**Spring 2014**

**Comprehensive Program Review**

**Language Arts Division**

**Dean’s Summary**

**Description of Division**

The Language Arts Division is comprised of the Departments of English, English as a Second Language (ESL), Journalism, Reading, and Speech/Communication. The English Department offers courses in English Writing (EWRT) and Literature (ELIT). The Technical Writing Program was eliminated during the budget cuts of 2011-12 and 2012-13. In the fall quarter of 2013, a final section of TWRT64 was offered, allowing the last group of students seeking to complete their program of study. LART courses, which combine basic skills English and Reading curriculum into a learning community, are also housed in the Division. In addition, the Language Arts Division coordinates, supports, and maintains two computer labs that serve the entire Language Arts Division, and a third computer lab dedicated to the Journalism Program and *La Voz*, the student and college newspaper.

**Enrollment Trends**

The need and demand for Language Arts Division courses remains strong, with total enrollments approaching 30,000 per year. The largest growth in the Division was in the basic skills; this growth can be most easily seen in Reading and LART. Although hampered by the reductions and showing no growth from 2010-11 to 2011-12, Reading FTES grew by 10% in the following year, and the FTES in LART grew a remarkable 27.5% over the two-year period from 2010-11 to 2012-13. This large growth in LART and READ demonstrates the enormous and rapidly growing demand for our core basic skills courses. The growth in FTES in LART courses may partially explain the minimal growth in English Writing (EWRT) courses, which was largely unchanged from 2010-11 through 2012-13. For some students in our target populations, the more intensive LART courses and their higher success rates are a more appealing alternative than the separate reading and writing courses.

Target populations grew at a significantly higher rate than non-targeted populations in most Language Arts Division programs. In ESL, which has a smaller percentage of targeted population students due to the nature of the program, targeted population students grew by 5%, compared to no change in the non-targeted populations in two years. Targeted populations in Speech/Communications grew 17% over the two-year period from 2010-11 through 2012-13, they grew 10% in Journalism, and they grew a remarkable 46% in English Literature (ELIT). The growth in target populations in basic skills courses was even more dramatic; in the two-year period from 2010-11 through 2012-13, target populations grew by 55% in Reading from 738 to 1,146 and by 90% from 273 to 513 in LART. The trend appears to be consistent in all basic skills courses, although the enrollment data for basic skills courses in English Writing (EWRT) is not disaggregated from the transfer level. These changing demographics present a clear case for greater investment in basic skills courses and support.

**Student Success and Equity**

The percent of successful grades among targeted populations for the whole of the Language Arts Division was relatively consistent during the three-year period from 2010-11 through 2012-13, rising from 74% to 76% and falling back to 74%, even as the total number of grades given to targeted populations grew steadily and dramatically during the same period. Non-targeted populations saw a similarly consistent trajectory in the percent of successful students (82% to 83% to 82%), with a slight decline in total number of grades given. Notably, the rapid growth in the targeted populations, from 7,298 in 2010-11 to 9,559 in 2012-13, a 31% increase, did not adversely affect the equity gap.

Because of the growth in targeted populations and the increased demand these students place on our core basic skills courses, additional effort in the form of staff and faculty development and increased access to student support that specifically addresses the needs of these students is necessary in order to close the equity gap further. Because of the correlation between the growth in target populations and the demand for basic skills courses, closing the equity gap at the basic skills level will lead to narrowing of the equity gap in other programs. Current work being done in college-wide committees including DARE, SSSP, and the EAC presents an alignment of approaches and efforts that has the potential to close the equity gap across many disciplines. Similarly, greater coordination between and among Language Arts Division instructional programs, Student Success & Retention Services, the Student Success Center, Learning in Communities, and other support programs is vital to our equity efforts.

The impact on equity that strong support for basic skills students produces is clearly evident in one especially noteworthy success. In 2012-13, following years of gradual narrowing of the equity gap in LART courses, targeted student populations succeeded at a higher percentage (86%) than non-targeted student populations (85%). Having shown that the equity gap can be closed, the next task we have is determining how to sustain this success and to replicate it in other programs.

**Staff and Faculty Levels**

Years of budget cuts have severely impacted staffing levels in the Language Arts Division. At the beginning of this program review cycle, there were four full-time classified professionals in the Language Arts Division. Two of these positions have been eliminated due to budget reductions. The loss of one of two division assistants in 2009-2010 has had a severe impact on the amount of support that the Division Office can provide to faculty, staff, and students. The elimination of the learning lab/student publications assistant position at the end of 2012-13 has meant the loss of evening support for the computer labs, as well as the loss of program and lab support for the Journalism program and *La Voz*. Although difficult to measure, the full impact of the loss of these positions is greatest on students and faculty who have the greatest need, evening and part-time students and faculty and those who are otherwise marginalized.

Budget cuts have also impacted faculty levels in the Division. Although we have had modest growth in overall FTEF and enrollment, the percentage of instruction taught by full-time faculty has declined steadily reaching a low of 32% in 2012-13. Full-time percent of load is 5% below that of the whole college and is declining at a faster rate. The departments with the lowest full-time percentage, READ (28%) and EWRT (27%), are also declining at the fastest rates (-10.5% and -11.4%, respectively). During the 2011-12 budget reductions, the Reading Department lost a full-time position to reductions. A growth position is requested to meet the rapidly growing demand for Reading courses as the demographics of the College change. The English Department is currently seeking to fill two recently approved positions that will help meet the growing demand for basic skills courses. Two additional replacement positions and one growth position are needed to support the success of the changing student population. Like Reading and English, the Speech Department has a markedly low full-time percentage of instruction (29%), and is requesting one growth position to support its equity goals. The ESL Department, which has had three full-time retirements during this program review cycle, is also below the college-wide full-time percentage (37%), and is seeking replacement positions to meet the needs of increasing immigrant and international student populations.

The declining full-time percentage of instruction in the Language Arts Division is greatest in the basic skills areas and is a formidable threat to progress in closing the student success equity gap. Sadly, the declining percentage of instruction in basic skills reading and writing by full-time faculty is happening concurrently with increased demand and rapid growth in the target student populations. Continuation of these trends will test the institution’s commitment to equity and student success. Additional full-time faculty in Language Arts will help to restore and maintain vital basic skills and transfer courses and programs and are essential to achieving the equity objectives of the departments and the Division.

**Equipment and Facilities**

Improved use of technology-enhanced instruction, whether in a traditional face-to-face class, a hybrid class, or a fully online class, is vital to the success of our programs and our students. Replacing/upgrading existing equipment in classrooms and labs and adding state-of-the-art equipment to keep pace with social change and assure our students and graduates are well prepared to succeed in employment or after transfer. Much of our multimedia equipment is more than five years old and is not industry standard. A short list of the most pressing needs follows.

* Upgraded and/or refreshed multimedia stations for many of the classrooms in the L-Quad, including L4 building, L3 building, L-73A
* New multimedia and updated furniture in the Division Conference Room for student and faculty training and development, demonstration, meetings, and collaboration among colleagues here and at other institutions
* 100 new headphones for use by ESL students in the relocated labs in AT305 and AT307
* Thirty iPads or other tablet computers to teach students newsgathering and digital journalism
* Upgraded digital recording equipment in the dedicated Speech classrooms and a portable recording panel to meet the demands of enrollment growth
* Sound abatement panels or other sound mitigation for classrooms in L4 in order to reduce sound carryover that can disrupt student performance or instruction in Journalism and Speech classes
* Multimedia upgrades to the Journalism Lab, including a large networked flat panel monitor/smart monitor
* Interactive language software for ESL students in the ATC labs
* Replacement of the majority of chalkboards in the L-Quad with white boards to reduce dust allergens and protect computers and multimedia equipment

**Other Budget Needs**

B-Budget augmentation is needed for staff and faculty development for technology enhanced instruction, better alignment of courses and norming standards, to encourage part-time faculty to attend department/division retreats, and to meet division/department equity objectives.

There is a clear need to maintain the augmentations for printing for the departments at current levels for transfer level courses and programs and increasing the printing budgets for basic skills courses and programs.

Ongoing funds are needed for better coordination among the cohort programs and to provide peer mentors for students in basic skills courses in EWRT, READ, LART, and ESL.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Shifting demographics have created a growing demand for basic skills courses. At the same time, meeting the needs of a changing student population challenge instructors in all courses to make their classroom more inclusive. Rapid changes in technology and communication add an additional layer of complexity to instruction. Students are often more familiar with emerging technology but lack the understanding of how and when to use different tools and applications for academic purposes. Varying degrees of access to technology and digital resources have a disproportionate impact on minorities and working class students, increasing the need for an investment in equity that reaches across departments and divisions. Faculty and staff need to be supported in the adoption of new and existing technology and in the development of more inclusive pedagogies and teaching methods. Each of these challenges is also an opportunity; there is a clear correlation between the increase in diversity of the students and staff and the opportunity to foster inclusiveness and promote equity in our classes and on our campus.