Improvement Dimension Report
California State University-San Marcos

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement. This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions' overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year.

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This report is divided into four parts:

1. Review of assessment efforts in connection with five key First-Year initiatives:
    a. Summer Programs before the First Year
    b. Orientation
    c. Lower-Division Roadmaps (LDRs)
    d. Learning Communities
    e. Remediation Interventions coordinated by the First-Year Academic Support Coordinator

2. Study of the extent to which assessment activities have improved campus understanding of four elements of student success:
    a. Student allocation of their time
    b. Student/faculty connections
    c. Student use of campus services
    d. Student class attendance patterns

    An additional section e contains a discussion of faculty/staff responses to FoE survey questions concerning the use of data on campus.

3. Degree to which the campus creates and takes advantages of opportunities to acquire expertise on first-year issues.
    a. Travel to conferences/workshops
    b. Participation in multi-campus initiatives
    c. Bringing experts to campus
    d. Sharing campus-based expertise

    An additional section e contains a discussion of faculty/staff responses to FoE survey questions concerning faculty/staff development related to the First Year.

4. Additional action items arising from committee discussions.

Part 1.

a. Summer Programs before the First Year.

Overall, there is a high degree of assessment and high use of assessment for improvement in the four linked programs that we studied:

- College Assistance Migrants Program (CAMP)
- Summer Bridge (SB)
- Summer Academy (SA)
- Mathematics Acceleration Program in the Summer (MAPS)

These programs are housed in different parts of the University: EOP and CAMP are somewhat similar grant-supported programs for different student groups; CAMP is supported by an NIH-grant in the College of Education, and SB is jointly sponsored by Student Support Services and the Educational Opportunity Program (SSS & EOP). SA is a self-support program organized by First Year Programs and offered through Extended Learning. MAPS is a flexible mathematics curriculum used by some students in SB, CAMP and SA, as well as students who are in neither of these programs but who sign up (for "plain MAPS") through Extended Learning. (A new twist was introduced in Sumer 2008 with the introduction of a section of MAPS that was funded by an NIH grant for SB, CAMP and plain MAPS students in science majors.)

CAMP students are enrolled in GEL 101, a Chicano Studies course (offered by Palomar College), and a mathematics course (for some students, this is a Palomar mathematics course and for other students, this is MAPS). CAMP regularly performs a number of programmatic assessments in connection with its grant-reporting requirements; the program annually files mid-year and year-end reports to the U.S. Department of Education. Based on its evaluation of the results of prior cohorts of students, the program updates or modifies its approach for the next incoming cohort. Examples of data reviewed by the program are

- Surveys of CAMP students
- Reviews of overall student progress (e.g., in meeting special admission requirements, completing remediation, maintaining a satisfactory GPA, making progress toward graduation, etc.)
- An external evaluator reviewed program in 2004

Two examples of changes that the program has made include the addition of a retention specialist intern (suggested by an evaluation of CAMP retention data) and changes in the summer curriculum for GEL and the Chicano Studies course (based on Faculty feedback and student evaluations).

Summer Bridge students are enrolled in an intensive 5-week program that includes GEL 101, mathematics (for some students this is a Palomar mathematics course and for other students this is MAPS), and a number of co-curricular activities designed to facilitate campus connections and community building. The EOP and SSS programs file regular reports on all of their activities, and regularly conduct assessments to improve the quality of the SB program. For example:

- The progress of Summer Bridge students is tracked in a comprehensive manner. This includes continuation/graduation rates, and progress on completing the ELM, EPT and CCR. These data have been used to make key decisions about recruitment and program structure. For example,
    - In 2004, when the Summer Bridge program began to focus its recruitment efforts on particularly high risk students; it used these reports to identify particular populations that are required to attend SB, especially special admits who have deficiencies in mathematics).

    - When reports indicated that FY students were not completing their Computer Competency Requirement (CCR) in a timely manner, Summer Bridge hired a student peer to assist students with passing the CCR.
- EOP produces a yearly Admissions Summary assessing all EOP collaborations with various offices on campus. Each year after that report comes out, EOP staff determine what has worked and what hasn't so they can fine-tune and re-evaluate how they do business with our campus colleagues. This includes collaborations with FYP to deliver GEL 101 and MAPS for Summer Bridge.

Summer Academy consists of a pair of structured summer programs that emphasize English and mathematics through specialized versions of GEL courses: one course which emphasizes reading and writing across the curriculum and another which emphasizes the development of mathematical skills (through a lab which is essentially MAPS). With the exception of the assessment of MAPS described immediately below, little assessment work directly related to Summer Academy has been done to date as this program was only offered for the first time in Summer 2007 to 13 students in the English side of SA, and 19 students on the mathematics side (students can only enroll in one of the courses). A second offering in Summer 2008 had 20 students enrolled in the SA English course and 36 students enrolled in the SA mathematics course.

MAPS features the ALEKS web-based assessment and instruction program which makes this an exceptionally data-rich initiative. Records collected and analyzed include

- Scores on the Entry Level Mathematics exam (both pre- and post-MAPS). We have collected pre-MAPS and post-MAPS ELM exam scores for all students since program inception in 2003 who took the ELM exam both before and after participation in MAPS, a total of 259 students. A paired t-test compared the mean pre-MAPS ELM score (33.74) with the mean post-MAPS ELM score (45.31). This test was found to be statistically significant, indicating that participation is associated with an average improvement of 11.57 points. The 95% confidence interval for this increase is [10.35, 12.79]; note that the cut-offs currently used for remedial mathematics placements are 10 points apart. This demonstrates the statistical significance of the MAPS pedagogical model. For the purpose of comparison, a search was made for all students who took the ELM exam twice before the start of their first semester without participating in MAPS. The average improvement for these students (for whom the nature of any intervention between the exams is unknown) was 7.01.
- Hours spent using the ALEKS program. An analysis of student performance on the ELM exam as a function of hours spent working with ALEKS was used to arrive at the target given to students of spending 43 hours on ALEKS in Summer 2008. Two-thirds of the Summer 2008 MAPS students who reached this goal passed the ELM exam altogether, and another 30% of the students who spent this much time on ALEKS decreased their remediation by at least one full semester.
- Progress made by students through the topics in ALEKS. Crude correlations between this data and ELM scores are currently used to gauge the probability of students being able to pass the ELM exam based on the performance in ALEKS. A future project is a statistical analysis of how the post-MAPS ELM score depends on the pre-MAPS score, the amount of time spent on ALEKS, and the progress made by students in ALEKS.

- Although MAPS has been run every summer since 2003, students have only been followed into their next mathematics course in that initial year (where their performance was comparable to other students – even if they had advanced multiple levels in mathematics through MAPS). It was noted anecdotally in subsequent years that students sometimes did not take the next mathematics course in the Fall semester (and thus risked forgetting some of the mathematics that they had learned in MAPS), so effective with Summer 2006, students were required to return to campus in the week between retaking the ELM exam and the start of Fall classes for a Schedule Adjustment appointment.
- The data maintained by the MAPS program was an important factor in getting an August ELM test date (initially cancelled due to budget cuts) re-instated in 2008. As it turns out, MAPS students accounted for 82 of the 179 ELM exams administered on August 15, 2008. An added benefit of this test-date was that it allowed nearly 100 non-MAPS students to be assessed prior to the start of their first semester, so they could be placed – where necessary – in the correct remedial courses.

It should be noted that MAPS is supported with little-to-no direct General Fund expenditures. The salaries of the instructors and assistants (other than the AVP for Academic Programs who runs the program) are funded through assessments of the CAMP, EOP and SSS programs (currently $200/student), fees paid to Extended Learning by "plain MAPS" and Summer Academy students. First-Year Programs covers copying expenses and any instructor/assistant salaries not covered by the above sources directly out of its operating budget (less than $3000/year). In 2008, an NIH grant obtained through OBRT helped make an expansion of MAPS possible. Finally, every year since the first year, FYP has received Lottery funds to purchase ALEKS licenses; this lowers the cost to participating students and programs and enables the program to run more smoothly as a sufficient number of licenses are already on-hand at the first class meeting.

Action item 1. (*Medium priority*)

Continue tracking MAPS students and begin tracking Summer Academy students with particular attention on the following questions:

- Do students complete remediation requirements within the first year?
- How do students perform in the next mathematics course (or GEW 101 for students in the version of Summer Academy with the reading and writing emphasis) that they take?
- What are one-year and two-year continuation rates for these students?

Action item 2. (*Medium priority*)

Continue refining recruitment and registration practices for Summer Academy. Recruitment involves several distinct units including First-Year Programs, Enrollment Management Services, First-Year Academic Support Coordinator, CAMP, SB, Athletics, Office of Biomedical Research Training (OBRT) Registration involves First-Year Programs, First-Year Academic Support Coordinator, Extended Learning and Registration and Records.

Action item 3. (*High priority*)

Work with University Village Apartments to develop an on-campus housing possibility for Summer Academy.

Action item 4. (*High priority*)

Secure funding for ALEKS licenses to keep pace with growth in MAPS as the FY class grows and as improved recruitment efforts attract more students into MAPS. In addition to lottery funding, explore the possibility of obtaining IRA funding.

Action item 5. (*Medium priority*)

Increase infrastructure in First-Year Programs (e.g., create a part-time MAPS director position) to allow MAPS to continue scaling up in size as the FY class grows and as improved recruitment efforts attract more students into MAPS.

b. Orientation

One key observation is that our campus is just beginning to shift from thinking of Orientation as a "one-day" experience to the transition that occurs throughout a student's First Year. Over the past two years, teams have begun to identify 'milestones' which support the students as they transition to college. The Orientation Planning Team (OPT) has worked to streamline communication which students begin receiving as soon as they are admitted to the campus. New Student Programs (NSP) has been launched to support students in their continued transition to the university. Currently, NSP offers Weeks of Welcome activities, a New Student Survival Series of monthly workshops, the continued development of a comprehensive CSUSM Student Planner (including First Year checklists for orientation, first week on campus, and first semester on campus), and the administration of the First Year Alcohol Education Requirement. For purposes of this report, though, we have focused on the one-day Orientation program during which students experience the following:

- Small Group Activities & Campus Tour led by an O-Team leader
- Welcome
- Campus Safety
- Health and Wellness
- Financial Wellness and Responsibility
- Interest sessions including the following topics:

    - On-Campus & Off-Campus Living Information
    - Student Life and Involvement Opportunities
    - Financial Aid
- EPT/ ELM Information
- Diversity and Multiculturalism
- Getting an On-Campus Job
- Lunch
- Academic Success Tips
- Academic Advising
- Course Reservations
- Parking
- Permit, Student ID, and pay fees

There are student learning outcomes for every aspect of Orientation, and each intersession is evaluated. Every student participating in Orientation receives an evaluation by email which includes both a program evaluation component and questions regarding what students have learned and absorbed during certain presentations (Sexual Assault protocol, EPT/ELM information, FY Student Requirements). Reminders to complete the survey are sent throughout the summer via email and the responses are tabulated through September in order to gather as many responses as possible.

Clickers are used during Orientation in order to provide an immediate measurement of what the students are learning throughout the day. Based on the responses of the students, the presenters will move on or will reiterate the information that had just been covered to ensure students understand what is being articulated. This was highly effective in gauging student learning. Evaluations are also collected from workshop participants at the end of each Interest Session to provide immediate feedback to presenters.

The Orientation Planning Team (OPT) reviews the student learning outcomes and evaluation results at an early Fall OPT meeting and all members are provided access to the evaluation to view it as a whole and they are asked to discuss these with the staff in the units that they represent to inform the planning process for the following year. For example, in response to the findings and results in the evaluation, Orientation has:

- Implemented schedule changes;
- Adjusted training O-Team on certain areas;
- Increased the number of concurrent Family Orientation sessions to accommodate growing student interest in attending Orientation with a family member;
- Made decisions about what information can be placed online prior to Orientation; and
- Decided what presentations need to be adjusted or provided in a different format (i.e. continued refinement of the ELM/EPT advising session).

In 2004-2005, Orientation/New Student Programs participated in a CAS review. This comprehensive self-study provided valuable feedback and recommendations to improve the First Year Experience for students. This document is periodically reviewed by the SLL staff.

Action Item 6. (*Medium priority*)

Review the FY philosophy statement and goals to ensure that New Student Programs services are aligned with it. Share the FY philosophy statement and goals with the CSUSM Programming Council (which consists of professionals who coordinate a vast majority of the student programming) to ensure there is support for co-curricular programs which support the 'milestones' which occur through the FY.

Action Item 7. (*Medium priority*)

Establish an Orientation Planning Team (OPT) work group to review and/or implement the FOE action items related to Orientation.

One thread of the discussion was that the "Academic Advising" period preceding "Course Reservations" (i.e., registration) is misleadingly titled. Due to staffing constraints, there is limited one-on-one advisor-to-student interaction to assist students with the development of a lower-division personal academic plan. In the Academic Advising sessions, students receive a presentation on University requirements for continuation and graduation, and procedures for course registration. In reviewing the Fall 2007 First Year Orientation Evaluation, some observations were that

- Academic Advising was identified as the third least helpful part of Orientation (by 25% of respondents, following "Getting a Student planner" and "Various Campus Presentations") out of nine choices, and as the fifth most helpful part of Orientation (by 19%). In the same questions, Course Registration was the top selection for most helpful part of Orientation (chosen by 47%) and third from last on the least helpful list (chosen by 16%).
- One of the last questions on the survey was a free response invitation to offer suggestions to improve the Orientation experience. Approximately one-quarter of these responses were requests for more help (usually specific requests for advisors) during registration.
- Only 7% of students had made a follow-up appointment with their academic advisor. (This may be due to surveys being returned soon after the Orientation session.)

It was speculated that one possible source of student dissatisfaction with Advising/Registration might be not so much the availability of classes as it is with whether these are offered at times that the students feel are convenient for them. The following action items are suggestions for offering more effective advisement at Orientation.

Action item 8. (*Medium priority*)

Reconsider the timing of the Advising/Registration portion of Orientation. For example,

- Break these up so that students begin working on schedules earlier in the day, but don't actually register until the end.
- Consider holding more two-day Orientations to give more time for selection of courses that are aligned with a two-year plan.

Action item 9. (*Medium priority*)

Increase use of Lower Division Roadmaps (LDRs) at Orientation. Specific strategies include:

- Devoting more of the time spent introducing Degree Audit to LDRs (since Degree Audit is not as immediately useful for first-year students as it is for transfer students).
- Send incoming students a message suggesting that they try LDRs before coming to Orientation.
- Require students to be ELM/EPT exempt or have ELM/EPT scores prior to attending Orientation. If this is not feasible, then impose this requirement just on the earlier Orientations.

(Note that this action item assumes that item 11 below is carried out.)

Action item 10. (*High priority*)

Increase staffing in Advising so that there is greater student-advisor interaction at Orientation and throughout the first year:

- Have more advisors present for Orientation. If this is not possible, consider having peer advisors available during registration as CoBA did in Summer 2008 Orientations.
- Have an advisor check student schedules before they leave the room in which they register for courses.
- Make it possible for first-year students to get timely advising. (While it is already recommended that students make a follow-up Advising appointment after Orientation, students report long waits to get an appointment.)

Although it is "off-topic," the discussion on Advising in Orientation led to a discussion of the role that GEL 101 can play in helping students with advising/academic planning. As one of the last committees to finish our report, we know that some dimension committees are proposing making GEL 101 a required course for FY students. We caution that while there are certain advantages to this (one benefit being that it would help students put together complete first-semester schedules during Orientation more easily), implementation of this recommendation should not take place before a careful analysis of the cost of offering enough sections to make it available to every incoming first-year student. This analysis should include costs of direct instruction and impact on Library and Career Center. Even if we can't move this far immediately because of the budget situation, we should be thinking ahead to the point where there is growth or strategic planning money again on campus.

c. Lower-Division Roadmaps (LDRs, pronounced 'leaders')

This is a project that arose at San Marcos out of the systemwide Facilitating Graduation initiative. It consists of an on-line 'atlas' (http://lynx.csusm.edu/roadmaps) of specialized two-year study plans which take into account a student's intended major and starting location along three key "axes of preparedness: English, mathematics and a language other than English. Each LDR is actually a set of up to 60 distinct study plans. These roadmaps which are developed by First-Year Programs working together with academic departments reflect the advice of the faculty in the majors as how to best integrate and sequence General Education and Preparation for the Major requirements. LDRs were introduced over Summer 2006 for certain majors including "Undeclared" for first-year students beginning at San Marcos in Fall 2007. Additional LDRs have been developed each year, and LDRs were available for most majors for the first-year class arriving in Fall 2008 (all except Anthropology, Applied Physics, certain Kinesiology options, Liberal Studies, Social Sciences, and Nursing). As a relatively new initiative, there is no long-term record of assessment for LDRs, and some of the 'assessments' cited below are anecdotal.

- Since LDRs take into account remedial coursework needed by students, their students using them should be enrolled in the correct remedial courses. Joanne Pedersen did a quick study in Fall 2006 of students in a pilot group and found that the overwhelming majority were on the right remediation path.
- In addition to being a useful advising tool during Orientation, LDRs also have the advantage of being independent of PeopleSoft which has sometimes "gone down" during the registration part of Orientation. Due to its usability and accessibility (from home, as well as from campus) LDRs are a key part of the Advising/Orientation "plan B" for dealing with PeopleSoft outages.
- The primary source of assessment data on the use of LDRs is the open-response question added to the FoE student survey (see item #73 in the Evidence Library). Note that students in the "Other Responders" group include continuing freshmen, many of whom entered before LDRs were rolled out to most majors. It appears that a little over half of the students in GEL (who are first-time freshmen) were familiar with LDRs and a little over two-thirds of these used them/like them/found them helpful. It should be kept in mind that LDRs were available in Summer 2007 for all then-existing majors except Nursing, Liberal Studies, Social Sciences, and Women's Studies; thus they should have been introduced at Orientation to over 80% of the incoming FY students. From the student responses to the open-ended question about LDRs in the survey, it seems that several students recalled having seen LDRs at Orientation, but couldn't remember how to find them afterwards.
- The Transitions dimension committee administered a survey to students enrolled in GEL 101 in Spring 2008 which included a question on the use of LDRs: Have you used Lower Division Roadmaps (LDRs)? Only 37.2% of the students answered yes. Students answering "no" were asked why not: 73.2% didn't know what it was; 14.1% didn't feel they needed it; 21.1% said their major didn't have roadmaps yet.

Action item 11. (High priority)

Complete the development of the LDRs website:

- Produce roadmaps for all majors/options.
- Provide more advice on what to do when students can't get all of the classes recommended on their roadmap. (Note: There already are suggestions in LDRs, but do students find these, and do advisors know about these?)

Keep the LDRs website maintained.

Action item 12. (Medium priority)

Understand why students more students don't use LDRs. (One reason is that not all majors have LDRs yet, and this will be addressed by item 13.)

- Put a comment item at the end of LDRs, "Was this helpful for you. Send us your feedback."
- Form a focus group of students who were FTF in 2007-08 to determine what would make LDRs more attractive to them.

Action item 13. (High priority)

Promote use of LDRs by students. (Several students reported on the FoE survey that they had used LDRs at Orientation but couldn't locate the website afterwards.) Specific strategies include:

- Include a piece of paper with the direction on how to get to LDRs (i.e., the URL) in the Orientation materials (e.g., the Student Planner)
- Include a page (or so) on LDRs in the customized materials for the GEL text.
- Remind students about LDRs after Orientation.
- Work with Advising to ensure that LDRs are consistently used as an advising tool for first-year students.
- Make it easy for students to get to the LDRs website. At one point in Spring 2008, students had a long path to get to LDRs: CSUSM Home ➔ Current Students ➔ Academic Advising ➔ First Year Programs ➔ Lower-Division Roadmaps (LDRs). Maybe add a link to LDRs directly from myCSUSM.
- Include a discussion of LDRs in GEL prior to the registration period for the next semester.
- Create a link to LDRs in myCSUSM.
- Make it easier for students to keep track of the particular LDR that they are trying to follow. Explore the possibility of students being able to save their roadmap to myCSUSM. If this could be tracked, then that information would be even more useful than the counter indicated in the following action item.

Action item 14. (High priority)

Identify the most critical LDRs by adding a counter to record how many times particular roadmaps are accessed.

Action item 15. (Low priority)

Explore whether there are reasonable alternatives to LDRs that take more into account than the five LDR factors: major, catalog year, English proficiency level, mathematics proficiency level, and language-other-than-English proficiency level.

d. Learning Communities

The success of the learning community model – cohorts of students enrolled in linked courses with a common theme and array of co-curricular activities – has been well documented in the First Year literature. With this in mind, FYP has worked with several campus units to develop three different learning communities that were offered in 2007-08:

- San Marcos Experience (SME) living-learning community
- First-Year Student Athletes
- First-Year Business Learning Community

The level of assessment and use of assessment in these communities has been low, but this is in part due to the fact that this initiative is still relatively young, and the curriculum continues to develop with each offering. Additionally, we are still in the process of developing effective and efficient recruitment and registration procedures; the advertising for these learning communities has been uneven, uncoordinated and reactive rather than proactive.

Below, we briefly describe each community and comment on the degree to which assessments are performed and used.

<u>The San Marcos Experience Learning Community (SME).</u>

Program description. For AY 2004-05, First-Year Programs collaborated with University Village Apartments (our on-campus residential facilities) to offer a pilot version of our first living-learning community (SME) for 36 first-year students living on campus. In Fall 2004, SME linked together GEL 101, a freshman writing course (GEW 101), and a basic political science course (PCSI 100) around the theme of civic engagement. In Spring 2005, SME students were enrolled in an oral communications course (GEO 102) and an interdisciplinary social science course (GESS 101). Initial feedback (via student and instructor evaluations) was highly constructive and a decision was made to formally launch SME in AY 2005/06. SME has been offered every year since AY 2005-06, with the most significant changes being the replacement of PSCI 100 by a critical thinking course (PHIL 110) in the Fall semester, and – due to the difficulty in coordinating student schedules – the elimination of the Spring semester.

Program Assessment:

- We have data on one-year continuation rates for SME; for the first two classes of SME students after the pilot year (i.e., 2005-06 and 2006-07), the average one-year continuation rate is 79.6%. This can be compared with the continuation rates for GEL students who were not in SME (74.4% for the same two classes), for UVA students who were not in SME (77.2), and students who did not take GEL (64.6%).
- Anecdotal data about some of the undesirable aspects of students taking too many courses together for too long a period of time, was one of the major factors (together with the difficulty in keeping students from taking the courses in the Fall that were intended to be part of the Spring learning community) that informed the decision to contract SME to a one-semester (Fall only) program, effective 2008-09.

First-Year Student Athletes.

Program description. In Fall 2007 First-Year Programs collaborated with Athletics to begin offering specialized sections of GEL 101 reserved for our first-year athletes. The course is taught by our Athletics Coordinator and focuses on the academic and co-curricular needs of first-year student athletes. This learning community is different from the other two in that the students do not all stay together in the other class(es) in the learning community. Instead, the students are divided by sport for their other learning community class, which is a sport-specific physical education class.

Program Assessment:

- Assessment has been very limited. Based on anecdotal evidence from faculty (Athletics Coordinator) and student evaluations, First-Year Programs and Athletics has made the decision to offer one section of a specialized "first-year student athlete" GEL 101 each semester.

First-Year Business Learning Community (FYBLC).

Program Description. In Fall 2007 First-Year Programs collaborated with CoBA to launch our first discipline-specific learning community. Offered to 30 first-time freshmen declared as "pre-business major," the FYBLC linked GEL 101 with a business law course, BUS 202 (a key course in the lower-division pre-business curriculum). The content of the GEL 101 course was customized to focus on academic planning and success in the pre-business curriculum, careers in business, and researching local North County business. The FYBLC students received highly intrusive academic advising and co-curricular activities included a Roundtable Lunch where

FYBLC students met and networked with the CEOs of our local North County Chambers of Commerce.

Program Assessment:

- Since this is a new program, assessment is in the beginning phases. We will have one-year continuation rates for the first FYBLC (pilot cohort) in a few weeks.
- Based on feedback from FYBLC faculty, CoBA advisors and deans, and student evaluations, a decision was made to scale up FYBLC to two cohorts for the current Fall 08 semester (i.e., to 70 students).
- We have also obtained feedback from the Chamber CEOs (via e-mail) who participated in the FYBLC Roundtable lunches (both Fall 2007 & 2008). This feedback is highly positive of the FYBLC model and its connection to the local chambers.

Action item 16. (High priority)

Develop recruitment materials (i.e., brochures, webpages) and effective registration procedures for learning communities and special reserved sections of GEL 101. (Note: This recruitment for learning communities needs to be coordinated with recruitment for summer programs since both involve versions of GEL.)

Action Item 17. (High priority)

Develop a process for developing additional learning communities, which should address:

- Defining exactly what a learning community is (The answer to the question of what distinguishes a "learning community" from a section of GEL reserved for a special population of students should involve academic enhancements that are particular to the community),
- How to determine what new learning communities to offer and what learning community model will be used,
- What support is needed to develop and maintain them,
- How to attract tenure-line faculty to teach in these, and
- Assessment of the effectiveness of these communities.

Action Item 18. (High priority)

Establish student learning outcomes for learning communities that reflect the academic enhancements that are particular to them (e.g., civic engagement for SME). Develop measures to insure that those student learning outcomes are being met. Routinely and systematically collect continuation rates and graduation rates for each learning community.

e. First-Year Academic Support Coordinator (FYASC) Remediation Interventions

There is both a high degree of assessment and high use of those assessments in this initiative. Indeed, the existence of this position owes a great deal to data collected and reported to the Chancellor's Office and locally generated analyses. Since systemwide data on FY continuation rates has been posted on the Chancellor's office website (data goes back to the incoming Fall 2000 class), CSUSM has consistently had one of the three lowest one-year continuation rates in the system. When this rate is disaggregated by whether or not students needed remediation or were proficient, we see that the low overall continuation rate is due to CSUSM consistently having one of the two lowest continuation rates for students needing remediation (and approximately two-thirds of the incoming freshmen needing remediation). Again, looking at systemwide data, we see that the remediation rate at CSUSM is consistently 9% to 15% below that of other CSU campuses with the most similar proficiency profiles. A student-by-student analysis conducted in First-year programs of the 110 students who entered CSUSM in Fall 2004 and who failed to complete their remediation within one year showed that only 30% of these students were registered in the correct courses to clear their remediation in both Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. Many of our students were falling through the cracks in our remediation program.

This led to the creation of the FYASC position, which was filled in Spring 2007. One of the first assignments given to the FYASC was making certain that there was an effective and reinforced communication plan for making certain that first-year students entering in Fall 2007 who would need remediation (especially in mathematics, where depending on the level of deficiency, as many as three semesters of remediation might be required) were made aware of the requirement that they complete their remediation in order to return to the University for their second year. The FYASC raised awareness and eliminated confusion among students regarding the remediation process and the consequences of not taking this seriously through intensive and intrusive communication campaigns including mass emails and phone banking.

One advantage to the delay in the preparation of this report is that we now have access to the remediation statistics for the Fall 2007 first-time freshmen, and this improved by more than 8% to 76% – the highest remediation rate since the Chancellor's office began posting this statistic.

A set of institutional obstacles that needed to be overcome were registration practices which precluded students from registering for the next mathematics course until they had passed the one in which they were enrolled. This has been replaced by a new practice in which students may now register for the next course, and they are removed form it if they fail the current course. Another obstacle which is being tackled has to do with how the grades of the first two remedial mathematics courses (which are Palomar College courses offered on the CSUSM campus) are entered into our administrative database.

Action item 19. (*Medium priority*)

Continue simplifying the registration process for successive remedial mathematics courses.

Looking forward, the FYASC has noted that the longer the required remediation sequence, the more likely students are to not complete it. A closer analysis conducted in conjunction with First-Year Programs and the Mathematics Department showed that while students seemed to be able to get through their first remedial mathematics course, they often stumbled upon taking the second. Experiments involving adding supplemental instruction (SI) to the highest level remedial mathematics course and reducing the class size for this course are scheduled to run in Spring 2009.

Action item 20. (*Medium priority*)

Continue funding the SI and class-size reduction experiment in AY 2009-10. (Note that the results of the first trial won't become available until Summer 2009 at which time the Spring 2010 schedule will already be under development.)

Part 2.

To assess the extent to which assessment activities have led to campus understanding of the key elements of student success, we first reviewed information posted on the Institutional Planning and Analysis (IPA) website in three categories to determine what assessment information was available, and then analyzed the responses to certain questions on the FoE Faculty/Staff Survey.

a. Student allocation of their time

- Slightly over 50% of respondents to a Spring 2004 Survey of Student Opinion who began their studies at CSUSM as first-time freshmen (over 200 students) indicated that the ability to work while attending school was a factor that influences their decision to return to CSUSM.
- From the 2006 NSSE Executive Summary: "One areas of clear weakness, particularly for freshmen, was the amount of time spent preparing for class... When considering these comparisons, it is important to note that San Marcos respondents, particularly freshmen, are more likely than others to hold off-campus jobs, to work 10 hours or more per week and to

provide care for dependents living with them-- activities that typically inhibit student engagement."

- From the Overview of Findings to the Fall 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey: "San Marcos respondents are less likely than others to say they spent at least five hours per week watching television, using online social networks or playing video games while they were in high school. But they are more likely to say they spent at least five hours per week partying and that they came late to class or drank alcohol at least occasionally."
- The NSSE 2008 Pocket Guide states: "52% of FY respondents spend more than 10 hours per week preparing for class."

b. Student/faculty connections

- IPA Surveys of Student Opinion in Fall 2001, Spring 2003 and Spring 2004: 88% of students responding (over 1000 respondents in each survey) were satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility of faculty members.
- Fall 2007 FoE Student Survey (Q07): 26% of respondents responded "high or "very high" when asked to rate the degree to which the institution connected them with faculty members outside of class.

c. Student use of campus services

- From the Overview of Findings to the Fall 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey: "Even though most San Marcos respondents report that they received As or Bs in their high school courses, they are more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to have had tutoring in Mathematics and one in three say they will need such tutoring in college."
- Also from the Overview of Findings to the Fall 2007 CIRP Freshman Survey: "One in four of the CSUSM respondents are first-generation college students … [They] are consistently less confident of their intellectual talents and more likely to feel they will need special assistance in English, Reading and Writing."
- Fall 2007 FoE Student Survey (Q08): 54% of respondents responded "high or "very high" when asked to rate the degree to which the institution connected them with academic support outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring, advising).
- Spring 2008 GEL survey administered in connection with the Transitions dimension: 48% of FY students surveyed had yet to make an appointment with an advisor; one-quarter of these students had unsuccessfully tried to make such an appointment.

d. Student class attendance patterns

- There is no University policy mandating that instructors take attendance at class, hence there is no data available on student patterns of class attendance. Anecdotal accounts indicate that student attendance in certain classes could be better; taking roll (or having students sign in on an attendance sheet) might improve student attendance.

Action item 21. (*Medium priority*)

Encourage instructors of courses identified as having a predominately first year audience (e.g. GEL, GEW, GEO, remedial mathematics) to regularly take attendance.

e. Analysis of responses to selected questions on the FoE Faculty/Staff Survey. For most question, we look at four percentages: the percentage of all respondents answering "high" or "very high," and the corresponding percentages for three special groups (chosen in part because they were large enough for the percentages to be meaningful): administrators, faculty who work directly with first-year students, and professional staff.

Q84. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by demographic information from University databases: The percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 18%, and there was not a great difference among the groups.

Q85. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by measures of pre-enrollment academic skills from University databases: Over one-third of administrators answered "high" or "very high," but only one-tenth of faculty working with first-year students also did. Almost one-quarter of professional staff answered that their work was influenced by this information.

Q86. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by measures of academic skills measured after one semester: The percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 20%, and there was not a great difference among the groups.

Q87. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by measures of student times spent studying: The percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 15%, and while there was not a great difference among the groups, it is not surprising that the percentage was highest for faculty working with first-year students (almost 20%).

Q88. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by measures of student alcohol consumption: The overall percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 11%, but only 8% of (all) faculty answered this way while 18% of all Student Affairs respondents did.

In looking over the responses to questions Q84-Q88, we kept in mind that faculty (especially the non-tenure-track lecturers who teach many of the courses taught by are more likely to be influenced by their direct interactions with students than by aggregated institutional data. Even so, those of us who have participated in FoE have benefited from the treasure trove of reports collected in the FoEtec Evidence Library, and this may be valuable to others.

Action item 22. (*High priority*)

Create an archive of key First-Year information/reports/data. We can start with what has been collected for the FoEtec Evidence library, but this will need to be reviewed carefully to see what items should be 'public,' with sensitive/candid information being made available on my CSUSM. In order for this to retain value, a commitment needs to be made to keeping key reports regularly refreshed and updated.

Q92. University's overall capability to assess what's relevant: Almost one-third of respondents answered "high" or "very high," but there were significant differences across the groups. The percentage was 20% for administrators, 31% for faculty working directly with first-year students, and 39% for professional staff.

Q93. University's overall capability to disseminate results in a timely manner: One-third of respondents answered "high" or "very high," but administrators (59%) and professional staff (51%) were more likely to think that this information was being disseminated than faculty working directly with first-year students (31%).

Q94. University's overall capability to use assessment results for improvement: Almost one-third of respondents answered "high" or "very high," but there were significant differences across the groups similar to Q92. The percentage was 15% for administrators, 41% for faculty working directly with first-year students, and 27% for professional staff.

One likely explanation for the difference in the responses to questions Q92-Q94 between administrators, professional staff and faculty is that they are answering these questions with different definitions of 'assessment' in their minds.

Action item 23. (*Medium priority*)

Develop a campus understanding of the different kinds of assessment, and promote assessment as a vehicle for improvement and not just the collection of data.

Part 3.

As with part 2, we follow-up our report on the extent to which we have found evidence of campus efforts to increase the campus knowledge-base on first year issues with analysis of responses to certain questions on the FoE Faculty/Staff Survey.

a. Travel to conferences/workshops.

Since 2003, our campus has sent campus teams to a wide variety of conferences and workshops to gain expertise on first-year issues

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges Annual Meetings (recently renamed Academic Resource Conferences). These meetings alternate between northern California (San Jose) and southern California (Irvine and San Diego). A San Marcos contingent attends these meetings, with – since Improving First Year Retention has been one of our three self-study themes – special attention being paid to sessions concerning first year issues.
- CSU conferences on Student Success: Facilitating Transfer and Degree Completion (December 2003) and Campus Practices for Student Success Conference (October 2006). These were conferences held in connection with the Facilitating Graduation initiative. San Marcos sent teams of approximately 10 faculty and administrators to each meeting, and gave presentation on the Mathematics Acceleration Program in the Summer (2003), Lower-Division Roadmaps (2006), and General Education Lifelong Learning 101, Career Development and Choice Module (2006).
- A team of six administrators, faculty and staff will be attending a Proficiency in the First Year at the University conference on October 30 and 31, 2008. Additionally, smaller teams of faculty and staff attend other sporadic meetings on English and/or mathematics remediation.
- Orientation staff members have participated in NASPA & ACPA workshops specifically focused on the FY experience.
- Small teams (of two or three faculty, staff and administrators) have attended AAC&U meetings, the annual National Orientation Directors Association conference, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition: Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience (prior to the meeting described further below), and First Year Experience meetings sporadically organized by the Chancellor's Office.

The recent state of budgets in the CSU has especially had an effect on travel budgets. We were fortunate that the strategic planning request that funded our participation in Foundations of Excellence also allowed us to send to teams to key meetings in 2007-08:

- Foundations of Excellence® Launch Meeting in Asheville, NC (August 2007): A team of seven faculty, staff and administrators attended this meeting to receive training by the Policy Center on the First Year of College on implementing the Foundations of Excellence® project.
- A total of eleven faculty, staff and administrators attended the Third Annual Foundations of Excellence Winter Meeting and/or the 27th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in San Francisco (February 2008). Team members collected handouts and brought back ideas and points learned for both the FoE process in particular and the first year more generally.

b. Participation in multi-campus initiatives.

A brief discussion of four examples follows:

- **North County Higher Education Alliance "Task Force on First-Year Success" (AY 2004/2005).** This multi-campus (CSUSM, Palomar, MiraCosta) initiative brought

together faculty and staff to exchange information on the development of programs and best practices for our respective first-year students. A highlight of this initiative was bring out Richard Light to give addresses and run workshops at all three NCHEA campuses.

- **CSU Facilitating Graduation (Beginning in 2003).** A systemwide CSU initiative to encourage and support students in following efficient pathways to the degree during their careers at CSU campuses. This has had a significant impact at CSUSM. It helped to focus attention on several first-year issues including the role of GEL (especially the Career Center module), remediation, and advising (especially the development of LDRs).
- **American Democracy Project (Beginning in 2004).** CSUSM joined the ADP initiative in 2004 with the goal creating an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement for our undergraduates. CSUSM ADP activities that have targeted our first-year students include "campus reads" and guest speakers, In 2006-07, all GEL sections read The Kite Runner as part of an ADP-sponsored campus read.
- **CSU First Year Experience effort**. There have been sporadic efforts led by the office now called The Center for community Engagement over the past several years to bring systemwide FYE personnel together to discuss common issues and share best practices. This might best be characterized as a fledgling effort; we note that one of the materials posted on the CSU FYE website (http://www.calstate.edu/acadprog/fye/index.shtml) is a description of the SME learning community (http://www.calstate.edu/acadProg/FYE/documents/CSUSM_LrngCmty_Lesns04_Plans05-06.pdf).

c. Bringing external experts to campus

Probably the four highest profile experts on the First Year to address large audiences at San Marcos (the last of these virtually) are the following:

- **Dr. Richard Light** (Harvard University) August, 20, 2004: Dr. Light has conducted over 15 years of research on the factors determining student success. He is the author of "Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds." A NCHEA grant provided funds for Dr. Light to conduct a day-long workshop focusing on best practices for supporting first-year students.
- **Dr. Sharon Ferrett** (Humboldt State University) August 15, 2005: Dr. Ferrett is an expert on first-year student success and author of "Peak Performance." McGraw-Hill and NCHEA provided funds for Dr. Ferrett to conduct a day-long workshop on facilitating first-year student success in the classroom.
- **Dr. Jean Twenge** (San Diego State University) April 16, 2008: Dr. Twenge is author of "Generation Me." Dr. Twenge delivered a presentation/workshop on today's students and their use of technology sponsored by Information and Instructional Technology Services (IITS)
- **Dr. John Gardner** (Policy Center on the First-Year of College) May 16, 2008: Sponsored by FYP and Cengage Learning, Dr. Gardner conducted an interactive Webinar (online as on the first-year seminar where he provided extensive feedback on our GEL 101 course. http://prawn.csusm.edu/Mediasite/Viewer?peid=08693bd5-bbfb-43f7-9c2a-0d989b8f3c5e

d. Sharing campus-based expertise

- GEL instructor retreats. First-Year Programs offers a minimum of two retreats for each academic year. These retreats bring together the GEL instructional team for the purpose of professional development and GEL planning. Examples of topics discussed at these retreats include review of student learning outcomes and syllabus guidelines, coordination of the Library and Career Center modules, development of a custom text, use of Mediasite and webCT, use of student response systems, and the American Democracy Project.
- GEO instructor training. GEO instructors meet 3 times each academic year for 2-3 hours per meeting. In those meetings they discuss 1) curriculum issues (brainstorming possible changes, assessing revisions), 2) relevant campus policies and administrative information such as accessibility, privacy, HR, budget, 3) guest speakers covering topics such as student health services, disabled student service, pedagogical ideas specific to our course, evaluating personal biases, technology, etc, and 4) workshops/trainings, usually from ATS on topics such as webCT, accessibility.
- GEW instructor training. Most GEW sections are taught by graduate students who undergo an intense training session prior to the start of the Fall semester, and who are required to enroll in LTWR 602 (Composition Theory and Practices).
- MAPS instructor training. MAPS is directed by the AVP for Academic Programs, who came to CSUSM as a member of the Mathematics Department. The Mathematics Department has requested that MAPS try to take a few "newbies" every summer who would then be potential candidates for teaching MATH 051C with ALEKS in the fall for Mathematics. These considerations have guided the selection of co-instructors and assistants, the curriculum for the one-day training program, and the weekly teaching seminars at which attendance is required for the length of the program. Additionally the assignments of co-instructors and assistants to sections are made so that the experienced mentor the newcomers.
- O-Team training. O-Team is recruited and selected in the early Fall semester with training consisting of two retreats and weekly 2-hour trainings starting in November and running through the end of the Spring semester. This training covers: facilitating icebreakers and getting small groups connected, public speaking, CSUSM campus facts and history, CSUSM values and mission statement, campus tours, how to register for classes and set-up email, First-Year student and family member needs, how to get First-Year students involved, First-Year Student Requirements, working with disabled students and students from different backgrounds, leadership style, and how to work as a team. Special emphasis is placed on departmental and resource information available to First Year students.
- RA training. Resident Assistants in University Village Apartments undergo an intense two-week training; the Allen & O'Hara Community/Resident Assistant handbook that they receive is over 100 pages long. Since most of the UVA residents are freshmen, RA training is always focused on first year student issues. This training features Roommate Conflict Resolution, Counseling, Health and Wellness, and FERPA issues (especially pertaining to communication with parents).

Action item 24. (*Low priority*)

Complete the compilation of key take-aways and lessons learned at the San Francisco meetings, and post on the CSUSM FoE website.

Action item 25. (*Medium priority*)

Identify funding and explore grant possibilities to continue sending CSUSM teams to appropriate national/regional meetings and to bring experts to campus.

e. Analysis of responses to selected questions on the FoE Faculty/Staff Survey. For most question, we look at four percentages: the percentage of all respondents answering "high" or "very high," and the corresponding percentages for three special groups (chosen in part because they were large enough for the percentages to be meaningful): administrators, faculty who work directly with first-year students, and professional staff.

Q50. Degree to which University personnel attend conferences or workshops held on campus focused on the first-year: Over one-quarter of respondents answered "high" or "very high," but the differences across groups are interesting. The percentage was 40% for administrators, 36% for professional staff, and 25% for faculty working directly with first-year students.

Q51. Degree to which University personnel attend national/regional conferences or meetings focused on the first-year: Over one-fifth of administrators and professional staff attended such meetings; one-seventh of faculty working directly with first-year students also did so.

Q52. Degree to which University personnel present at conferences or contribute to publications: The percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 15%, and there was not a great difference among the groups.

Action item 26. (*Medium priority*)

In light of the budget situation, it is not likely that it will be possible to significantly increase the number of teams and individuals sent to off-campus conferences, but there are administrators, faculty and staff doing presentable work and we should leverage the funding spent on these conferences by asking those who attend them to lead local workshops on lessons learned.

Q89. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by current practices at other institutions: The overall percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 17%, but only 27% of administrators and of all Student Affairs respondents answered this way.

Q90. Degree to which the work of University personnel is influenced by professional/published research: The percentage of respondents answering "high" or "very high" was 20%, and there was not a great difference among the groups.

We note that this survey was administered in Fall 2007, and we feel that that – in large part due to the Foundations of Excellence self-study – these percentages would be higher if the survey were re-administered now.

Part 4.

One unique aspect of the Improvement committee was that, since it was also the Steering committee, its discussion on the Improvement dimension tended to bring in aspects of several other dimensions. We record some of the action items that arose out of these discussions here.

As we began the Improvement study, a set of questions that we asked of the five selected initiatives, and which can (and perhaps should) be asked of all first-year initiatives were the following:

- Do these programs have explicit, clearly stated goals?
- Are they the 'right' goals?
- Are we measuring the extent to which these goals are being achieved?

Action item 27. (*Medium priority*)

Compile a complete list of all first-year initiatives, and check that each has clear, explicit goals for the First Year aligned with the First Year Philosophy Statement. Developing these goals will help to clarify the relations between these initiatives, and outline how they might be strengthened and better coordinated.

In connection with our discussion of learning communities, we discussed Supplemental Instruction (SI).

Action item 28. (*Medium priority*)

Assess the effectiveness of current Supplemental Instruction efforts and explore opportunities for expanding SI.

Three recurrent themes were the need for better coordination between the various distributed units, better use of technology (especially a stronger presence on the campus website), and improved advising services.

Action item 29. (*High priority*)

Develop a comprehensive website accessible directly from the University homepage with all of the materials that first-year students need to succeed; make it intuitive and highly visible.

Action item 30. (*Medium priority*)

Develop (Service-Learning) courses to train:

- Peer advisors
- GEL peer leaders
- O-Team (the training already exists; it just needs to be formally housed in a for-credit course)

Action item 31. (*Medium priority*)

Identify courses that have high percentages of W's and undertake a study of the reasons that students withdraw from these courses (when they are withdrawing from the course but remaining enrolled in some other courses). Note: In Part II of the Withdrawal Form, students must provide a statement explaining the reason for the withdrawal, and in Part V of the form (which is "For Office Use") the withdrawal reason is coded as 1. Employment, 2. Financial Hardship, 3. Lack of Academic Preparation, 4. Medical, 5. Military Duty, 6. Relocation, 7. Urgent Family Matter, or 8. Other.