – with required campus community service – to foster persistence and integration into the campus environment.

Learning Support Services

1. Streamline tutoring methods and learning materials in order to offer high quality learning opportunities for all students regardless the campus or center location.
2. Establish two branches in the learning labs: a competency-based branch and a service-based branch. The competency-based branch will focus on providing electronic testing in the skills required to specific course while the service-based branch will provide additional instruction by one-on-one tutors.
3. Strengthen contact between the instructional faculty and staff in the learning labs to ensure lab service is consistent and relevant to classroom instruction and addresses students' need.
4. Offer Supplementary Instruction (SI) where appropriate.
5. Assign specific tutors to learning community cohorts.
5. Personalize student contact and support to develop students' self-confidence; encourage their willingness to ask for help; and strengthen their drive to succeed.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Review course outcomes for all College Prep and EAP/ESL course outlines.
2. Specific curricular recommendations for English, Math, and Reading are pending. Academic deans and associate deans for the three disciplines will be charged to work through related issues.

Assessment and Tracking

1. Develop a cohort method of tracking persistence and performance of College Prep and EAP/ESL students. This tracking system will be developed in SAS so that we may collect statistical and data mining tools to provide the best information for knowledge-based decisions.

The data collected will consist of demographic, course, instructor, degree, financial aid, and Prep placement information. Specifically, the following data points should be included:

- Age
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- First-generation-in-college indicator
- FT/PT
- Admission status
- Program information, original and changes
- Level of placement in each Prep or EAP/ESL area
- High school
- Program changes
- Learning Community indicator
- Pell grant recipient
- Course delivery method
- Course instructor
- Campus attended
- Tutoring usage
- Mentoring or coaching
- Early Warning interventions
- Length of time between test and coursework
- Number of attempts
- Progression to gatekeeper courses
- Average class size
- GPA

Members of College Prep Steering Committee: Donna Battle, Darena Borgers, Eugene Bowen, Marian Coanda, Cynthia Halstead, Bonnie Hilton, Teresa Hodge, Mimi Markus, Carole Michaels, Mathew Pierce, Cecil Scott, Mary Smith, Wendy Clink, Scott Feaster, Tiandra Johnson, Trish Joyce, Diane Lamb, Jaquelyn Loftus, Jose Macia, Hank Martel, Joyce Nemeth, Christopher Pulsifer, Dianne Ruggiero, Debbie Sloan, Janice Stubbs, Ted Wright, Ken Ross, and Shouan Pan