

Starting a new Learning Assistance Center is a daunting task. No matter the size of the operation or the level of support, there is so much to do, so many decisions to make. Which programs need development? Which have moderate to poor potential for success on campus? Which steps will likely insure success potential with faculty and students? How will I gather the staff needed? Will these staffers be full-time, part-time, professionals, students?

More basic questions of center mission and goals need be answered as well. Long term problems, including where the center should ultimately be housed, are also important. Help dealing with these problems is essential for those moving into a director's position for the first time. But even if an individual has directed a center before, each school and program contains enough differences that help in dealing with them can make life easier

When I was named director of the English Language Skills Lab at West Virginia State College in the early 1970's, there was little help available. I had previously served as the head of a small English Department, but that experience carried few clues to help. Luckily, I had acquired a mentor, Lila Bruckner, then head of the University of South Carolina's reading/study skills program. I had studied under her for a year and found her willing to visit and provide advice; even more importantly, she introduced me to the Western College Reading Association (now the College Reading and Learning Association), which has provided a great deal of help and inspiration through the years.

When I moved to my current job as head of Transitional Studies at Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne, the situation was greatly different from the one I had experienced in West Virginia. Instead of only reading and writing responsibilities, I had acquired some math responsibilities and a tutoring operation—and the need to work very closely with three academic departments in— two different schools. There was a lot to learn, and again mentors became important. In both new situations, I would have profited greatly from a book with information on a wide range of areas that could help in forming questions and action plans. Providing such information is the purpose of this book.

Primary editors Frank Christ, Rick Sheets, and Karen Smith, all experienced LAC directors, have identified a number of areas that are primary concerns in LAC management and have invited a wide selection of long-time LAC personnel to respond to these areas of concern. Contributors include: Gwyn Enright of San Diego City College, Elaine Burns of [??], Frank Torres from California Polytechnic University Pomona, Sylvia Mioduski and Reed Mencke from the University of Arizona, David Gerkin of Paradise Valley Community College, Gene Kerstains a founding member of CRLA, Martha Maxwell of M.M. Associates, Georgine Materniak from the University of Pittsburgh, as well as Frank, Karen, and Rick themselves.

Areas covered include: LAC definition, professional development, LAC justification, identification of significant individuals, meeting expectations, special populations, faculty roles in LACs, useful management tools, technology, program assessment, student assessment, program types, choice of appropriate instructional resources, staffing, organizational structure, design considerations, image development, and national standards. The book ends with a series of thought-provoking scenarios that cover a range of decision areas facing LAC directors.

All chapters are arranged in question-answer format with experts responding to concerns raised by a moderator. The questions hit on areas of concern to people starting or developing LAC programs. The answers are generally in conversational style as respondents give their views on each of these important areas. The book serves as a primer on matters of importance to LAC directors. Those charged with developing and administering are as always well advised to follow up on the information provided here by joining professional organizations and their sponsored special interest groups on LACs. Attending national or regional conferences put on by these organizations remains a major help in establishing networks and passing on ideas to deal with specific situations that arise as part of LAC development.

Enjoy the book! Learn from it! Raise further questions on the book with its editors and contributors! Use it as a stepping stone in developing a successful LAC.



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