Peralta Community College District
STUDENT SERVICES ANNUAL PROGRAM UPDATE

I. Overview

College: Merritt College
Unit/Area: Learning Center
Date: December 3, 2013
Administrator: Dr. Stacy Thompson
Completed By: Dr. Audrey Trotter

Mission/History and Description of Service Provided

The mission of the Merritt College Learning Center is to serve as a campus hub for learners and to assist students in becoming more efficient, effective, and independent learners. The primary focus is to provide supplemental academic support and to help students reinforce the mastery of concepts in college courses across the curriculum.

To assist students in achieving their maximum potential, the Learning Center staff collaborates with faculty, staff, and administrators in addressing the learning needs, academic performance, and retention of students. Supplemental academic support services include:

- Free drop-in tutoring and mentoring
- Open entry/open exit supplemental instructional courses in Learning Resources and English
- Writing Across the Curriculum (WRAC*)* services to help students understand the writing process
- Mathematics lab academic and supplemental services to support developmental, vocational, collegiate, and transfer level courses
- General tutoring in biology, chemistry, physics, CIS, and other disciplines (as budget allows)
- Open computer labs and computer aided instruction
- Study skills and success workshops and classroom presentations, often in partnership with Counseling and College Success faculty
- Study skills strategies provided in the form of tip sheets, and online resources
- Study groups led by faculty and tutors Training in discipline specific content strategies, learning theory, study strategies, communication strategies, learning styles, diversity, and customer service

Service Area Outcomes (SAOs)

As a result of the services provided by the Learning Center students will be able to increase skill levels in one or more of the following areas:

1. To become more independent learners
2. To increase self-confidence
3. To decrease stress level
4. To improve in-class performance
5. To improve grades

6. To become more aware of how they learn best
7. To increase knowledge of the subject
8. To complete homework assignments
9. To achieve learning potential
10. To better define and solve problems
11. To become more comfortable in using technology
12. To use collaborative learning to achieve course objectives
13. To prepare for their goal (transfer to another college/university, complete vocational and technical programs, and to obtain employment, etc.)

Merritt College SAO Mapping to Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

COMMUNICATION: Communicate with clarity and precision using oral, nonverbal, and/or written language, expressing an awareness of audience, situation, and purpose. (SAO #2)

CRITICAL THINKING: Think critically using appropriate methods of reasoning to evaluate ideas and identify and investigate problems and to develop creative and practical solutions to issues that arise in workplaces, institutions, and local and global communities. (SAO #1, 3, 4, 9, 10)

QUANTITATIVE REASONING: Apply college-level mathematical reasoning to analyze and explain real world issues and to interpret and construct graphs, charts, and tables. (#10)

Cultural Awareness: Through knowledge of history and cultural diversity, recognize and value perspectives and contributions that persons of diverse backgrounds bring to multicultural settings and respond constructively to issues that arise out of human diversity on both the local and the global level. (SAO #6, 10, 12, 13)

Civic Engagement and Ethics: Internalize and exhibit ethical values and behaviors that address self-respect and respect for others with integrity and honesty that will enable success and participation in the larger society. (SAO #12)

Information and Computer Literacy: Use appropriate technology to identify, locate, evaluate and present information for personal, educational and workplace goals. (SAO # 5, 7, 8, 11)

II. Assessment, Evaluation and Planning

Quantitative Assessments

Include service area data such as number of students served by your unit/area. Include data and recommendations from program review. Include data used to assess your SLO/SAO/PLOs.

Academic Year	Learning Center Contact Hours (SARS Contact Hours)	Learning Center Students Tutored (Actual Number of Tutor/Tutee Contacts)	Learning Center Tutors	Learning Center FTES
Summer 2009	1,420	403	9	.78
Fall 2009	19,404	1,201	31	13.77
Spring 2010	15,679	1,101	20	8.49
TOTAL	**36,503**	**2,705**	**60**	**23.04**
Summer 2010	1,297	234	7	0.22
Fall 2010	13,511	1,097	20	6.39
Spring 2011	22,520	970	18	41.30
TOTAL	**37,328**	**2,301**	**45**	**47.91**
Summer 2011	2,059	630	8	0.22
Fall 2011	25,174	1,078	24	23.09
Spring 2012	11,817	965	28	32.09
TOTAL	**39,050**	**2,673**	**60**	**55.40**
Summer 2012	2,021	482	10	2.09
Fall 2012	42,513	3,135	*28	24.74
Spring 2013	13,487	3,287	**28	38.63
TOTAL	**58,011**	**6,904**	**66**	**65.46**

*Fall 2012 (9 Grant Funded Embedded Tutors)
**Spring 2013 (10 Grant Funded Embedded Tutors)

Qualitative Assessments

Present evidence of community need based on advisory committee input, student surveys, focus groups, etc. Include data used to assess your SLO/SAO/PLOs.

The Learning Center continues to conduct classroom and Learning Center presentations and workshops to facilitate outreach and to promote the benefits of tutorial and computer lab services to students. The Director and Coordinator of the Learning Center, the Instructional Assistant, and the English Department Co-Chair who facilitates the WRAC Center present information to faculty

and staff during flex-day programs and regularly at Division meetings on the availability of free drop-in tutorial services, open computer labs for student use. The Learning Center Director frequently develops and conducts tailor-made in-class workshops to support students in becoming independent learners, to improve textbook reading strategies in specific disciplines, goal-setting, time-management, career and college planning, and how to apply for scholarships workshops, as well. At the conclusion of the student workshops a One Minute Journal assessment tool is used to identify the most important thing students learned, what they wish had been included in the presentation, or how it might be improved.

Plans are underway to establish a Learning Center Advisory Committee effective Spring 2014. The Advisory Committee faculty and staff membership will include representatives from English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Business/Accounting/CIS, and Nursing/Nutrition/Rad Tech, a Social Science discipline, and Counseling. The initial goal of the Learning Center Advisory Committee will focus on faculty staffing and support of peer tutors in the discipline service areas located in the newly renovated Learning Center (i.e. WRAC Center; Science and Mathematics; general tutoring service areas; and, the computer labs). Another goal is to increase collaboration with discipline faculty in their participation of tutor training activities.

The Learning Center will also utilize data resulting from student responses to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement that will be administered in Spring 2014 to assess the results of Learning Center tutorial services as a supplemental academic support service to students.

Ultimately, in order to assess the results and experiences of students who use Learning Center tutorial services, faculty and staff would benefit from working with a research professional in tracking students by discipline who use tutorial services in comparison of those students who do not.

Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Limitations

Strengths
What are the STRENGTHS of your unit/area?

The Learning Center serves as a campus hub for learners and provides supplemental academic support services to all students with the support of faculty, staff, and peer tutors. The Center also serves as a critical learning space for individual and group study and as a place for study between classes. This service has been particularly important to students due to the temporary relocation of the Library and its limited space in Building A over the past couple of years. The Learning Center student traffic has increased with the relocation of the Library, particularly as the completion of the Building L Facilities Renovation Project nears completion. In Spring 2014, the goal is for the Library and the Learning Center to make their final move to newly renovated facilities in Building L.

The Learning Center has also been able to expand its tutorial services to students with the addition of the Embedded Tutor concept implemented through the College's Title III Grant and Basic Skills Projects. Embedded tutors attend the classes taught by faculty teaching in Learning Communities, the First Year Experience Program, or designated Basic Skills courses. As a result, tutors gain first-hand knowledge of what students are taught in the classroom, while gaining a better understanding of the course and faculty requirements of students—which in turn leads to established tutor and

tutee relationships and the provision of focused tutoring upon the arrival of these students to the Learning Center. The embedded tutor concept also facilitates the tutor/faculty relationship. More importantly, embedded tutors are able to work with other students who come to the Learning Center for tutoring in their discipline when they are not busy serving students from their assigned classes. As a result, the Center has expanded its capacity in serving all students.

Weaknesses
What are the current Weaknesses of your unit/area?

The current weakness in Learning Center services is the outdated and the limited size of the facility in Building D. Of course, this will be rectified upon the Center's move to its newly renovated facilities in Spring 2014. This weakness exists because of the two year delay in making this move which has impacted services to students and collaboration with discipline faculty.

Another weakness is the arrangement of the learning spaces and the computer labs in the current Learning Center location in Building D. The current structure of the Center hinders the capacity of the receptionist staff and tutors in ensuring that all students sign in when they enter the Learning Center

Opportunities
What are the OPPORTUNITIES in your unit/area?

A future goal is to create more paperless, on-line, web-based resource materials to support student learning, tutorial services, and students enrolling in LRNRE 280—Study Skills and ENGL 280—English fundamentals (reading, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary). The Learning Center staff will also collaborate with student services to ensure that a streaming video on the Center's services is included in the College's new online orientation program.

Learning Center staff will also systematize the process for ensuring that faculty syllabi are on file each semester and available to tutors so that they are better prepared in providing targeted tutoring to students. A request will be made to each Division Dean to forward an electronic copy of faculty syllabi which will be printed and filed in a binder for student reference.

Also, upon the move the new Learning Center faculty and staff will work with discipline faculty to prepare for campus-wide dissemination a monthly schedule of workshops on learning strategies, computer keyboarding, study skills, grammar and vocabulary, writing techniques, and other topics, as well.

Limitations
What are the current LIMITATIONS of your unit/area?

The most pressing limitation for the Learning Center is its old, out-dated facility. This will limitation will no longer exist upon the move to the new Learning Center in Building L in Spring 2014. The Learning Center Computer Lab "ancient" computers designated for student use were finally replaced in Summer 2013! An assessment of the software needs to support student computing and classroom instruction should be conducted and completed during the current fiscal year, so that any costs for needed software may be integrated into the current budget development process.

Action Plan for Continuous Improvement
Please describe your plan for the continuous improvement of our unit/area?

Learning Center staff and tutor staff meetings and training activities are held on a more consistent basis. For the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters a monthly meeting calendar was established (e.g. second Wednesday of each month). The next steps is to use the Learning Center page on Merritt's new College website as a means of posting online tutor training activities and links to useful resources for peer tutors.

An ongoing effort in continuous improvement of services involves the Learning Center staff working with the Division Dean in putting forth plans to stabilize the Fund 01 budget required for adequate Learning Center services and staffing. The Learning Center budget through Fund 01 has increased over the past couple of years, but must continue to do so, particularly upon the move the new facility in Building L. The configuration of the Learning Center spaces in Building L will have a direct bearing on the projected number tutors, reception area staffing, and computer lab techs needed to support the hours of operation and to provide adequate services to students. More importantly, grant budget allocations that may have sustained the Learning Center during years of fluctuation in the budget in previous years are scheduled to end in the coming year.

The vision is to increase the number of faculty who will work a limited number of hours in the Learning Center to support student learning in their discipline outside of the classroom and to assist in the training of tutors in their discipline. This will support and sustain the achievement of the mission of the Learning Center in helping students to reinforce the mastery of concepts in college courses across the curriculum. Additional, faculty and staff in the newly renovated Learning Center will be critically important in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WRAC) Center and in the Mathematics and Science Learning Labs.

Additional Planned Educational Activities Towards FTES, Student Success, Persistence, and Completion
Describe your unit/areas plan to meet District FTES target and address student success, persistence, and completion, especially for unprepared, underrepresented, and underserved students. (See Student Success Scorecard—http://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecard.aspx)

The Learning Center mission, service area outcomes, and the supplemental academic support services directly support college goals in improving persistence, retention, course completion, and academic support services to sustain student educational goal achievement.

III. RESOURCE NEEDS

Human Resource/Personnel
Please describe any human resource/personnel needs for your unit/area.

Current Staffing Level:

	Headcount	FTE Equivalent
Faculty (Permanent)	1	.50
Faculty (PT/Adjunct)	0	0
Classified Staff (Permanent)	2	2.0
Classified Staff (Hourly)	0	0
Students (Tutors)	25	N/A
ICC/Consultant/Other	0	0

Narrative:
Describe the current staffing level in relation to the relative need for effective delivery of your unit/area/s programs and services.

Within the current structure of the Learning Center, the faculty and staff have made due in maintaining the Center's operational hours and providing sufficient tutorial and computer lab services to students. The budget allocations have not allowed for increased faculty nor classified staff hires since 2003. However, the infrastructure of the newly renovated Learning Center points to the need of increased staffing to provide coverage and services in all of the areas of the Center during its operational hours. For example, in the current Learning Center facility, one or two persons may be sufficient to provide tutoring services, and to close the computer labs and the general tutoring learning spaces because of the close proximity of the rooms. In the newly renovated Learning Center, the layout of the facility will dictate the need of additional staffing because the computer labs are at one end of the facility, the general tutoring spaces are in the middle, and the WRAC Center is at the opposite end of the Learning Center away from the computer labs. The Center may be out of compliance with line of site guidelines without staffing to support student needs in the computer labs or for tutorial services.

Previous sections of this report highlight the need for the increased assignment of faculty staffing hours in English, Mathematics, Science, and other disciplines, as well. However, for effective delivery of Learning Center services, students would be better served with the hiring of additional instructional assistants in these areas.

Discuss any current position vacancies, the need for additional personnel, the need for permanent faculty/staff instead of adjunct/hourly personnel, etc.

This program update includes the first request from the Learning Center since 2003 and 2006 for the hiring of additional instructional assistants (hourly) in the following areas: Mathematics, Science, English, and Computer Labs. In the 2002-2003 an instructional assistant hired through Fund 01 and in the 2006-2007 an instructional assistant was hired and paid for by VTEA funding.

Merritt's core academic performance data indicates low student success rates in the retention, course completion, and drop rates for students in all Mathematic courses illustrating a dire need for additional support for students outside of the classroom with homework assignments, individual and group study, and repetition and review of concepts covered during class by faculty.

Supplemental instructional support is also critical the Science area courses—Biology, Microbiology, Chemistry, and Physics—particularly as it relates to students fulfilling the prerequisite requirements for Merritt's core niche of Health Science related majors.

Lastly, with the opening of the Learning Center Writing Across the Curriculum program consistent instructional assistant support will benefit students enrolled in general education, transfer, CTE, and certificate programs.

Describe the implications of the current staffing level in your unit/area to overall service delivery.

As Merritt analyzes, interprets, and dialogues on the College's core academic performance data and tracks the performance of students who are unable to take advantage of supplemental instruction, a strong case will emerge for expanded instructional assistant hourly hire support in the new Learning Center.

Lastly, as the Title III grant ends, the Learning Center faculty and staff recommends that the College meet the institutionalization requirements outlined in the grant for hiring five additional tutors by hiring four instructional assistants in the Mathematics, Science, English disciplines, and for general assistance to students using the Computer Labs.

Human Resource/Personnel Requests

List your human resource/personnel requests in prioritized/ranked order.
Human resource/personnel requests will go through the established College and District planning and budgeting process.

Interdisciplinary faculty assigned hours in the Learning Center (Contract and/or Adjunct)
Instructional Assistants—Mathematics, English, Science, Computer Labs
Five Additional Tutors

Facilities/Infrastructure
Please describe any facilities/infrastructure needs for your unit/area.

The Learning Center and Library faculty and staff have engaged in a six-year process to design and renovate Learning Center and Library Facilities in Building L. The move to the new facility has been delayed almost two years, but the current move-in date for the Learning Center and Library will be 2014 (Spring 2014 or Summer 2014, at the latest). Therefore, facilities/infrastructure needs will be met in the near future.

Narrative:
Describe the current facilities/infrastructure of your unit/area in relation to the relative need for effective delivery of programs and services.

The current Learning Center is certainly not up to par or standards in its appearance for an institution of higher education. The move to the new facility will provide for increased effectiveness in the delivery of tutorial and computer lab services to students at Merritt College. Furthermore, the dynamic of having the Learning Center and the Library in the same building will be a plus to students and support supplemental instruction, library services and research conducted by students, and sufficient learning spaces for students to study on campus.

Describe implications of the current state of facilities/infrastructure in your unit/area to overall service delivery.

Same as above.

Facilities/Infrastructure Requests
List your facilities requests in prioritized/ranked order.

Current facilities and infrastructure requests for the Learning Center are being met through the Building L Facilities Renovation Project. Future requests may arise upon the move to the new facility. These would be requests that could not be anticipated until the new Learning Center becomes operational.

Facilities requests will go through the established College and District planning and budgeting process.

Technology
Please describe any technology needs for your unit/area.

Current technology needs are being met through the Building L Facilities Renovation Project—this includes computers for the Center's service areas and computers for Learning Center staff, as well.

Narrative:
Describe the technology needs of your unit/area in relation to the relative need for effective delivery of programs and services.

Computer equipment is needed to accommodate student sign-into SARS in all service areas of the new Learning Center. Currently, students sign-in upon their entrance into the Learning Center in Room D187, but in the new Center in Building L, students will need to sign-in for in the area in which they are receiving services (e.g. WRAC, General Tutoring, Mathematics, Science, Computer Labs, or the Reception Area).

This system may require upgrades to the SARS system.

Describe implication of the current state of technology in your unit/area to overall service delivery.

The need for the technology and SARS sign-in system described above has great implications for the delivery of services in the Learning Center. It is critical that the Center accurately tracks student contact hours and tutoring service hours each semester. Hopefully, the SARS upgrade will enable SARS and PROMT to interface in the posting of positive attendance hours onto the grade rosters.

Technology Requests
List your technology requests in prioritized/ranked order.

Update the SARS system as needed.

Technology requests will go through the established College and District planning and budgeting process.

IV. **OTHER**
Please feel free to provide any additional information about your unit/area below.