

## QUESTION #3:

# HOW DO I ANSWER FACULTY MEMBERS OR ADMINISTRATORS WHEN THEY ASK WHY WE HAVE A LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER ON OUR CAMPUS?

*A conversation with Elaine Burns*

You can answer by citing reasons that should satisfy both your faculty and administrators. Administratively the LAC is significant because its programs and services can increase retention rates and certificate completions. Also, when the LAC offers lab courses for credit, captures tutorial hours, and provides a tutor training course, there is an increase in

FTE's. A Learning Assistance Center also benefits an institution's recruitment and outreach efforts, is a success component in orientation and probation programs, and a significant campus highlight in school relations and public relations strategies. The LAC can also act as a liaison with neighboring institutions and partner with them, as well as with local businesses.

*Those reasons would certainly appeal to my administrators. Are there any other reasons?*

Yes, the LAC can establish interrelationships with departments, offices, and services on campus to build the quality and types of services the LAC can offer. For example, two-year institutions could partner with four-year institutions to obtain graduate student assistance, through graduate internships and stu-

dent teaching programs, for tutorial programs where there are few or no available tutors in upper division courses. The LAC can also work with teachers' retirement groups or a retirement village to obtain additional volunteer tutors.

*I can understand that administrators would see the LAC as a significant part of the university but what about faculty?*

From a faculty perspective, the LAC is an important campus teaching and learning resource because it can be a place where they can send students for academic skills assistance,

for tutorials, for course materials accessible to students outside of the classroom, for testing, and maybe even for improvement of their teaching and computer skills.

*Tell me more about student referrals to the LAC.*

When faculty refer students to the LAC for basic skills improvement in reading, writing, math, computer literacy, critical thinking, or analytical reasoning, the LAC should use

some type of referral form that provides a copy for the student, faculty member and LAC. Such a form would show faculty that the LAC follows through on their referrals.

*How else can the LAC be useful for faculty?*

There are several ways: in course tutoring by getting faculty involved in both recommending tutors and in training tutors, by being a repository for course syllabi, practice tests, lecture audio or videotapes, and lecture notes, as a testing center for make-up classroom exams, special testing considerations, and proctoring for special exams through telecourses, extension programs, and distance learning programs,

and as a center for teaching and learning or as a faculty resource center, with space and equipment for faculty to enhance their knowledge of computers and multimedia, share course outlines, syllabi, and lesson plans. When faculty use the LAC, they will better understand what it is the LAC does on campus and they will promote its use to other faculty and will become advocates for its programs and services.

*What particular aspect of the LAC would you emphasize to campus faculty, staff, and administrators?*

I would emphasize that the ideal learning assistance center, developed with faculty and administrative support, is a comprehensive support system for everyone: students, faculty,

staff, administrators, and community members, not just special populations. Finally, an LAC would offer a wide range of programs and services to students across the curriculum.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

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*Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns is the Director of The Learning Center and the Student Support Services - TRIO Program at Skyline College in San Bruno, California. Elaine has directed learning centers for the past nine years and was the Associate Coordinator of the Learning Assistance Support System at California State University, Long Beach under the directorship of Frank Christ for eight years. Her doctoral dissertation is entitled, "A Study to Formulate a Learning Assistance Model for the California Community Colleges." Elaine Burns has a B.A. in Broadcast Communication Arts from San Francisco State University, a M.S. in School Management and Administration and an Ed.D. in Institutional Management, both from Pepperdine University, a California Community College Supervisory Credential, and a California Community College Instructor's Credential in Basic Skills. As President of Mammoth Concepts, her learning assistance consulting company, Dr. Burns conducts learning skills workshops for schools as well as public and private organizations, writes grant proposals for the funding of community learning centers, and provides technical assistance to established community learning centers. She has also published articles on management strategies to assist students in improving their learning skills.*