

QUESTION #4:

WHO ARE THE SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS, UNITS, AND DEPARTMENTS THAT MAY SUPPORT A CAMPUS LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER?

A conversation with Frank Torres

Your question is comprehensive and may take some time to answer. Let me give you the big picture first. I'll talk about individuals, units, and departments that support LAC's at most universities.

First of all, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are the two most significant divisions at most campuses. Some LACs actually fall under the supervision of Academic Affairs and

may be housed in the library, a very significant unit under Academic Affairs. However, the LAC may get its financial support, as we do here at Cal Poly Pomona, both from Academic Affairs through deans, department chairs, and faculty and from Student Affairs directors and staff of programs such as Educational Opportunity Program, Disabled Student Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Associated Students.

How do individual faculty support a campus LAC?

Our LAC houses the English department's tutoring program. Some faculty teach English courses to a large number of sections of students who have been placed in those classes because they received low scores on the En-

glish Placement Test. Thus, the English instructors who teach English 095 and English 096 appreciate the LAC's tutoring facility and the use of computers which we make available to tutors and tutees.

How do you accommodate so many students?

With great difficulty. We get so crowded in here that many tutors and tutees conduct business on the luxuriant lawn outside or in

the large study room next door. Our tutors are versatile. They've been well trained and certified.

What do you mean by certified?

Thanks for asking. All our tutors have to take and pass Level I Certification from CRLA. Our tutor trainer who also is our computer programmer, has presented at CRLA, and he

has set up on-line tutor training on our LAC web page, using HTML, Java, C+, and QuickTime captions.

Slow down. Before you get too technical on me, are English instructors the only ones supporting the LAC?

No. We also have a good number of math faculty supporting the LAC. Our math coordinator has a close working relationship with the chair of the math department. They work

closely together on developmental math matters. Our LAC offers free math workshops to students who want to retake the Math Diagnostic Test.

Do you work with any other faculty?

Well, each college has a College-Based Program, which targets underrepresented students, and the coordinators of those programs are faculty. Since they work closely with the same type of students we do, they refer students to us and frequently ask LAC to speak

to their students about our College Reading Study Skills Program and the free workshops the LAC offers in stress management, time management, critical reading, world wide web, speed reading, and memory improvement.

Now, getting back to faculty who support the LAC. Are there any others?

Well, a large number of faculty from the Colleges of Engineering, Science, and Business

refer students to our LAC. Engineering faculty have a significant number of international

students who have not mastered English and can't graduate until they pass our institutional

Graduate Writing Exam. We provide support for them.

It's clear that you have strong support from Engineering. But what about units from the other colleges? What about science and business faculty and staff, for example?

We have several liaison faculty and staff in the College of Science, Business, Agriculture, and Environmental Design, as many of them are mentors for our federally funded TRIO programs. Our TRIO program assists low-income, first generation college students in the areas of critical reading, critical think-

ing, vocabulary, reading rate, and writing. The program uses computer software that motivates students to excel. The beauty of this program is that it has generated significant support from senior staff in the departments relevant to Financial Aid, Student Outreach and Recruitment, and the Registrar.

Besides faculty and staff, are there other individuals who support your LAC?

Yes, our president, who has learned about our high school outreach program from discussions with local school superintendents. He

was impressed with their favorable remarks about the program and has been a strong LAC supporter ever since.

It really helps to have the president on your side, doesn't it? But I am still interested in knowing about other units or departments at Cal Poly Pomona who also support your LAC.

In addition to Student Affairs, EOP, Disabled Students Services, Athletics, Cultural Centers, Women's Reentry Center, and Psychological Services and Counseling. The best

part is that all the units and departments mentioned above have a self-interest in supporting the university's LAC.

Why do you think that?

Because LAC assists thousands of their students each year. We help to retain and gradu-

ate their students. We also succeed in placing many of them into graduate school.

I see. You work in collaboration with them. So, if their students or clients need academic help, they refer them to you.

Exactly. I have discovered that strong personal relationships with faculty, staff, and student-centered units and departments across campus pay off in many ways. They support the LAC because that means that they support their students. They support my grant proposals because those proposals are student centered. And they support many of my requests for expansion of my programs because I share the outcomes of my LAC programs with them

in the form of a Year End Report. In fact, a good percentage of the financing for LAC programs and student assistance came from telephone calls that I received from my friends throughout campus. In turn, they can depend on me to deliver excellent academic support for the students they refer to LAC. These successes and interpersonal relationships are a source of great satisfaction for all of my staff and myself.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Burns-Reed, M. E., & Dozen, P. (1982). New partnerships in academe. In H. Boylan (Ed.), *Forging new partnerships in learning assistance. New directions for college learning assistance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 17-29.

Knight, B., & Helm, P. (1981). Developing trustee commitment to learning assistance. In F. Christ & M. Coda-Messerle (Eds.). *Staff development for learning support systems. New directions for college learning assistance*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 19-27.

Frank Torres has been involved in learning assistance since 1972. He is the founding director of the Learning Resource Center (1972 - present) at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona). His professional interests in student persistence and graduation at the college level led to the writing and awarding of four TRIO projects (Student Support Services, Upward Bound Classic, Upward Bound Math & Science, and McNair Scholars) from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to directing the LRC and TRIO projects, Frank is a tenured professor of English at his campus where he recruits staff and faculty as advisors, coordinators, and directors of the seven programs within the LRC. He is involved in the broader community where he serves as a trustee of the Los Angeles Educational Alliance For Restructuring Now (LEARN). He also serves as a leader with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) which is currently reorganizing clusters of institutions, religious groups, political allies, and community leaders to form a robust political entity in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Frank has been a member of CRLA since 1971.