

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE**  
**PROGRAM REVIEW**  
**STUDENT SERVICES**  
**ASSESSMENT/TESTING CENTER**  
**FALL 2011**

**Program Description**

1. Describe the program emphasizing the program's objectives and how the program supports the college's mission and vision statements, strategic initiatives, and core competencies.

**PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:** Assessment and Testing is the second of the four steps of Matriculation. Thusly, most new full-time students enrolling into El Camino College come to the Assessment/Testing Center to complete their placement testing for the purpose of their educational planning. Also served are part-time, non-matriculants who may need or wish to avail themselves of the same service. Testing data is made available Campus-wide via Colleague, so that it may be used for both counseling and registration purposes.

**SUPPORT OF COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT:** The College's Mission Statement places emphasis upon ensuring the educational success of students. The best way that the Testing Center can do that is to provide all students an appropriate testing ambiance and to seek out ways to encourage them to pre-prepare, so that they may receive accurate test results.

**SUPPORT OF COLLEGE'S VISION STATEMENT:** The College's Vision places emphasis upon the creation of a positive student environment—one that incorporates respect, integrity, and excellence. To that end, the Testing Center respectfully offers each student both open-access to a testing experience that is equitable, as well as a process that has integrity through the use of standardized rules of testing.

**SUPPORT OF COLLEGE'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:** Most of the efforts of the Testing Center are aligned with Strategic Initiatives B, E, F, and G, and indirectly with Strategic Initiative A.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE A:** In order to “enhance teaching to support learning using a variety of instructional methods”, the Testing Lab is utilized for testing purposes by various entities on campus. These include the Nursing Department (diagnostic and program admission exams for Nursing), the International Student Program (ISP) (English, Math, and ESL placement tests), the El Camino Language Academy (English, Math, and ESL placement tests; Institutional TOEFL), the Math Academy (Math placement test), and the Urban Teacher Fellowship Program (UTF) (English and Math placement tests).

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE B: In order to “strengthen quality educational and support services to promote student success”, the Testing Center provides access to placement testing. Without the existence of this support service, students would not know their placement levels for English, Math, ESL, or Chemistry and, no doubt, would register into multiple incorrect courses. A disastrous situation would present itself in that most hard pre-requisites would not be followed. Additionally, the Testing Center has attempted to utilize different methods of making students aware of what topics are covered on the placement tests and to encourage them to pre-review (or re-review) prior to taking the placement tests. Examples: Much testing information is offered via the Testing Webpage, in regard to test descriptions, links to sample test questions, as well as other useful website links. Hard-copy handouts have also been made available at the Testing Center, the Counseling Center, and other locations on campus, such as the Humanities and Mathematics Division Offices. Lastly, in the Spring Semester, the Testing Center works in tandem with the Office of Outreach and School Relations in an effort to deliver as many tests on-line as possible to students off-campus in preparation for Fall semester registration.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE E: In order to “improve processes, programs, and services through the effective use of assessment, program review, planning, and resource allocation”, the Testing Center has continually striven, through on-going self-evaluation, to make testing procedures and services flow as efficiently as possible. To this end, over the last several years, these procedures have been successfully improved upon via the information garnered through customer satisfaction surveys. These surveys have helped the Testing Center see itself through the eyes of the student. In planning for the future, more efficient ways of delivering tests will be sought out—such as, whenever possible, converting from paper-and-pencil versions to on-line tests. Additionally, there are always staffing concerns. One should note that much of any procedural efficiency is closely linked to adequate staffing. During the last few years, due to budget issues, it has been a constant struggle to maintain appropriate staffing by way of juggling hours and allotted dollars. Without appropriate staffing, the best laid procedures will fail.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE F: In order to “support facility and technology improvements to meet the needs of students, employees, and the community”, every five to six years, as appropriate and as budget permits, all computer equipment in the Testing Lab and Testing Center is completely replaced and upgraded. This replacement must occur on a regular basis, as after a certain length of time, the heavily used equipment begins to fail more and more often, which can have a highly negative effect upon the testing process. When repair parts become unavailable, the number of working computer stations is quickly reduced.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE G:** In order to “promote processes and policies that move the College toward sustainable, environmentally sensitive practices”, over the last few years, we have repeatedly requested an imaging machine, which will allow us to “go green” and become a cleaner and more efficient “paperless” office. This request has finally been granted for the 2010-11 school year.

**SUPPORT OF CORE COMPETENCIES:** The student support service of Assessment and Testing is linked, more or less, to three of the Core Competencies. The first of these is that of Content Knowledge--the student utilizes whatever knowledge, skills, and abilities they have developed and acquired throughout their academic life to help them perform as well as they can on the placement tests in order to obtain their initial placement levels into English, Math, ESL, and Chemistry. Pre-reviewing can be part of this knowledge. The second core competency is that of Critical, Creative and Analytical Thinking—although the student utilizes these particular skills more fully in a classroom setting, they might possibly invoke these processes to a somewhat limited extent when taking some of their placement tests (e.g. Reading Comprehension). The last core competency is that of Professional and Personal Growth—it is hoped that students taking the placement tests will step up and exhibit responsible behavior and personal integrity by not attempting to cheat on the tests and will be honest in all their dealings with all entities on campus, including the Testing Center.

2. Describe the student population served by the program using available data.

The student population served by the Testing Center is drawn from that of the District’s own diverse community. Based upon data gathered from ACCUPLACER during our most recent peak period of testing (July/August 2010), the majority of students come from the following ethnic groups (Black or African American, 26.97%; Mexican or Mexican American, 19.62%; Other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American, 16.58%; Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander, 15.27%; White, 8.93%; and Other, 12.63%). Most are high school graduates (82.35%); a little more than half are male (51.32%); a huge majority intend to apply for Federal Financial Aid (75.66%); and just over half speak English only (51.23%), another language (26.31%), or English and another language (20.90%).

3. What happens after students participate in the program’s activities? If applicable, address whether students are successful in meeting their educational goals.

After completing their placement exams, new students are immediately referred to the Counseling Center for further information regarding orientation and counseling. Part-time, continuing, or returning students would go to the Counseling Center, as needed or required. Once there, they can discuss their test placement results with a counselor. After that, students can enroll into courses applicable toward their educational goal. Studies which

ascertain whether or not students have been successful in meeting their educational goals are conducted by the Institutional Research Office.

4. List notable achievements that were linked to the College's Strategic Initiatives that have occurred since the last program review.

#### **Filled vacant positions (Strategic Initiative E)**

The most important issue addressed by students in the last program review was the need for more staff coverage in the Testing Center and Testing Lab. Since 2006, two classified employees retired from the Testing Office, and there has been a 50% attrition rate in the non-certificated (non-cert) pool of hourly employees. However, circumstances have been favorable between then and now and replacement of both classified employees took place. The replacement of two full-time employees has been our most important and notable achievement, as budget cuts have not always made such actions possible. As well, we have been able to add one more employee to the hourly non-cert pool. (In the heyday of the Testing Center, when it was open five days a week with 40 hours of available testing time, there were eight non-certs in the staffing pool. When hours were reduced to being open four days a week with 25 hours of available testing time, this number dwindled down to four and, thankfully, is now up to five.)

#### **Dissemination of Testing Information (Strategic Initiative B)**

The next notable achievement has been the development and dissemination of testing information hand-outs, intended as an assist in encouraging students to pre-review before testing or re-testing. It is also one of the items that students specifically requested in our last program review customer satisfaction survey. To this end, the Testing Webpage was thoroughly revised and expanded and informational handouts were made available at various campus locations. Additionally, the Office of Outreach and School Relations has offered to disseminate online testing information to the District's high school population.

#### **Increased Off-Campus On-Line Testing (Strategic Initiative E)**

Since the last program review, off-campus on-line testing in the Spring semester has increased. This testing opportunity helps to facilitate Fall semester registration and reduce the number of students who test in July and August for Fall enrollment. However, the amount of this testing has fluctuated somewhat from year to year, as it is always dependent upon the current year's budget allocation for testing, counseling, and campus recruiting staff.

#### **Testing Facilities Provided For Other Campus Entities (Strategic Initiative A)**

In the last few years, the Testing Center has provided or arranged for the necessary testing facilities for the Nursing Department, the International Student Program, the El Camino Language Academy, the Math Academy, and the Urban Teacher Fellowship Program.

### **New Equipment (Strategic Initiatives F & G)**

At the time of our last program review, it was mentioned that an imaging machine had been requested in order for us to become a more efficient “paperless office”. Now, five years later, the dollars have finally become available to acquire both an imaging machine for the office and the replacement of computer equipment in both the Testing Lab and the Testing Center.

### **New Signage (Strategic Initiative E)**

New hallway signage and a color-coded painting scheme will soon be in place, so that students may more easily differentiate between the Assessment/Testing Center and the Financial Aid Office, which are located next door to each other. (This was suggested by students in the last program review survey.) The Financial Aid Office has a very lengthy line and often students seeking to take the placement tests inadvertently get into their line by mistake.

5. What prior program review recommendations were not implemented, if any, and why? What was the impact on the program and the students?

There are two items. One was the delay in the acquisition of an imaging machine, and the other dealt with the conversion of the paper-and-pencil DRP to the on-line eDRP.

At the present time, an imaging machine is on order, so that issue has been resolved.

However, although the on-line version of the DRP was purchased, its deployment has not moved forward for two reasons--technical issues (an applet required to be downloaded on each computer station would not download onto approximately a dozen of the stations) and procedural disagreement with the Nursing Department as to whether the test should be offered timed or untimed. At this time, the issue of using the eDRP is defunct. The intent of using the on-line version was to create convenience for both students and staff. It was thought to use the eDRP in the same manner as ACCUPLACER—on a drop-in basis and untimed. The test can only be done on a continual drop-in basis if it is given untimed. Otherwise, if ten students came in within an hour and wanted to take it, a separate hand-timer would be needed for each student, as the time cannot be set on the individual computer station. This would not be practical. The Nursing Department maintains that the DRP must remain a timed test, whether it is the paper-and-pencil or on-line version. To utilize it timed would necessitate that students would still need to come in to obtain an appointment and come back another day for the test. All test-takers would need to appear at the same time. Late-comers could not be accommodated, and a proctor would need to stay with a master computer to manage the administrations and to end the test within the allotted time-frame. This would not be any more convenient for either students or staff than it is now; thusly, there is a stalemate regarding use of the eDRP. This issue needs to be resolved with the new Director of Nursing. It remains to be seen if the new Director will feel the same about the

timing issue or if, through informed discussion, a procedural change might be effected, which would allow the test to be administered to students untimed.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)**

1. Describe how program personnel are engaged in the creation, discussion, and review of SLO - statements, assessment results, and reports.

Since the supervisor of the Testing Center attends various meetings and is made aware and kept up-to-date regarding various trends and needs of the College, it is generally this person who formulates possible ideas for the Testing Center SLO's, analyzes the assessment results, and writes the reports. (SLO's for testing are hard to come by, so the SLOs tend to hover around the same aspect of testing, but with a slightly different spin each time.) Engagement of program personnel occurs at the point when a possible SLO has been identified. The supervisor runs the SLO topic past the staff in order to obtain in-put, solicit other ideas, and answer questions about the SLO process. After the SLO is put into place, the Testing Staff assists in the daily collection of student data via an SLO customer survey. Throughout the process, information regarding the progress of our SLO is shared on a regular basis at Enrollment Services Division Council meetings. Lastly, when the SLO is nearly ready for submission, it is presented to the Testing Staff once again for their reaction and additional in-put.

2. How does the program ensure that SLO's are assessed consistently?

Survey questions have always been used over a specified period of time. The results of these questions are then thoroughly evaluated and, if possible, compared to the previous year's responses. We have generally used paper surveys that the students fill in after they complete their tests. These forms are printed up and later processed by Institutional Research, which subsequently furnishes the Testing Center with a statistical breakdown to be used for SLO analysis and reporting. However, this year, an on-line survey is being utilized, which appears directly after the test. The results of this year's survey can then be downloaded into a spreadsheet for analysis.

3. Have the SLO assessment results indicated the need to change or modify components of the program? If so, were the changes implemented?

For the most part, the Testing Center SLO's have dealt in one way or another in regard to encouraging students to prepare for their tests--placement and/or Ability-To-Benefit (ATB). The process will only work if students can be persuaded to prepare for the tests. Thusly, the Testing Center results have not always come out with a highly favorable result. This year's SLO is targeting students who must take and pass an ATB Test in order to get their Financial

Aid. ATB testing information, which is handed out by the Financial Aid Office, was recently revised and simplified by the Testing Center. Students are being referred to specific websites for review and being told to do this review before they come to test. However, survey results for the current SLO are coming back with students indicating, yes, they received the information regarding pre-review, but did nothing with it. There needs to be a hard requirement for all students to do review or to offer some sort of “reward” for completing the pre-review. The majority of students simply do not realize the importance placement results will have on their time in college. The only changes that have been implemented to the program have not been per the results of the SLO’s, but in the preparation of executing the SLO’s. For example, the Testing Webpage was revised to include more testing information. Hand-outs comprised of sample test questions and other testing information were printed up and widely disseminated on campus. Lastly, it should be noted that in the very near future, students are going to be instructed on a global basis that they must prepare before taking their placement tests. It remains to be seen how much of a difference this official request will make to students.

### **Program Improvement**

Explain what changes need to be considered to improve the program.

1. What activities has the program engaged in to improve services to students?

As mentioned previously, the Testing Center acted upon several of the suggestions offered by students during the 2006 program review survey. Some of these improvements have included maintaining appropriate levels of staff coverage by re-filling the two classified positions vacated through retirements, as well as augmenting the non-cert pool of employees; revising verbal and written instructions for clarity and ease of understanding; accommodating students with disabilities as often as needed in the Special Resource Center; posting re-test procedures on the Testing Webpage; shortening the out-going message on the office voice-mail; providing students with links to sample questions and study websites; and distributing testing information to varied locations on campus, including the highly utilized and centralized Counseling Center. In addition, in 2008, testing information was added to the LCD screens in the lobby of the Student Services Center Building, above the Information Desk. Continuing on into the near future, there will be installation of new hallway signage, including a color-coded location scheme, in order to alleviate the long-time problem of students who wish to test getting into the next-door financial aid line by mistake.

2. How have program personnel used metrics to improve program services? (Provide metrics from the last four years).

Overall, testing metrics can be used both in general and specific ways. In a general fashion, they have proved to be a valuable indicator--when testing numbers rise, so do registration numbers, and the opposite is true, as well. This information thusly alerts the school to the impending number of students to expect, and the institution may react accordingly. For example, in regard to improving services, these metrics can be analyzed more closely, calculations made, and breakdowns provided to a division office, such as Humanities, in order to aid in their decision-making process regarding whether or not to add or delete course sections, following the trend of student test placements. Without this valuable information being imparted to the division, many students could possibly end up without a full program, as not enough sections would be provided to handle the volume. In regard to staffing, metrics from the previous year are invaluable for working out a staffing schedule for as far ahead as a year and for accurately calculating accompanying budgetary needs. Such detailed future planning is highly necessary to prepare for the efficient processing of students through the Testing Center at peak and other times throughout the year.

3. If applicable, explain any patterns in student success, retention, and persistence in terms of student characteristics and program objectives and discuss planned responses or changes.

The integrity of the testing program is safeguarded and supported by the College's Institutional Research Office, which completes validation and disproportionate impact studies on a periodic basis. These studies ensure that the testing instruments are being used properly and that any possible bias in their make-up does not adversely affect student placements. Periodic assessment validation is moving forward and should be completed this Spring 2011. In addition, cut-off scores and accompanying placements are tweaked on an as-needed basis in order to fine-tune the results. Most certainly, without these studies and adjustments, students would be inappropriately placed. This would perpetuate far into the future long-term negative issues related to student success, retention, and persistence.

### **Program Environment**

1. Discuss the program environment, including the relationship among program staff and students and involvement with other programs or support areas.

The Testing Program is an integral part of the Matriculation process with a multitude of customers queuing up daily for placement test services. Each employee in the Testing Center serves a particular function. The Assessment/Testing Center Assistant is responsible for the technical aspects of the testing program, which include programming the testing set-up (ACCUPLACER), uploading all data for El Camino College and the Compton Center (DATATEL Colleague), training new users on the ACCUPLACER System, as well as working the front counter with the other two classified employees. All three assistants are front-line employees, who interact directly with students who come to test. They sign-up students to test, answer questions, provide test results, answer the phones, look up past records and provide copies to students, process all paperwork, etc. When times become



exceedingly busy, the hourly Non-Certificated employees are scheduled in support of the permanent staff and perform the same tasks as they do. Their work schedules range from one day per week to four or five days, depending upon the volume of students needing to be tested. Lastly, there is the ESL Coordinator (75% Testing and 25% Humanities Division funded) who handles all students needing ESL assessment. The Coordinator works out a schedule with ESL faculty members who participate in the assessment process by doing both the oral interviews and grading the writing samples. In addition, this person is responsible for managing all ESL testing and orientation sessions, as well as entering all test results from the sessions into Colleague. During peak periods, the Coordinator also assists ESL students in registering.

The Testing Center interacts with several other programs and support areas: Humanities Division (supply metrics), Math Division (provide testing facilities for special projects and groups), Nursing Department (provide testing facilities for special on-line nursing exams), International Student Program (provide placement testing for all new incoming international students twice per year), El Camino Language Academy (provide placement testing and the Institutional TOEFL test), Behavioral and Social Sciences Division (provide placement testing for Urban Teacher Fellowship students), Office of Outreach and School Relations (interact regarding off-campus on-line testing during the Spring semester), Counseling Center (refer students after completing placement tests; provide large testing room for counseling workshops), and Admissions Office (update testing information distributed by Admissions to students; request assistance regarding individual students).

2. Describe the number and type of staff and faculty (include current organizational chart).

The Testing Center is under the direction of a Supervisor, who has a classified staff of three full-time clerical employees [Assessment/Testing Center Assistant (1), Clerical Assistants (2), Non-Certificated (Non-Cert) hourly employees (5), and an ESL Coordinator (1)]. The Supervisor reports to the Dean of Enrollment Services, who in turn, reports to the Vice-President of Student and Community Advancement.

3. Describe facilities or equipment needs for the next four years.

Plans for a new Student Services Center Building have been added to the Master Plan. The construction of the new building should be completed approximately six years from now. Until then, the Testing Center staff are very happy with the facilities in which they are currently housed. Presently on order is new computer equipment for the Testing Center and Testing Lab, as well as an Imaging Machine. The replacement cycle generally runs on a five-year basis--the last equipment was installed mid-year 2005. At present, all the rest of the office equipment (fax, shredder, copiers, etc.) are functioning just as they should. At present, the Testing Center has no additional facility or equipment needs.

4. Describe how well the scheduled hours of availability meet student demand and indicate the specific hours the program operates.

Beginning with the Summer of 2008, all student services operating hours were changed. Budgetary concerns prompted the change, as well as a desire to align all office hours to be the same in the Student Services Center. We have two separate sets of hours, one for the Office and one for Testing.

| <u>Office Hours</u> |                 | <u>Testing Sign-Up Hours</u> |                  |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Mon/Tues/Thurs      | 9:00am – 6:00pm | Mon/Tues/Thurs               | 10:00am – 4:00pm |
| Wed                 | 9:00am – 7:00pm | Wed                          | 10:00am – 5:00pm |
| Fri                 | CLOSED          | Fri                          | CLOSED           |

At the time of the last program review (2006), the Testing Center had more expansive hours and was also open on Friday mornings for testing, which provided a total of 40 available testing hours per week, from mid-morning to mid-evening. A customer survey was conducted in 2000 and 2006 (with these more expansive testing hours). In 2000, 75% of the students indicated satisfaction with the hours, and in 2006, 89% indicated satisfaction with the hours. At the present time, there is a total of 33 available testing hours per week. The latest customer survey for Fall of 2010 shows that 98% of students currently indicate a satisfaction with these hours. It should also be noted that there is an unadvertised flexibility in the testing hours, which we put into effect on a case-by-case basis. If a student arrives after the sign-up cut-off time, we may offer him/her the option of being able to take one test (instead of two) or perhaps one section, depending upon how late he/she has arrived. The student may come back another day to take a second test, if required. It is also important to realize that in order for the testing data to be prepared for upload later that evening and for any necessary computer maintenance to be completed, testing must end preferably one hour before the actual office closing time. If we normally stop taking names at 5:00pm and the office closes at 7:00pm, we would like to start the necessary processes no later than 6:00pm. The later things run, the tighter timeframe there is for getting the upload readied for submission that night. The time needed will vary depending upon how many students were tested during the day.

5. Describe the influences that external factors such as state laws, changing demographics, and the characteristics of the students served have on the program and services and how the program addresses these factors.

Occasionally, external factors can exert either a slight or a considerable influence on the processes of the Testing Center. For example, newly enacted laws, California Assembly Bills, or the State Budget can have an immediate effect in regard to the range of students to be tested and the approved testing instruments to be used. Changing demographics and academic characteristics of the students can perhaps affect the levels of classes to be offered

and may require the adjustment of placement cut-off scores. These major types of changes would also necessitate programming modifications within the ACCUPLACER testing set-ups for El Camino College and the Compton Center and within Colleague (pre-requisite changes and data uploading issues). In these situations, the Testing Center would work very closely with ACCUPLACER and ITS (Information Technology Services) to effect all necessary changes.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Present a brief summary of the program's strengths and areas for improvement. List all recommendations in a prioritized manner for subsequent placement into the program's annual plan.

1. Summarize the program's strength and areas that need improvement.

The Testing Program does not have a single over-riding strength, but several which support it. Firstly, students are provided with a state-of-the-art testing experience, which includes up-to-date equipment\*, as well as user-friendly testing software, and the proper atmosphere in which to take their tests. Students may test on a drop-in basis with results becoming available immediately after completion of testing. Lastly, the testing data can be easily uploaded to Colleague on a daily basis.

On the other hand, what can be considered strengths can also become weaknesses. Computers and websites are wonderful when they function as they should. However, power outages, the crashing of servers, and a multitude of other unanticipated events can cause computer systems to go awry. Luckily, these problems occur rarely, but when they do, students are very much inconvenienced and a smoothly running process is suddenly thrown into chaos. However, having said that, one would still never wish to return to the days of scheduling, administering, scoring, and filing hundreds and hundreds of paper-and-pencil tests--a grueling and tedious task at best.

\*New upgraded equipment should be installed in early Spring 2011.

2. List prioritized recommendations. (Provide proposed organizational chart if appropriate).

The only adamant recommendation is that \$10,000 be restored to the Testing Center's non-certificated account. In 2008-09, the budget for the non-cert account was \$80,664. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, the Testing Office was asked to work with a 30% reduction, which reduced it to \$56,464.80. Additional amounts have had to be requested for both the last fiscal year and the current one in order to make ends meet. The additional amounts needed for the current fiscal year total to approximately \$10,000. (This includes

increments requested and received for July, August, and for the remainder of the year.) Instead of requesting the additional amounts piece-meal, the entire total might as well be restored as a lump-sum. To be sure, when scheduling staff, no hours are wasted and calculations are tallied to the penny. Dollars are not frivolously spent in the Testing Center. Testing numbers continue to be strong and, to put it into simple terms, a more adequate budget is needed in the very near future for the Testing Center and Testing Lab to function adequately.

In regard to other items, there are no further recommendations. The Testing Center seems to have reached a happy plateau at the present time--the facilities are fine, staffing is adequate, and new equipment is on its way. In the coming months, the Testing Center will be working with the appropriate parties in fine-tuning the assessment process (i.e. getting mandatory pre-review issues in place) and will continue striving to maintain an efficiently run testing facility.

3. ☒ Continue Program

☐ Discontinue Program (Explain how the program's services could be handled by other services on campus if the program has been declining or is no longer fully utilized.)