APPENDIX A:
TYPICAL SCENARIOS OF A LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER ADMINISTRATOR

Scenarios by Karen G. Smith & Rick A. Sheets

Below are twenty common scenarios which new and experienced LAC administrators may face. Many of the scenarios are politically charged. Often new ideas are expected to be implemented using limited new money or with existing institutional resources. These are provided to provoke critical thinking and problem-solving. We welcome you to deal with one or more of the scenarios. Feel free to change any part of it to better fit a scenario you would like to address.

1. The vice president has set aside a small amount of money to support a program focused on improving retention for first and second year students. The focus for this retention program has been left entirely to you as you face a goal of demonstrating actual improved retention from first to second year. What are your first steps?

2. To prepare for the institution's renewal for accreditation, you and other administrators have been asked to develop a self-study for your areas. The self-study is to include statistics on purpose, use, and success. How would you proceed? What information would you include and how would you gather and report it?

3. A committee was appointed by the president of the faculty senate to study the feasibility for initiating a learning assistance center. After visits by committee members to existing programs and developing a plan based on LAC success stories from other universities, a consult-

ant was hired to draft a final plan, and you were hired or appointed to implement their plan. Please describe their plan and how you plan to implement it.

4. You have been invited to teach in a learning communities program with a biology instructor. The suggestion is that students will be required to sign up for both the study strategies and the biology course. You and the biology instructor will team-teach both courses to help give students a context to apply the study strategies being taught. How can the two be taught in an integrated fashion so that each of the two courses supports the other? How would you design the study skills course and how would it connect to the biology course?

5. You have just been hired to run an existing center. Most of the tutors are peer tutors and the only training has been a single staff meeting to present procedures for filling out time sheets for pay. You have been asked to develop and implement a comprehensive training program for your tutors. Describe the topics, delivery mode, funding, competencies, amount of training, short and long term planning, and any other aspects of how you would build a comprehensive training program?

6. In answer to a study of institutional responsiveness to students of minority and underrepresented populations, the college provost has decided that the greatest need for these students is the establishment of an LAC. You have been hired to respond to this special need while providing access to all students in the institution. What recommendations would you make (include services, staffing, funding, placement in organization, reporting structure, and evaluation process)?

7. A successful TRIO (federally-funded) program has been in operation for years at this college, providing support services to first-generation students from families with significant financial need, and the chief academic officer has decided to expand the program to serve all students by providing additional funding. As the director of the TRIO program you are faced with this new challenge. How would you plan to meet the federal guidelines as the project students are served while expanding and serving all students equally (include your proposal guidelines which may address any additional funding, staffing, service, or space considerations or requests)?

8. Your president has just returned from a national conference and is excited about the new concept of becoming a learner-centered institution. It is a new paradigm and has already become a hot issue because the focus becomes student learning rather than delivery of instruction. Your president has asked you to form a committee and lead the charge to develop a plan to follow and tout this new learner–centered model. Who would you ask to be on the committee? How would you "lead the charge"? What would you plan to accomplish (short and long term)?

9. In response to competition for new students, the chancellor is looking at distance education courses as a way to recruit and retain more students. Because of your reported success with retaining students using your center, she has asked you to develop strategies for recruiting and retaining students enrolled in distance education courses. What questions would you deal with? What assumptions are you making? Describe what suggestions you would make and why. What, if anything, have you chosen not to deal with and why?

10. Although the learning assistance center which you direct has been successful in providing appropriate services and programs, an institutional retrenchment has forced every unit and every department to reassess how services are funded and delivered. As the administrator for this LAC, you have been required to demonstrate how the unit can be reorganized so that services are not curtailed nor diminished while receiving less funding. Describe what you would do.

11. The president of the university, in his fund raising zeal, has convinced a friend/benefactor to give a major gift to the institution for the purpose of establishing a comprehensive learning assistance center. Because the center will carry the benefactor's name and could easily become a trophy-piece of the president, the development of programs and services is extremely sensitive and political. How would you balance institutional service needs with the potential political agenda? Describe what you see as a realistic plan and outcome. What else could be involved to make this a success and how do you define success?

12. Your institution is in the process of developing a comprehensive web site to encourage student interaction for institutional information, course

selection, registration, and some distance education options. You have been asked to develop a web page for your center. What will you identify as its purpose and function? What information or resources will your web page include? What opportunities for student interaction will be provided? How can it be used to better support your tutors and/or students?

13. While a long-time learning assistance center with little direction and/or inspiration has functioned insignificantly on campus, serving a limited number of students, the supervising vice-president sees the pending retirement of the current director as an opportunity to breathe new life into a potentially dynamic service. You have been hired to provide vision and develop meaningful services, but with very little additional funding. How would you approach this? Describe desired short and long term outcomes.

14. The number of students at your institution has decreased over the last two years and all departments have been asked to cut their budgets by ten percent. During the same period, the number of students using your services has actually increased by ten percent and the reported retention rate has also increased. How would you respond? Describe the reason for your response and the desired outcomes.

15. You are informed that some grant money has not been expended at your institution and that you have $25,000 to spend on new hardware and software to support your program. However, all money must be spent within the next six weeks. How would you decide what to purchase? Describe why you made the choices, who was involved in the decisions, and the "added value" of the purchases you made. What criteria would you suggest others look at in making similar decisions?

16. Your institution has very limited new money available to remodel some of the student and academic service areas on campus. It has been suggested that the remodeling include a merging of the library, media department, student-use computer lab, and the learning assistance center into one building. You have been asked to chair the campus representatives from each area and develop an effective model for integrating these services into the new building. Describe the issues your team will face, the process you would use to accomplish

this, and what you would see as a successful outcome of this committee. What suggestions would you have for others in a similar situation?

17. A powerful faculty member on your campus is critical of the new learning assistance center program you have presented. He has raised some concerns with fellow faculty which include concerns about:
    ◊ additional funding needed for this program;
    ◊ students' responsibility versus the institution's;
    ◊ amateurs providing instruction; and
    ◊ loss of face of faculty involved in the LAC program.
    How would you answer these concerns? Why? If this were an ideal situation, what would be different?

18. You suggested your institution create a tutoring program. With little additional funding and the addition of a work-study student for the program, you have been asked to develop a three-year plan for implementing this new program. Describe your plan and include staffing, equipment, and funding considerations. Describe why you made the choices you did.

19. A faculty member has come to you with a proposal to develop an on-line tutoring option for students in her distance education courses. She will create the web pages and lead the charge for other interested faculty. What is your role in supporting her efforts and helping her establish this new option for students? What equipment, staffing, and other considerations need to be included in this planning stage?

20. Several faculty members have complained that there is no make-up testing facility and have asked if your center could provide that as a service to students. No one has identified additional funding. However, some additional space may be available. What would you propose? What would be an ideal situation and how would it differ from what you described?

The previous scenarios were intended to present a variety of real-life situations. Though some of the specifics may change, the general tone or themes of the scenarios are prevalent in centers today. The key to dealing with any of the scenarios is in the planning, the network of support to implement, and the documentation and evaluation of the level of success with "next step" recommendations.