CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND
LOS ANGELES
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

#88-0007
Cognitive Skills Development

The Cognitive Skills Development Program (CSDP) is designed to shadow the Women's Vocational Improvement Program already in existence at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. Upon completing the Women's VIP class, seventy-five percent of the participants return to college for further preparation for meeting career goals. Research has suggested that cognitive skill development, an increase in self-esteem, learning skills and motivation are the very skills reentry adult women need to become successful college students and, subsequently, successful employees.
Cognitive Skills Development Project

The Cognitive Skills Development Program (CSDP) is designed to shadow the Women's Vocational Improvement Program (V.I.P.) already in existence at the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. Upon completing the Women's V.I.P. class, seventy-five percent of the participants return to college as a tool to reach career goals. For this reason, CSDP has been developed as a follow up to the Women's V.I.P. class. CSDP is based upon the hypothesis that metacognition and self-monitoring can increase self-esteem, learning skills, and motivation while decreasing performance anxiety. Research has suggested that these are the very skills that re-entry adults need to become successful college students. Cognitive skills development also instills for the disadvantaged student a sense of power or an internal locus of control over the learning environment.

The objectives of the project are (1) to develop a comprehensive program of recruitment, instruction, staff development, and evaluation for the Cognitive Skills Development Program (2) to develop a cognitive skills curriculum which consists of the following: cognitive mapping, memory retention, concentration enhancement, problem solving skills, algorithms, behavioral objectives, learning strategies, math/test anxiety, retroactive/proactive interference, abstract reasoning, stimulus generalization, the effects of reinforcement, and motivation (3) to develop with each participant a future academic and career strategy by the end of each ten-week program. The strategies will include further education plans and future employment goals while addressing the special needs of the participants to become successful college students (retention and matriculation) (4) to develop in-house an external evaluation process (formative and summative) to assess the effectiveness of the CSDP. The Equity Re-entry Center's Advisory Board will be utilized to fulfill this objective.

The activities of the CSDP will be aimed at aiding in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum and instruction of the program. The major thrust of the program's activities will be in the evaluation of the effectiveness of cognitive skill acquisition on participant self-esteem and academic performance.

This project will contribute to increasing both the number and matriculation of underrepresented students in the community college system. In this specific case, the target population is designated to be the female re-entry and/or disadvantaged student.
The Director of the Equity Re-entry Center will assess program effectiveness and write a formal report in relation to those needs and objectives identified at the project's inception. The Equity Re-entry Center's Advisory Committee will evaluate the program objectives and approve the final report.

The Director is seeking from the Fund For Instructional Improvement $9,972. The in-kind contribution will be $8,860.
Cognitive Skills Development Project

1. Specific Educational Program Being Addressed

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR SERVICE Addressed

The purpose of this project, as related to Educational Code 84381, Programs, is to establish a program to assist in the retention and matriculation of under-represented community college students. The Cognitive Skills Development Program (CSDP) is designed to shadow the Women's Vocational Improvement Program (V.I.P.) already in existence at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College (hereafter referred to as LAT-TC). The Women's V.I.P. was initiated five years ago and is designed to increase the self-esteem of female participants. The mean age of women participating in the V.I.P. program is 42 years. Upon completing the Women's V.I.P. class, seventy-five percent of the participants return to college as a tool to reach career goals. For this reason, CSDP has been developed as a follow up to the Women's V.I.P. class. CSDP is based upon the hypothesis that metacognition (critical thinking) and self-monitoring can increase self-esteem, motivation, and learning skills while decreasing performance anxiety.

Performance anxiety or the stress that often interferes with a student's success in college, is an important variable when considering the retention and matriculation of the re-entry student. The alleviation of stress associated with re-entering college is necessary to promote the wellness and success of the adult student. When the student can focus less energy upon performance anxieties and focus more energy upon academics, the result is usually the successful completion of the assigned task.

One of the ways to decrease performance anxiety of the re-entry student is to provide her with the cognitive and motivational skills that are necessary to promote self confidence and self-esteem. Variables to consider when attempting to decrease the performance anxiety of the re-entry student are the student's familiarity with the educational system and the awareness of her learning style and expectations. The instruction of cognitive and motivational skills can facilitate both the personal and academic growth of the re-entry adult.
Metacognition or knowledge of one’s own learning process has been shown to increase learning capacity by allowing students to retain and apply vast quantities of novel information. The key to the success of metacognition is based upon the theory of learning strategies. Learning strategies are defined to be the rules, procedures, and algorithms that students follow to combine subtasks into meaningful solutions. Rather than teaching specific study skills or tutoring, CSDP would focus upon teaching cognitive processing skills which are more general in application. For example, instead of remediating a specific learning difficulty, cognitive processing skills provide the student with a general understanding of problem solving strategies. An additional benefit of teaching cognitive skills is that it is helpful in decreasing fear of exposure, which many disadvantaged re-entry adults may experience. Cognitive skills development also instills for the disadvantaged student a sense of power or an internal locus of control over the learning environment.

BASIC AGENDA

The Cognitive Skills Development Program (CSDP) reflects the rationale described in Objective C - Student Access and Success, of the 1987-1988 Board of Governors’ Agenda. The main thrust of the CSDP is to fulfill the educational needs of disadvantaged re-entry women while providing them with the motivation and capacity for meeting the standards that are necessary for them to become successful college students. In this specific case, successful college student implies both the retention and matriculation of students re-entering the community college system. The CSDP focuses primarily on the initiative of Objective C; under-represented students (disadvantaged re-entry women) and the unmet needs in services for these under-represented students. Cognitive skills instruction, traditionally, has not been incorporated into the community college curriculum as a service for students, and hence the CSDP is a new developmental program.
2. Specific Problems Being Addressed

SPECIFIC PROBLEM

Traditionally, women have been victims of economic loss and social change. As a result of such changes, women may be suddenly forced to become self-supporting. For example, with high divorce rates, many women have assumed total economic responsibility for their families. However, women also share a sex role socialization that often discourages them from independent participation in American society. Therefore, women who seek employment often lack the necessary skills to do so. These women may also suffer from low self-esteem, loss of self confidence, and the fear of not being able to support themselves and their families.

Another variable to consider is that many re-entry women may also be economically, academically, or culturally disadvantaged. Research has shown that re-entry for the disadvantaged adult can be a frightening and difficult experience. Women who traditionally have been discouraged from achieving outside of the home may not possess the knowledge, confidence, and motivation for success. Their expectations are different from those students who have been exposed to the value of academic achievement. The purpose of this program is to provide disadvantaged re-entry women with the cognitive skills necessary for both academic achievement and employment. It is also postulated that, along with skill acquisition, participants will experience an increase in motivation and self-esteem.
3. Population To Be Served

POPULATION SERVED

Los Angeles Community College District serves a geographical area of 882 square miles and approximately four million people. The college is one of nine community colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District and it serves the largest area of any of the nine colleges (see attached map). Because of its unique vocational programs, LAT-TC outreaches its facilities to the outside borders of the county. It is located in central urban Los Angeles and has the following student ethnic distribution.

- Black/Negro 31%
- Oriental/Asian 12%
- Other None-White 9%
- Spanish Surnamed 32%
- Other White 16%

(Demographic data were developed by a 1987 Los Angeles Trade-Technical College self study report.)

Based on the above figures, the women reached by recruitment satisfy the criterion of racial and ethnic minority women (745.24). We are not addressing this priority, but ask the reader to consider this ethnic distribution whenever reference is made to this program's women.

LAT-TC’s vocational history dates back to 1920, when the school was first established. In addition to vocational training, the school boasts a strong Business and General Studies Department. However, due to the excellence of the trade programs, LAT-TC has traditionally attracted more men than women (sixty-three percent men in 1986). There is a recognized need toward increased representation and retention of women, a historically under-represented group. The proposed program will promote educational balance by increasing cognitive skills, and by motivating and raising the self-esteem of disadvantaged, re-entry women.
4. Objectives

OBJECTIVES

1. The Director of the Equity Re-entry Center will direct a comprehensive program of recruitment, instruction, staff development, and evaluation. Project publicity and recruitment using cooperating local community agencies and media will be completed by August 1, 1988, and will result in an initial group of twenty (20) participants identified as either re-entry, single parents, minority, handicapped, or disadvantaged women. The participants will be recruited from previous Women’s V.I.P. classes.

2. A minimum of forty (40) female program participants will be distributed between two equivalent ten-week courses (bi-weekly two hour sessions) designed to instruct them in the following areas: Cognitive mapping, memory retention, concentration enhancement, problem solving skills, algorithms, behavioral objectives, learning strategies, math/test anxiety, retroactive/proactive interference, abstract reasoning, stimulus cues, stimulus generalization, the effects of reinforcement, and motivation.

3. All program participants will design future academic and career strategies by the end of each ten-week program. The strategies will include further education plans and future employment goals while addressing the special needs of the participants to become successful college students (retention and matriculation).

4. To develop in-house an external evaluation process (formative and summative) to assess the effectiveness of the CSDP.
5. Workplan Narrative

ACTIVITIES

1. A Program Instructor will be assigned to this program by the Director of the Equity Re-entry Center and the program mechanism will be in place by September 1, 1988. Existing institutional facilities and staff will be utilized.

2. Presentations describing the program will be made by members of the Equity Re-entry staff to target groups through cooperation with community and social service organizations and agencies.

3. A media campaign using local newspapers and radio, as well as LAT-TC campus publicity will be utilized to make the target population aware of the program. The Equity Re-entry Center Director will be responsible for carrying out this activity, which will require routine office supplies and facilities in-kind by the Equity Re-entry Center.

4. A final report and evaluation will be produced describing the project as well as future program recommendations by June 30, 1989. This report will be disseminated to the Dean of Students at the 106 California Community Colleges.

5. Participants will be interviewed prior to enrollment in the program and advised of the level of commitment expected. The Equity Re-entry Center Director and the Program Instructor will conduct the interviews. Interview summaries will by kept and used to evaluate the effectiveness of the media campaign and curriculum development.

6. To measure the effect of cognitive skill acquisition on participant self-esteem, pre/post tests will be administered. The test to measure self-esteem will be the Coopersmith self-esteem Inventory.

7. To evaluate the progress of cognitive skills acquisition on academic performance, individual skills tests based upon weekly instruction will be administered throughout the ten-week program.

8. Program participants will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires throughout the duration of the project. These questionnaires will aid the program staff in evaluating the project's effectiveness.

9. Upon completion of the ten-week program, each participant will meet individually with the Program Instructor and Equity Re-entry Center Director to develop their academic/career plan.
10. The Director of the Equity Re-entry Center will assess program effectiveness and write a final report in relation to those needs and objectives identified at the project's inception.

11. The Equity Re-entry Center advisory committee will evaluate the program objectives and approve the final report.
6. Expected Outcomes

EXPECTED IMPACT AND TRANSFERABILITY

This project is designed to increase the retention and matriculation of those female community college students who are disadvantaged and/or re-entry adults. The purpose of the program is to instill in the re-entry female a sense of power and confidence over their academic environment. It is postulated that while learning cognitive skills, participants in the CSDP will experience an increase in motivation and self-esteem. As stated previously, the re-entry female often lacks the knowledge, confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to become a successful college student. A lack of motivation and self-esteem has been shown to decrease the success of the re-entry student with the result often being a failure of the student to matriculate. The CSDP program provides the re-entry female with the cognitive skills necessary to become a successful motivated college student. With increased success and motivation comes the likelihood of retention and matriculation. In this case, the CSDP has the potential to increase the motivation and self-esteem of the disadvantaged and/or re-entry female while also increasing the retention and matriculation rate of this under-represented population of community college students.
EVALUATION PLAN

The Director of the Equity Re-entry Center will present a report to the Advisory Committee at the completion of the first year of the project. The report will contain the following data: (1) the evaluation of the effectiveness of the media recruitment campaign and curriculum development (2) the measure of the effect of cognitive skill acquisition on participant self-esteem (3) the measure of the effect of cognitive skill acquisition on academic performance - individual skills test scores based on weekly instruction will be reviewed (4) if seventy-five percent of the participants enter or continue to be enrolled in post-secondary education after the completion of the CSDP, this project will be evaluated as successful (5) a final report and evaluation will be produced describing the project as well as future recommendations by June 30, 1989. The Advisory Committee, assisted by the Director of the Program, will also evaluate the general procedures used in the development and implementation of the program.
8. Dissemination Plan

INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION

The Director of the Equity Re-entry Center and the Program Instructor will prepare a report of the CSDP and send it to the State Chancellor's Office as well as to all of the 106 community colleges in California. This report will serve as a vehicle to establish the existence of the CSDP as a viable program designed to increase the retention and matriculation of the community college re-entry student.
9. Budget Narrative

[NO “BUDGET NARRATIVE” ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]