93-0019
Peralta

Scholastic Training for Achievement and Retention

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This proposed continuation grant for the Scholastic Training for Achievement and Retention (STAR) program will permit the further refinement and development of an innovative academic excellence program for educationally disadvantaged African-American students. The program model incorporates four key components:

· A unique "Successful Student" Class including critical thinking, study skills development, career exploration and focus, and life skills development;

· An Afro-centric English course emphasizing excellence in writing and reading comprehension; the course will prepare students for success in English 1-A;

· An expanded mentoring program which will match each student with a mentor employed in the student's field of career interest or in a closely related field;

· Individualized academic and personal counseling with a designated counselor linked with the program who will be available to a particular student throughout the academic year.

In addition to these four components, STAR will also provide referrals to Treisman-style math and science study groups, tutoring in various subjects, and other student services available on campus.

Program staff believes that a second year of funding will permit the addition of a key component as well as the refinement of several existing components, will allow the program model to be fully tested and proven, and will permit the full institutionalization of STAR by the third year of operations.
The project develops a comprehensive programmatic response to one of the key Basic Agenda Priorities of the Board of Governors: that of promoting Educational Quality. The program is designed to "improve the quality of instruction to promote excellence in the classroom, in both teaching and learning," to "challenge students to increase their performance to the best of their ability," and to "expand the cultural pluralism aspects of community college courses." The program specifically addresses these concerns with reference to African-American students.

By disseminating statewide a final report on the development of the program, the curriculum material, and program design specifications, the STAR project will help meet the statewide need for culturally relevant education programs which can assist under-represented students achieve significantly improved results in their academic careers.

NEED FOR SECOND YEAR FUNDING

During its first year of program operations, the STAR program implemented the key components of its work plan including a "Successful Student" skills class, a tutoring component, a mentorship program, and math and science study groups.

In the second year of operations, STAR proposes to develop and add a culturally relevant English language instructional component. This course will be a specially designed pre-English 1A course and will assist the students develop critical reading and writing skills. The course will be Afro-centric in its use of study materials from African and African-American literature. The course will emphasize collaborative learning strategies to enhance the students' learning experience, to increase bonding between students, and to encourage a sense of academic community. The course will also be coordinated with the other program components to reinforce the effectiveness of mentoring and study skills development activities.

In addition to adding the English component, a second year of funding will allow STAR staff to refine the "successful student" course especially through the expansion of the career exploration and identification segment. Moreover, the mentoring program will be broadened and deepened to include mentors outside the academic setting and drawn from professional ranks. The program will also streamline its operations by shifting tutoring and
study group activities to regular, institutional delivery systems. In short, STAR staff believe, as noted earlier, that the program can become fully institutionalized by the third year of operations.

By adding and refining various program components, a comprehensive and replicable program will be created which will permit the preparation of a more detailed and useful "how to" manual for dissemination throughout the state.
The project addresses one of the eligible areas defined by the Fund for Instructional Improvement as priorities: under the category of program development the project will develop and further strategies for addressing the special learning needs of educationally disadvantaged students, in particular, African-American students. The project also addresses one of the areas defined as a Board of Governors 1992-93 Basic Agenda Focus: to improve the quality of academic offerings by (1) improving the quality of instruction to promote excellence in the classroom, in both teaching and learning; (2) challenge student to increase their performance to the best of their ability; and (3) expand the cultural pluralism aspects of community college courses.

The English course proposed herein will essentially replace the 'traditional pre-English 1-A content with a culturally grounded course designed to promote excellence and mastery of English basics. Students completing the proposed English course will have a positive attitude toward written communication and reading and will obtain a strong foundation in English grammar and writing.

The program components are designed primarily to build and increase African-American students' academic focus, self-confidence, and success in the community college setting. Data compiled by the California Postsecondary Education Commission indicate that 80% of all African-Americans who complete a bachelor’s degree begin their college careers in a community college. It is therefore critical to develop, implement, and institutionalize programs which can increase the retention and academic success of underrepresented African-American students. Each component of the proposed continuation program addresses an issue critical to African-American student success.
The systemwide need for programs to improve the academic performance of underrepresented, African-American students is well-known and well documented. African-American students as a whole and at Laney College exhibit certain tendencies which require special attention:

The 46% rate of attrition in courses taken at Laney College is higher for African-American students than for other ethnic categories of students;

The transfer rate of Laney College African-American students to UC and CSU is only 4%;

Since 51% of all probationary students at Laney College are African-Americans compared to their 33% enrollment percentage, African-American students are significantly over-represented in the probationary student ranks;

58% of all students enrolled in basic English courses throughout the Peralta College District are African-American compared to their 32% composition of all enrolled students.

Underlying these statistical data are a number of different problems that are described below along with the programmatic strategy for addressing them.

Recent studies indicate that African-American students, in contrast to European-American and Asian community college students, frequently lack clear academic objectives upon entrance into the community college system. Community college becomes for many such students an extension of the high school setting in which there is a prevailing orientation toward obtaining unspecified general education. While California high school teachers and administrators are working diligently to transform California high schools from the "shopping mall" mode of educational delivery and to replace it with a system of focused programs for all high school students, the problem of lack of focus is still endemic in the system and will take years to correct. Meanwhile, community colleges must respond to the continuing challenge of addressing the problem as it is transferred to them. The STAR program addresses this problem in two key ways: (1) by building in a career focus component in the "successful student" course, and (2) by linking students with real-life role model/mentors who can help them solidify and better understand their career choices as well as the academic and personal development requirements for those career choices.
Peralta Community College District research indicates that over 58% of the students in District basic English courses are African-American. Moreover, data compiled at Laney College indicate that barely half (51%) of African-American students complete courses in which they enroll compared to 61-72% completion rates for other ethnic groups at Laney. Lack of mastery of college-level English skills certainly contributes to difficulties experienced in completing a wide range of college classes, indeed, any that require writing assignments. The STAR program will address English writing and comprehension deficiencies through an Afro-centric, pre-English 1-A prep course. The course will emphasize cultural and life experience validation through reading and writing assignments. The course will also be articulated with the mentor program and the "successful student" course through reading and writing assignments.

One of the premises guiding STAR’s expanded and revised program design is the notion that many African-American students may have internalized a type of "resistance" to standard academic culture. The STAR English course, in conjunction with other program components, will take a two-fold approach in overcoming this compelling, yet ultimately counter-productive, strategy of resistance:

- Firstly, by studying and discussing the writings of African-American and African writers, students’ life experiences and cultural roots can be validated within a context of creative and effective as well as standard English.

- Secondly, students can learn to "reposition" themselves with reference to the dominant the academic culture in order to adopt successful academic strategies. This repositioning will be supported pedagogically first through recognition and validation of culturally imbued learning styles, and second through classroom exposure and discussion of underlying peer pressure against and/or individual fears regarding crossing cultural boundaries in order to gain successful academic strategies
There are several distinct groups of students who will be served in this program:

- New and continuing African-American students who self-identify an intent to transfer to four-year institutions or who have vocational majors and whose test scores and/or other academic indicators suggest need for academic support activities;

- Primarily full time African-American students

- African-American students who are on progress or academic probation as well as others who may be at risk of going on probation or dropping out.

The short term impact of the program on this population will be to increase student career and academic focus, improve study and life skills, improve general academic skills, and improve English comprehension and writing skills. In the long-term students will perform significantly better throughout their academic endeavors and will have much greater likelihood of career success.
Objective 1
Task. Develop an Afro-centric, pre-transfer level English course for field testing in the Fall 1993 semester.

Completion Date. August 20, 1993.

Benchmark Standards. (1) Ensure that course syllabus, reading materials, and other content elements are in place. Develop comprehensive approach to course delivery including strategies for cooperative learning, articulation with other program components, research and writing projects, and outside assignments. (2) Each student completing the course will develop a portfolio of writing samples. (3) 80% of students will complete course with attainment of college level writing and reading comprehension and/or instructor recommendation for enrollment in English 1-A.

Objective 2
Task. Incorporate first-year evaluation results into delivery design for "successful student" course. Develop strategy for articulating course with program English course. Strengthen and expand career exploration and identification segment of course.

Completion Date. End-of-summer, 1993.

Benchmark Standards. (1) Ensure that overall course design reflects comments from prior year evaluation results. Make any changes/course corrections necessary. (2) Ensure that Successful Student/English course articulation points are identified and established in course design. (3) 80% of students completing successful student course will have written and detailed career attainment plan.

Objective 3
Task. Within the context of program operations, recruit 35 to 50 students for participation in the Fall, 1993 semester and Spring, 1994 semester course and program offerings.


Benchmark Standards. Ensure that Successful Student and English
classes have at least 25 students each. Ensure that at least one-third of students enroll in both classes simultaneously.

Objective 4

Task. Expand and deepen mentoring program to include additional training for mentors and recruitment of mentors from non-academic professional and skilled trade ranks. Develop use of mentors as guest speakers for "successful student" class or other joint activities for STAR students. Develop job shadowing activities in conjunction with mentors for students at mentor companies.

Completion Date. By middle of Spring semester.

Bench Mark Standards. Develop at least 20 off-campus mentors, some of whom can double up as guest speakers and some of whom can offer job shadowing opportunities.

Objective 5

Task. Prepare project evaluation, final report, and dissemination materials. Ensure that Project Director as well as instructional faculty make detailed input in report materials.

Completion Date. June 30, 1994

Bench Mark Standards. (1) Complete program evaluation incorporating review of program features, strengths and weaknesses of program design, student outcomes, and other program outcomes. (2) Prepare final report with significant input from instructional faculty. (3) Prepare and disseminate reports, design materials, course materials, and evaluation findings.
The general work to be done in this project covers four key areas: (1) development, field testing, and refinement of an Afro-centric English course; (2) refinement, field testing, and further refinement of a "successful student" class; (3) maintain general program operations especially recruitment of students into the program; (4) expand and deepen the mentoring component to include non-academic mentors and connection of possible job shadowing opportunities for students.

A general cost breakdown by activity is as follows: the cost of developing, refining, and field testing the two courses is $10,943; the cost for maintenance and supervision of overall program operations, recruitment of students, expansion and management of the mentorship program, and provision of clerical support for program operations is approximately $20,933; the cost for program evaluation final report preparation with input from key staff, and dissemination of project materials and results is approximately $4,500. Expense for books and materials, fringe benefits and miscellaneous items is approximately $8,624.
As noted in earlier sections, the objective of this two-year project is to develop and refine a comprehensive and innovative academic excellence program for educationally disadvantaged African-American students. Key outcomes programmatically will be in the academic skill development of the participating students. Results in student attainment should be obtained in the areas of enhanced English language abilities and skills in writing and reading comprehension, study skills, career focus and realism of career direction, critical thinking abilities, and related life skill attainments. Institutional results will also be obtained insofar as the development of an overall, replicable program design, curriculum materials for the two courses, design of mentorship program, and details about general program operations.

The success of the program in meeting its stated objectives will ensure its long term institutionalization.

It is hoped that, insofar as adaptation to other institutions, the program will be transferable to other urban college districts with large percentages of underrepresented African-Americans students. Every effort will be made to ensure that appropriate and highly useful package of program materials will be made available upon request to other interested colleges and districts throughout the State of California.
Formative evaluations will continue to be performed throughout the project, as is indicated in the Annual Workplan and Performance Indicators. A summative evaluation will be performed in the last month of the year of this project. The work statement objectives and activities will be assessed for completion. Problems encountered during the course of the project will be identified. Outcomes regarding student performance will be evaluated. Effective methods of teaching methodology and learning outcomes will be identified. A set of recommendations will be developed in conjunction with program review for curricula refinements.
This project will provide two products that can be disseminated statewide. One will be a final report on the project, including a detailed description of the components of program. A second product available for dissemination will be a course/curriculum guide for development of successful student and Afro-centric English curricula at other institutions. Laney proposes to make both products available for the cost of reproduction, and will announce availability through the news media provided by the California Community Colleges.

The products will remain available for one year, or until June 1995.
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