

**Basic Skills Initiative
Summary of Self-Assessment &
Recommendations for Action**

Chabot College

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Effective Practice Area A: Institutional Commitment and Priority

A.1: Developmental Education is a Clearly Stated Institutional Priority

Developmental education has been an explicit priority in various institutional documents and activities in recent years – e.g. strategic plan, Basic Skills Initiative projects, plans for Title 3 grant, Carnegie grant activities, expanded tutoring under Learning Connection. Additionally, positions in English and Math have been prioritized in faculty hiring decisions, with basic skills instruction explicitly included in position descriptions. Even with these positive trends, questions remain about whether resources are sufficient to provide effective support services for developmental students, or for faculty to engage in the kinds of practices that yield stronger outcomes for these students (e.g.: limited professional development opportunities, 44-student class size in developmental math, teaching load for general education faculty – 5 classes of 44 students per term).

A.2: A clearly articulated mission based on a shared, overarching philosophy drives the developmental education program. Clearly specified goals and objectives are established for developmental courses and programs.

There is no single “developmental education program” at Chabot. There are developmental-level courses in Math, English, and ESL, and various support services (e.g.: DSPS, Learning Connection, Counseling). Additionally, faculty in “non-developmental” disciplines teach developmental students in transfer-level classes without pre-requisites. Because developmental education is so decentralized, there is no single mission or over-riding philosophy, and there has been no forum for goal setting on developmental education as a whole.

Each area deals with these issues separately in various ways (e.g.: unit plans, program reviews, ongoing curricular work). In English, for example, the developmental education philosophy is articulated in two key documents, the “Throughline” and “Articulated Assumptions,” both of which are shared with all newly hired faculty are referred to regularly in faculty gatherings. One of the principles this philosophy is that students in basic skills classes should engage in the same kinds of skills/habits of mind/practices as students in transfer-level English classes (reading and critically responding to full-length books, writing argument-based essays), but that the classes should provide them with greater scaffolding and support, longer instructional periods, more accessible texts, and more explicit attention to “student-ing skills.” As is typical across the college, communication about this has generally occurred *within* English, but not much beyond it.

Goal setting occurs across the college through unit plans, but our planning does not typically involve specific focus on developmental education. Additionally, it often focuses on institutional goals (FTE/ WSCH, staffing, fiscal matters), rather than goals for improving specific *student outcomes*. For example, to what extent do we set goals for increasing retention within the semester, or increasing engagement rates across the curriculum, or persistence from one semester to the next? This might be an area for the college-wide Basic Skills Committee to pursue.

A.3: The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.

As noted above, developmental education at Chabot is de-centralized and has been minimally coordinated. Budgeting for developmental education is subsumed within larger division budgets. A movement toward greater coordination is evident in the integration of student tutorial services under the Learning Connection and the creation of a college-wide Basic Skills Committee. Formal and informal mechanisms exist for faculty *within* developmental disciplines to discuss instructional issues (Math's long-standing Basic Skills faculty group, English "Talking about Teaching: English 102" series and ongoing workshops/retreats, ESL's regular faculty workshops). Cross-disciplinary conversations about basic skills education have historically been limited to special programs (e.g.: learning communities), but have recently occurred more broadly among faculty involved in the Learning Connection, in Flex Day programs (e.g. college-wide viewing & discussion of video *Reading Between the Lives*), and among faculty participating in projects funded by Basic Skills Initiative or Carnegie grant. This is a promising trend for the Basic Skills Committee to build upon.

A.4: Institutional policies facilitate student completion of necessary developmental coursework as early as possible in the educational sequence.

Assessment, orientation, and placement are encouraged at Chabot through registration incentives, and students who see counselors are advised to take developmental coursework early. However, many students do not participate in these processes, and few pre-requisites block them from enrolling in transfer-level courses outside of English, Math. We do not have clear data on how many complete developmental coursework early and how many postpone these (often dreaded) classes. There is some disagreement among members of the Basic Skills Committee about the advisability of requiring students to pass a series of pre-requisites to gain entry to college-level courses. Institutional data on student performance is regularly monitored within divisions (e.g. English, Math, Counseling) and used for program planning and student advising.

A.5: A comprehensive system of support services exists and is characterized by a high degree of integration among academic and student support services.

This has been an area of significant focus and investment in the last few years, as separate support services (e.g. Math Lab, WRAC lab, Language Lab) have been integrated under the new college-wide Learning Connection, and support services have been developed in new disciplines. Services take many forms, (e.g.: individualized instruction from faculty, student-led supplemental instruction, peer learning assistants embedded in the classroom, subject-matter peer tutors, study groups). Faculty from the following disciplines currently serve as liaisons and/or tutor trainers: English, math, world languages, speech and communications, ESL, chemistry, life sciences. Student learning assistants provide support in classes in the following disciplines: business, CAS, art, anatomy, math, chemistry, English, ASL, Learning Skills, ECD, world languages. The Learning Connection plans to expand these offerings further through a "bottom up" approach in which instructors and staff across the curriculum identify learning needs, and the Learning Connection works with them to create and then to institutionalize successful pilots to address those needs. As the Learning Connection moves into its next phase of development, one area for attention involves gathering data to systematically assess its support services, then sharing those results with the broader college.

A.6: Faculty who are both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about developmental education are recruited and hired to teach in the program.

This is a given in disciplines like ESL and Learning Skills. Enthusiasm about developmental education has also been an explicit criterion of the last several rounds of full-time hiring in English, where all faculty are expected to teach both developmental and transfer-level courses. Throughout much of the college, however, faculty are hired for their discipline-specific expertise, and while many have teaching *experience*, many do not have training or expertise in teaching, nevermind specific training in developmental education. Individual faculty may pursue their own professional development in this area, but aside from recent grant-funded projects, this has not been an organized effort across the college.

A.7: Institutions manage faculty and student expectations regarding developmental education.

It is hard to assess the extent to which this is occurring at Chabot, as it occurs in such disparate contexts (faculty syllabi, individual classrooms, tutoring, student services, groups of faculty working within disciplines or in special projects). At a college-wide level, recent videos produced under the Carnegie grant use student voices to illuminate the question of student and faculty expectations (*Reading Between the Lives* – video on student/faculty expectations in reading, *Going the Distance* – video on the expectations/demands of being successful in distance education formats). A new video is currently planned in collaboration with Student Services to address what being a college student involves, and the services available to students at Chabot.

Effective Practice Area B: Program Components

B.1: Orientation, assessment, and placement are mandatory for all new students.

Orientation, assessment, and placement are voluntary for new students at Chabot, rather than mandatory. Student services has set up incentives to encourage students to participate in orientation and assessment, with points awarded that give earlier registration dates to participating students. We don't currently have solid numbers about the percentage of new students who participate, but data from the Office of Institutional Research indicates that new students participating in assessment and orientation persist and succeed at a higher rate than those who do not.

There was significant interest among the Basic Skills Committee in exploring the question of mandatory assessment, placement, and orientation at Chabot. Faculty within Math and English expressed interest in examining and possibly changing parts of the assessment/placement process in their areas. Faculty in other disciplines spoke of the challenges posed by the lack of pre-requisites in their transfer-level classes. There were significant differences of opinion on the question and concerns about the impact of such policies.

B.2: Regular program evaluations are conducted, results are disseminated widely, and data are used to improve practice.

Chabot has instituted a new Program Review process in the last several years, and basic skills were identified as a key area for programs to investigate. Program evaluations occur regularly, though results do not appear to be widely available to the college community. We were not able to evaluate the extent to which data are used to improve practice. As an ongoing, college-wide process, Program Review represents a potential partner in building a college-wide, coordinated effort to strengthen basic skills education.

B.3: Counseling support provided is substantial, accessible, and integrated with academic courses/programs.

Counseling support is integrated with academic instruction in special programs like the Daraja, Puente, and Springboard Learning Communities, as well as EOPS and Aspire. However, for students in the general curriculum, access to substantial counseling is limited, and there are no specific initiatives targeted toward developmental students.

B.4: Financial aid is disseminated to support developmental students. Mechanisms exist to ensure that students are aware of such opportunities and are provided with assistance to apply for and acquire financial aid.

Financial aid is disseminated to all Chabot students, including those who assess into developmental coursework (92% of the new students in Fall 2007). Over the last several years, expanded outreach has significantly increased the number of students receiving financial aid and the amounts of aid awarded (e.g.: The Financial Aid Office reports that between 00-01 and 07-08, the number of Cal grants awarded has increased 149%). In their self-assessment, the Financial Aid office expressed concerns about their reliance on soft, categorical funding sources and the limited staff time available for personal guidance to students.

Effective Practice Area C: Staff Development

C.1: Administrators support and encourage faculty development in basic skills, and the improvement of teaching and learning is connected to the institutional mission.

C.2: The faculty play a primary role in needs assessment, planning, and implementation of staff development programs and activities in support of developmental education programs.

C.3: Staff development programs are structured and appropriately supported to sustain them as ongoing efforts related to institutional goals for the improvement of teaching and learning.

C.4: Staff development opportunities are flexible, varied, and responsive to developmental needs of individual faculty, diverse student populations, and coordinated programs/services.

C.5: Faculty development is connected to intrinsic and extrinsic faculty reward structures.

The relationship between staff development and basic skills education has emerged recently through several different projects, particularly as funded by the state Basic Skills Initiative and the Carnegie grant. The individuals participating in these projects, of course, received the most direct professional development around basic skills education, but benefits of this work have spread to the college at large through forums like Flex Day (e.g. screenings and discussions of Carnegie-funded videos *Reading between the Lives* and *Going the Distance*; workshops featuring results from basic skills projects in Math, History, the Puente Project, service learning, Springboard to Transfer, research into the “academic sustainability gap” holding back so many developmental students). Beyond these projects, the long-standing New Faculty Group has been a place where new full-time instructors receive training and support in some of the effective classroom practices highlighted in the BSI Literature Review (e.g. using Classroom Assessment Techniques, designing good reading assignments). Faculty/staff participating in special programs (e.g.: EOPS, Puente) also receive regular professional development, some relating to basic skills education.

Outside of specific projects/programs, there has been little coordinated, college-wide attention to the area of developmental education. Staff development funds are overseen by a committee that includes developmental faculty, but these funds are distributed for conference-attendance in general (not developmental education in particular). Staff development in developmental education has been constrained by two main factors: limited time for faculty to come together, limited financial resources to organize and fund such work. College hour has been eroded by construction-related scheduling changes, and while the quality of recent Flex Day offerings has been strong, two days a year are not sufficient time for faculty to come together on matters of teaching and learning. Many members of the committee expressed interest in expanding professional development opportunities in developmental education – both within their disciplines (with funding for adjunct faculty to participate) and across disciplines. This need has also been highlighted in the proposal being drafted now for a Title 3 grant, and as an area for future attention within a new Center for Teaching and Learning to be housed within the college-wide Learning Connection.

Effective Practice Area D: Instructional Practices

D.1: Sound principles of learning theory are applied in the design and delivery of courses in the developmental program.

D.2: Curricula and practices that have proven to be effective in specific disciplines are employed.

D.3: The developmental education program addresses the holistic development of all aspects of the student. Attention is paid to the social and emotional development of students, as well as to their cognitive growth.

D.4: Culturally Responsive Teaching theory and practices are applied to all aspects of the developmental instructional programs and services.

D.5: A high degree of structure is provided in developmental education courses.

D.6: Developmental education faculty employ a variety of instructional approaches to accommodate student diversity.

D.7: Programs align entry/exit skills among levels and link course content to college-level performance requirements.

D.8: Developmental education faculty routinely share instructional strategies.

D.9: Faculty and advisors closely monitor student performance.

D.10: Programs provide comprehensive academic support mechanisms, including the use of trained tutors.

Despite its central importance, Area D is the shortest section of our self-assessment. This is in part because many of the above issues have been addressed in earlier sections, such as the integration and expansion of tutoring services under the Learning Connection, questions about entry/exit requirements related to assessment and placement, the insufficient time and funding available for faculty to share instructional strategies, and the limited staff development targeted to developmental education.

Because most of the above instructional practices are dispersed across a wide range of courses and instructors (in Chabot's decentralized and minimally coordinated developmental education "program"), it is difficult to assess how extensively practices like D1-D5 occur. The above list of effective practices does, however, provide guidance we can use in our upcoming work to design professional development activities, curricular changes, and academic support services to strengthen developmental education at Chabot.

Strengthening Basic Skills Education at Chabot

Draft Recommendations: Setting the Course for Basic Skills Committee & BSI Expenditures 2008-2009 and Beyond

Introduction

The following recommendations for action emerged from Chabot's Basic Skills Self-Assessment, conducted by the Basic Skills Committee and synthesized by committee co-chairs Katie Hern and Patricia Shannon. The recommendations reflect areas where committee members noted significant interest and need at the college. They fall into four major categories:

- 1) Academic Policy: Consideration of mandatory orientation, assessment, and/or placement
- 2) Professional Development: Effective Instructional Practices in Basic Skills Education
- 3) Direct Support for Developmental Students: Tutorials and Counseling Services
- 4) Curricular Review and Change: Strengthening Student Outcomes

A common philosophical theme ran through the self-assessment: We are *all* basic skills instructors. Given this, our recommendations reflect not only activities in English, Math, ESL, but efforts to strengthen basic skills across the disciplines and in key student services areas.

Recommendations

- 1) **Carefully study issues involved in adoption of mandatory orientation, assessment, and/or placement at Chabot. Develop policy recommendations. (BSI effective practices, Area A)**

Participants:

Basic Skills Sub-Committee including Counseling and Instructional faculty in English, Math, transfer-level G.E. disciplines. Support from Institutional Research office. Other members as interested.

Overview of Charge:

Faculty Inquiry Group (FIG) to analyze institutional data and external literature on feasibility and impact of such policies, from open-minded scholarly standpoint (rather than polemical/advocacy standpoint), to develop recommendations. Investigation should include (but not be limited to):

Attention to discipline-specific concerns with assessment/placement processes, such as questions in English about cut scores for English 102 and for directing students to ESL/Learning Skills, questions in math about expanding assessment process to include guidance on student weaknesses/strengths (instead of using placement simply to "get them in the right course")

Attention to the question of pre-requisites in transfer level g.e. courses

Attention to student equity & access issues involved in such policies

Examination of data on success rates of developmental-level students enrolled in college-level courses

Attention to financial implications, such as the impact on enrollments and the resources needed to support these policies

Consideration of the mixed findings about mandatory placement in community college settings (described in BSI Literature Review)

2) Increase Professional Development Opportunities re: Effective Practices in Developmental Education (BSI Areas C2-C4 & D)

Participants:

Faculty/staff from across the college – in traditional developmental disciplines (English, Math, ESL, Learning Skills, tutorials, counseling) as well as in transfer-level disciplines that serve large numbers of basic skills-level students. Staff/faculty/administration involved in Chabot's emerging Center for Teaching and Learning. Members of Staff Development Committee.

Sample Activities:

- “Grounds up” proposals submitted from across college to fund developmental education activities in their areas (e.g. Workshops on Active Learning pedagogies for Social Science, professional development activities to train additional faculty in Mastery Learning approaches piloted in Math under first round of Basic Skills funds).
- Opportunities organized by the Center for Teaching and Learning, especially cross-disciplinary activities, such as trainings in Reading Apprenticeship pedagogy and participation in an ongoing Faculty Inquiry Group of instructors trying these approaches in their classes.
- Faculty Inquiry Groups of faculty who commit to trying new instructional practices from Basic Skills Lit Review (Area D), then come together regularly to share results from their classes, get feedback & support
- Staff-development committee funding for attendance at conferences specifically devoted to developmental education

Guidelines & criteria for implementing these activities to be developed in early 2008-2009 by Basic Skills Committee

3) Expand & Strengthen Supplemental Academic & Counseling Support in Basic Skills
(Effective Practice Areas B...D...)

Participants:

Collaborations between Basic Skills Committee, Learning Connection, Counseling, and Faculty from Relevant Disciplines (whether serving on committee or not)

Sample Activities highlighted in committee members' bsi assessments:

- Further expand tutorial support in Learning Connection to include disciplines/areas/skills not currently represented
- Create new peer-tutoring support for reading across the curriculum
This need has been widely stressed across the campus, by both students and faculty from different areas (the video *Reading Between the Lives*, self-assessment by Science area, recognition by English faculty that the WRAC Center – Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum – has become primarily a *writing* center over time).
- Assess effectiveness of pilot projects in Learning Connection, share results with Basic Skills Committee & other parts of college
- Investigate effective models for better integrating counseling and academic instruction at the developmental levels, develop recommendations for new policies/practices at Chabot.

4) Curriculum Review and Change

Several members of the Committee raised specific ideas about curricular changes to strengthen basic skills education in English and Math, as well as other disciplines (Social Science, the Sciences). There was interest in using Basic Skills funding to support extensive assessment and review of the elements of the current curriculum, to develop curricular changes that would improve student outcomes. The literature review on Effective Practices in Basic Skills would be a primary source guiding this work.