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Consortium Project.

To achieve the goals of this project, we have organized a consortium with Pasadena City College and Rancho Santiago Community College. These institutions provide a broad perspective on the balance between teacher support and technological assistance. Pasadena City College makes intensive use of technology with little teacher support in their basic skills program. Rancho Santiago, on the other hand, uses both teacher-directed and computer-directed course management models. These two programs and our own will provide a broad base of study to compare different programs and methods of operation. Their commitment to the project is evidenced by their letters of support in the Appendix B.

The prospect of providing effective computer-assisted instruction to "at-risk" students is appealing in several respects. Computers can be less intimidating and less embarrassing to students with serious skill deficiencies than a teacher instructing the same skills. "Mistakes" can be safely made on the computer, and corrective feedback provided, without embarrassment. Instruction can be repeated as many times as needed, and the potential for open labs allows students to attend at flexible and convenient hours. Moreover, computer-assisted instruction can provide significant savings in institutional resources.

Some teachers, however, question the utility and effectiveness of instructional technology for "at-risk" students. It is argued that such students are especially in need of the teacher support, encouragement and sensitivity that they cannot receive from a computer.

No doubt there is truth in both the above views. Developing basic skills programs that make the best use of computer technology and teacher resources will have enormous benefits. Finding the appropriate "balance," however, is a challenging task. The basic skills team at VVC's Learning Center believes answering these questions will significantly affect student retention.

To address this challenge, the Victor Valley College Learning Center has planned a long-term college commitment to improving quality and access to basic skills instruction. Computer-assisted instruction and computer management/operations are key
components of this plan. We have taken an initial and important step with the development of a Basic Skills open lab. Students perform the majority of their assignments using educational software. However, we provide at least one "human" instructor or paraprofessional during laboratory hours. In addition, assignments and paths are designed and prescribed by the Basic Skills instructors, prescription are available on the computers. Initial student and even though such path design and staff evaluations of this lab design are positive. However, questions regarding connections between human and technical support remain unanswered.

This proposal seeks funding to build on the existing basic skills program to determine the most beneficial and cost effective combination of instructional technology and teacher support. The proposal also includes development of instructional material and operational guides that can be easily disseminated to other schools.
This proposal will have major impacts on all three areas of mission, access, and educational quality.

The Board of Governors has established remedial instruction as one mission of California community colleges. As the entry point, whether it be for initial learning or for remediation, for students with academic skills deficiencies and for many underrepresented students, basic skills programs represent, by far, the greatest opportunity for academic improvement. The proposed improvements in our new basic skills program will increase our capacity to provide instruction in the most cost effective manner and with maximum benefit to students. Moreover, dissemination of our findings and techniques to other colleges allows replication of our program and more effective operations state-wide.

Access is improved by allowing students to attend at convenient times. Current basic skills clients in the VVC program identified flexibility of hours as the greatest benefit of the computer-assisted open laboratory. (See Appendix A.)

Educational quality will perhaps be the major benefit. Determining the appropriate "balance" between computer and teacher instruction will be directly based on student achievement and evaluation. Increased student achievement will be an obvious indication of quality improvement. VVC wishes to establish a "consistent and comprehensive basic skills curriculum," (RFA 94-0001, p. 11).
The activities of this project will focus on the following priorities:

Section A Eligible Programs
2a Special Education Needs of Educationally Disadvantaged: Basic Skills Consortia: Finding the Balance, Sharing the Products

Section 2 Board of Governors' Basic Agenda
   B3 Basic Skills and English as a Second Language

Under the Board of Governors' Basic Agenda we will address the following initiatives:

Maintain and improve the quality of instruction to promote excellence in the classrooms, in both teaching and learning.

Reaffirm the Board's strong support of programs in English as a Second Language (ESL) and basic skills, which are essential to the Community College mission.

Establish a consistent and comprehensive precollegiate basic skills curriculum, with a scope and rigor that appropriately parallels the degree-credit curriculum.

Each of the above initiatives will be discussed separately in the sections that follow.

Maintaining and Improving the Quality of Instruction

In order to maintain and improve the quality of instruction in both teaching and learning, we will identify the elements necessary in instruction as it occurs in our VVC basic skills program. We will examine the quality of current instruction by studying: the need of the student, the ability of media to meet that need, and the timing and frequency of human intervention. Improving the teaching and learning of basic skills will occur because we will find the most appropriate relationship between these three.

Reaffirming the Board's Support of Programs in English as a Second Language and Basic Skills,

Support for these programs will be reaffirmed by the development of written materials and conducting studies specific to basic skills.

    Programs in English as a Second Language and basic
skills have been identified as essential to the mission of the community colleges. This project will concentrate on basic skills, although our basic skills program is used successfully by ESL students to supplement their regular instruction. The findings of this project should apply equally to both programs as well as other programs set in an open lab, computer assisted learning environment.

Establishing a Consistent and Comprehensive Precollegiate Basic Skills Curriculum,

Consistency requires clear plans and guidelines. Methods and rationale will be documented, and assignment guides and other student materials will be revised. In order to assure a comprehensive program, we will identify the specific elements that lead to the successful completion of basic skills curricula. Greater student achievement will lead to college retention or to meeting the individual student's academic, professional, or on the job goals. We will analyze grade equivalent scores and plan retention studies. We also will compose, use and examine surveys in all three programs.
A review of VVC’s current basic skills programs reveals two basic problems. First, we do not know how much human intervention and how much technological intervention should take place. Many questions arise regarding an appropriate balance. How much and what kind of instruction can students be expected to achieve using only the computer? When, how much, and what kind of teacher intervention is necessary? How much orientation and guidance do students need? These questions are too important to leave to "best-guess" program development. Student success or failure will often hinge on how well these questions are answered.

Second, curriculum material and a Comprehensive Guide, providing direction to supervisory and tutorial staff, should be based on findings from the first problem. Without this support material, it would be difficult to take advantage of the best teacher/technology combination. Development of this material is a key element in dissemination of the project to other community colleges as well as implementation at Victor Valley Community College.
The target population is the precollegiate basic skills student. Students served by this project are exceptionally diverse. The basic skills student may be a reentry or returning student, or a student using English as a second language. He is often from a family with extreme financial stress as well as being from a dysfunctional background. In some cases, he is learning disabled, but testing for the exact disability has not taken place. We have students who are physically disabled. These clients’ situations become more complex when we face a variety of crossover conditions. For example, we work with the underrepresented student who is also in severe financial stress, or the ESL student who is from a dysfunctional background.
Objective 1

Increase retention by 15% and record a 3.00 average grade equivalent gain for Spring 1995 students. Retention will be recorded by June 1, 1995, and exit TABE scores by June 10, 1995.

Objective 2

Prepare and publish a Findings Report from the project's activities and a Comprehensive Guide for the Victor--Valley College Basic Skills Program and make both documents available to interested California colleges by November 30, 1995.

Objective 3

Locate and install a centralized system to collect, analyze, evaluate and track data from separate sources about basic skills students, including: pre and post test results, individualized curricular plans, time spent on lessons and/or human intervention, and course completion by August 20, 1995.
[No information provided in this document for this section.]
**Project Objectives**

**Objective I**

Increase retention by 15% and record a 3.00 average grade equivalent gain for Spring 1995 students. Retention will be recorded by June 1, 1995, and exit TABE scores by June 10, 1995.

**Activities Related to Objective 1**

1. At the first meeting of the three partners in the consortium, decide the written record keeping method and select the two-week period (no later than the seventh week of the semester) during which frequency of teacher or paraprofessional contact is recorded. All VVC teachers and paraprofessionals will keep this record for that given period.

2. By October 1, 1994, compose, revise, print, distribute, collect and analyze student surveys directly related to timing, frequency and availability of human assistance to VVC basic skills students.

3. Using data collected from students and staff from all three consortium members, make specific appropriate changes in delivery of the VVC basic skills program, especially in the arena of amount and timing of human intervention.

**Expected Outcome of Objective 1**

1. Accomplishing this objective will answer the following questions:

   a. How much, and what kind of, instruction can students achieve using only the computer?

   b. When, how much, and what kind of teacher or paraprofessional intervention is necessary?

   c. How much orientation and guidance do students need to successfully begin and subsequently pass basic skills courses?

2. In addition, answering these questions will lead directly to research-based adjustments in program delivery. The VVC program will become more sensitive to genuine student need.

**Objective 2**
Prepare and publish a Findings Report from the project's activities and a Comprehensive Guide for the Victor Valley College Basic Skills Program and make both documents available to interested California colleges by November 30, 1995.

Activities Related to Objective 2

(1) At the first consortium meeting (by September 20, 1994), set up parameters and methods for an exchange of specific information such as: names of and objectives of software or media, and lists of texts or other materials used with basic skills students.

(2) Using at least 50 students registered for Fall 1994, record their goals and follow their academic or professional progress through two semesters. Also record their satisfaction with the basic skills course work, and level of realization of their goals.

(3) Organize and compile results of activities done under Objective 1 into a Findings Report including: data about amount and timing of human intervention and media-assisted-instruction; software, other media, and print materials; and data about student progress, satisfaction, and reaching of academic or professional goals.

(4) Revise, edit and publish the above Findings Report, making it available to other California colleges by November, 1995.

(5) Revise, edit and publish the Comprehensive Guide for the Victor Valley College basic skills program and make this Guide available to interested California colleges by November 30, 1995.
Expected Outcome of Objective 2

Reaching this objective will make two documents available for future basic skill teachers at VVC as well as any other California college wishing to replicate any part of this program or wishing to use individual elements of the program.

Objective 3

Locate and install a centralized system to collect, analyze, evaluate and track data about basic skills students, including: pre and post test results, individualized curricular plans, time spent on lessons and/or human intervention, and course completion by August 20, 1995.

Activities Related to Objective 3

1. Evaluate at least three different pieces of software, other methodologies, or programs and choose a piece of software, program or method which will serve as a centralized collection port for materials specified in Objective 3.

2. Select and install the selected methodology for use at least by Fall semester, 1995.

3. By September 15, 1995, train basic skills staff in the use of the selected system selected in Activity I above.

Expected Outcome of Objective 3

Accomplishing this objective will give individual students and staff single source documentation of essential data about individual students. In order to balance student need and resources, information must be constantly gathered, reviewed and acted upon. This will make the program more academically and cost-effective, and lead more directly to accomplishment of individual goals.

B. Impact of the Project

Provision of more effective basic skills instruction will clearly benefit students at Victor Valley College and will provide a model, instructional material, and operational guides to colleges.
throughout the state. Such broad impact will have enormous influence on basic skills teaching practice.

This consortium project will bring together expertise from the broad range of partners to develop the most effective guidelines and procedures.

C. Potential for Continued Support

Since this project is part of a long-term effort to improve basic skills in instruction, future funding is relatively certain. The computer facilities and current year’s operation were funded by 1993-94 General Fund allocations and plans have been accepted to convert the current library to a much expanded learning center and basic skills facility when our new library is completed in 1997-98.

D. Potential for Adaptation at Other Institutions

The Findings Report and Comprehensive Guide will give major assistance to basic skills programs in other institutions. These documents will enable institutions to replicate and manage the program with relative ease.
(1) Process evaluation will consist of monitoring whether or not the objectives are achieved. For example, if 50% of the students state they need brief interventions at least 3 times during an average visit to the basic skills lab, the project director will need to schedule paraprofessional or instructor presence accordingly.

(2) Outcome evaluation is concerned with changes in knowledge, attitudes, values and behavior. The planned retention gain is an outcome; so is the intent to see at least a 3.0 average grade equivalent on exit TABE testing.

(3) Impact Evaluation is the long term approach to basic skills improvement; it deals with pointing the program toward goals which we will not be able to recognize for years. VVC sees no abatement in the need to continually redesign basic skills curricula to meet community needs and is committed to continuous reevaluation. One indicator of the impact will be an obvious growth in the self-esteem of basic skills students.

(4) The first work statement will be to increase retention by 15% and record a 3.00 average grade equivalent gain for Spring 1995 students.

Activity Completion

(a) Assemble materials/software/print lists from all three sites; prepare this for the Findings Report.

(b) Gather and prepare the Findings Report section which summarizes results of student survey.

(c) By Fall 1995, document and change delivery of the VVC basic skills program based on finding the best balance between human and media intervention.

(d) Identify, in writing the most effective methods or processes, successes or failures.

(e) As a part of the Findings Report, list recommendations pertinent to developing and maintaining an open-entry, open-exit basic skills program.
(5) The second work statement is to prepare and publish a Findings Report and a Comprehensive Guide.

Activity Completion

(a) Gather the materials/media/print lists from the three colleges; prepare for Findings Report inclusion.

(b) Compose and publish the results of student surveys; prepare for Findings Report inclusion.

(c) Assemble all component reports for publication in the Findings or the Guide

(d) Identify, in writing the most effective methods or processes. successes or failures.

(e) Include final recommendations in the Findings Report.

(6) The second work statement is to develop and install a centralized student data collection which includes academic prescriptions, test results and other pertinent student records.

Activity Completion

(a) Test existing record management software, programs or methods for data collection. Select one.

(b) Install and test the selected program by August 1995.

(c) Organize basic skills teachers training in the selected system.

(d) Identify, in writing the most effective methods or processes successes or failures.

(e) Include final recommendations in the Findings Report,
Product. Target Population. Methods and Evaluation

The Findings Report (a summary of major findings from the consortium) and the Comprehensive Guide to the Basic Skills Program at Victor Valley College will be composed, published and disseminated to any California community college requesting the package. VVC will send an announcement to each college by December 15, 1994 giving pertinent request information. VVC will also enclose an evaluation form with the documents before the mailing.

The Basic Skills Team will seek to make local and statewide presentations, and when appropriate, national presentations about the nature of and findings of the consortium. These presentations could be at appropriate Chancellor’s Office events, English or math instructor’s conferences, basic skills events/conferences and/or technological seminars. VVC is presently applying to be a presenter at the League for Innovation conference in Houston, Texas in November 1994. If we become presenters, we will share our first year findings as well as our plans for this project.

Dissemination Timetable

(1) Record Average Grade Equivalent on TABE    6-1-95
(2) Record Exit TABE Scores and Average Growth 6-10-95
(3) Prepare and Publish Findings Report 6-15-95
(4) Prepare and Publish Comprehensive Guide 6-30-95
(5) Seek, Apply for Presentation Opportunity 10-30-95
(6) Prepare Announcement on Findings Report and Comprehensive Guide Availability 11-1-95
(7) Mail Announcement on Availability 11-30-95
[No information provided in this document for this section.]