

# Pasadena City College



## Introduction

The Academic Wellness Educators Subcommittee (Meryl Brooks, Anne Cavagnaro, Melissa Colon, Patricia Harrelson, Susan Medeiros, Adrienne Webster) visited the Teaching and Learning Community Programs (TLC) at Pasadena City College (PCC) on February 8 & 9, 2007. Our hosts were the co-directors of the Programs, Brock Klein and Lynn Wright.



Pasadena created the TLC Programs in 2000 to meet the needs of basic skills math, English, and ESL students and faculty. The program began as a five-year project funded by a Title V Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant from the US Department of Education. In 2005, Pasadena was awarded a second Title V grant to support the expansion of the program. In addition to Title V funding, the TLC is supported by grants from:

- [Hewlett/Carnegie/SPECC](#) (Strengthening Pre-collegiate Education in Community Colleges)
- [Irvine/MDRC/SPPIRE](#) (Student Support Partnership Integrating Resources & Education)
- [National Science Foundation](#)
- [MESA](#) (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement)
- [ARCC](#) (Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges)

Drs. Klein and Wright discussed the necessity of using “soft” money to initiate projects like the TLC and explained that they had become skillful writers of successful grant applications. They also indicated that dissemination was one of the components of the Carnegie grant and that our visit helped them accomplish that goal. They were generous with their time and provided extensive information on all aspects of their program.

The remainder of this description will be divided into three components: philosophy, space, and activities. This is a summary description that cannot do justice to the comprehensive nature of the TLC Programs. Whenever possible, we have provided links to websites that elucidate more fully our description. We have also included pictures to enhance the description.

## Description

### PHILOSOPHY

During our visit with Dr. Klein and Dr. Wright, they frequently spoke from their philosophical stance with regard to basic skills development. Dr. Klein has a PhD in learning theory and Dr. Wright has an Ed.D. Their education as well as many years working with developmental learners. They described their learning process in this adventure. We captured some of their thoughts in the statements that follow:

- When planning, it is essential to consider how ambitious one intends future project to be.
- Understanding the process of student learning—and continuing to grow in that understanding—is part of the professional responsibility of being a teacher.
- The TLC addresses the needs of both under-prepared students AND under-prepared faculty.
- Creating a space in which students witness instructors working, learning, and investigating problems provides a significant message about life long learning.
- The TLC outcome data supports the *Dosage Factor*: i.e. the more intensive the intervention the greater the student success.
- Many under-prepared students need structured time to do homework while on campus because they don't/can't do it at home.
- It is extremely difficult to measure transformation.

- Programs like TLC often must deal with “institutional drag” related to resources as well as readiness for change.
- The success of a program like TLC depends upon a sustained/cohesive/connected/intensive effort.

## SPACE

The TLC is a spacious center designed to encourage collaborative learning, easy circulation for instructors and tutors, and a welcoming environment. Large desks that each accommodate two learners are arranged in a pinwheel configuration to facilitate collaboration. A computer on each desk makes a clear statement regarding the centrality of technology in the learning environment.



Upon entering students “swipe” their ID card in a computer to the right of the door to collect attendance data. A waiting/convening area is situated to the left of the door, appointed with comfortable couches and chairs and a rack with magazines and periodicals. According to our hosts, students not only wait for appointments in this area, they also use the space to eat lunch and visit. There are several large whiteboards on the walls near the waiting area. Purposely, they are not a focal point in the center as pedagogy in the TLC relies on interaction, collaboration, and discovery rather than the traditional lecture/chalkboard approach in academic settings.

The Instructional Assistant's desk where tutoring appointments are made is against the back wall of the room. Bulletin boards picture staff, instructors, and tutors as well as an hour-by-hour schedule list of tutors on duty and their subject expertise. This part of the program is called Conexión: Tutoring and Mentoring.



Tutoring and studying are primary activities in the center, but the space is also used for classes. Faculty who are involved in the program are encouraged to bring classes to the center to conduct collaborative and project-based learning. Faculty sign up to use the area and during that time students who are not in the class must leave.

There are three offices adjacent to and opening into the center, two for Dr. Klein and Dr. Wright and one for the Program Counselor, Evangelina Quintanar. A temporary wall separates the TLC from the MESA program, and there is an interior walk way between the two programs



TLC and [MESA](#) are complimentary programs that share students, faculty, and tutors as well as proximity.



According to Dr. Klein, a dedicated space is not only important for engaging students in the learning process, it is *essential* for a creating a commitment to the scholarship of teaching.

## ACTIVITIES

The TLC mission expresses a commitment to helping under-prepared, first-generation college students move successfully from basic skills to transfer and vocational courses. The program develops, pilots, evaluates, and supports innovative and effective teaching and learning practices that encourage collaboration and community building and increase the [retention, success, and persistence](#) rates of students.

The activities of the TLC are designed to take an institutional approach toward cultivating success that includes *innovation, implementation, and evaluation*. Activities can be described under four general sub-headings: professional development, instructional programs, support services, and evaluation. Activities are listed below with summary description accompanying some of the components.

**Professional Development-** designed to increase faculty and administration commitment to and satisfaction from working with basic skills students.

- **Basic Skills Teaching and Learning Institute for Faculty—Intensive two semester program**
- **Faculty Inquiry Groups (FIG)**  
Faculty inquiry groups are organized around a particular course, topic, program or theoretical approach. Faculty collaboratively shape questions about student learning and gather data—both fine grained descriptive data and broad stroke numeric data—to answer their questions. This process of faculty inquiry promotes the scholarship of teaching and learning, bringing the rigor of research to the valued activity of teaching. For example, a [Pasadena FIG](#) studied the problem related to the retention and success for pre-algebra students.
- **Professional Development Courses**

[Susan Teele](#) of UC Riverside was enlisted to offer a for-credit course for PCC instructors on methods of integrating theories of multiple intelligence into the classroom.

- **Guest speakers**

Along with Mike Rose and David Masumoto, Vincent Tinto was one of the presenters who came to PCC whose work touches on many issues at the heart of learning support in colleges. Tinto work is featured in a book, [Assessment to Promote Deep Learning](#), that explores questions related to Student Learning Outcomes and faculty readiness for change. Dr. Tinto also writes about the [five institutional conditions](#) necessary for student retention.

**Instructional Programs-** designed to provide innovative, project-based, and student centered learning.

- **Summer Bridge Program**

PCC sponsors a Summer Bridge/First Year Experience to help students make a smooth transition from high school to college. Outreach is an essential component of the program. The TLC recruiter goes to the local high schools and continuation schools to present information about PCC, TLC, and the .XL program specifically. PCC and the .XL program applications are provided and completed on the spot. Follow-up letters are sent to potential .XL students. Students must respond to the letter acknowledging their interest in enrolling in the .XL program.

The .XL Program begins with students working on math, English, and study and college success skills for six weeks. The summer program culminates in a weekend field trip that involves students in a collaborative learning project. During the first year in college, students take a block of general education courses as a cohort group to extend collaborative work with their summer classmates.

- **First-year academies- basic skills math or English linked with counseling or content courses.**

Learning communities are an increasingly popular approach to educating students in developmental or pre-collegiate classes. Most learning communities involve a cohort of students who co-register for classes in which faculty collaborate to create coordinated assignments. The TLC employs this model in the .XL Program, Career Pathways programs, and Math Paths.

- **Complex [learning community](#) models, e.g. first year experiences and career pathways in multi-semester sequences.**

The TLC has fostered career pathways in the form of a four-semester sequence of paired courses. To date they have initiated programs for Future Nurses, Future Teachers, and Future Artists and Designers.

Another complex learning model at PCC is the Campus-wide Theme Initiative. A campus-wide theme encourages interdisciplinary instruction, active learning, collaboration, and collegiality. For instance, the Spring 2006 initiative was titled [What Drives LA: Work](#) and encouraged students, faculty, administrators, and staff members make the connections between classroom and campus learning and the vibrant working

world of Los Angeles. Five TLC design students created the marketing program for this initiative (see hyper text).

**Support Services-** designed to provide encourage productive engagement, community-building, and collaboration.

- **Intrusive Counseling**  
The .XL Program addresses the issues of the “emerging student” by making them a part of a learning community. The .XL experience is intense and incorporates continuous counseling elements.
- **Peer Tutoring and Mentoring**  
The Connexión: Tutoring and Mentoring Program focuses on building student learning communities that create social networks and provide role models for academic and personal success.
- **Incentives- book loans, internships, scholarships**  
The book loan incentive has proved highly successful and is connected with Summer Bridge program and Math Jams. Research from the [Opening Doors Program](#) at Louisiana Tech University supports the value of Incentive programs.
- **Summer and Winter Math Jams**  
These two-week intensive workshops are for students who have not performed well on the placement testing. Students receive an invitation to the Jam, and the program includes individual assessment to identify specific skill deficits followed by intervention and instruction by tutors and instructors. The program includes a college success component and features a variety of fun learning activities. Students who complete the intensive are allowed to re-take the placement tests and qualify for Life Lines which includes counseling, book loans, and tutoring.
- **Workshops- study skills, financial aid, transfer, etc.**

**Evaluation-** designed to foster a culture of evidence.

- **External – qualitative**  
Graduate students from nearby universities perform a significant amount of the qualitative evaluation.
- **Internal—quantitative**  
TLC has hired a graduate student to create and design a database that will eventually integrate with the main college MIS system. The database, which was in beta testing, tracks students from the first contact at the high school through entrance and participation into the TLC program. The database also provides demographic, academic, and contact information that serves to generate correspondence with students and parents to develop a data base program that interfaces with the college MIS. This system will significantly improve quantitative evaluation.  
The “Swipe” system also provides attendance data.



**Pasadena City College  
WRITING CENTER**

Meryl Brooks

The writing center currently provides open tutoring for walk-in students, but primarily offers tutorial support linked to a .3 unit co-requisite course that accompanies their English 400, 100, and 1A course (equivalent to our English 250, 151, 1A). Students earn .3 units for each tutorial course they take in conjunction with their English course.

The center is staffed by faculty and peer tutors who are recommended by faculty. If faculty have met their load assignment, every hour assigned to the Writing Center is counted as a full hour of overload. If faculty have not met their load assignment then every hour assigned to the center is counted as .8 hour. The center encourages faculty not to tutor their students. This allows students to hear a variety of voices.



The writing center director communicates with the English course instructors on the attendance and participation of their students in the co-requisite tutorial course, which is then counted toward student participation in the English course.

Tutor training is conducted weekly (tutors are paid), and overseen by the writing center director.

The writing center has an informational flyer which publicizes their services and is available at strategic locations on campus. The center also has a couple of floor stands that display a few dozen one page handouts that address the most common problems that students encounter in their courses.

WRITING CENTER LINK: <http://www.pasadena.edu/divisions/english/writing/>

## Pasadena City College MATH RESOURCE CENTER

Anne Cavagnaro

The Mathematics Resource Center (MRC) offers PCC math students Mediated Learning Courses, a Homework Room as well as a testing facility. The MRC is located on the fourth floor of the R building near math faculty offices and classrooms on the third or fourth floor of the building. The center is open Monday through Friday 8:00AM-3:30PM with extended hours Mondays and Wednesdays until 5:30PM and Tuesdays and Thursdays until 7:30PM.

The MRC has 34 computers arranged in long rows for the computer-based learning courses. The courses originally offered in this format included Pre-Algebra, Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra, but the department is considering Calculus preparation courses using this method of instruction. These courses are **not self-paced** but combine computer work with class work.



Adjacent to the computer area of the MRC is a separate room for testing. The room is closed off but has large windows facing the main MRC area. This room is used for proctoring make-up exams for the entire department, it appeared large enough to seat twenty or more. The testing room and scheduling for tutors and use of the main area is managed by a receptionist located at a counter located between the two locations.

In a separate small room, near but not adjacent to the MRC, tutoring services are offered by paid tutors in the "Homework Room". Students log-in and log-out by swiping their PCC student ID card using a scanner in the homework room. Drop in tutoring services are provided five days each week during the operating hours of the MRC. There is one tutor available each hour to help students and they follow a specific five minute rule. Students

needing additional assistance are recommended to the Learning Assistance Center located on the third floor of the D building. The homework room was cordoned off by a temporary wall, had a whiteboard in the front of the room and furnished with trapezoid shaped tables. While math faculty recommend that students do their homework in the homework room, the space was relatively small and not conducive to circulation of tutors.

Additional information on the MRC available at  
[www.pasadena.edu/divisions/mathematics/resourcecenter/](http://www.pasadena.edu/divisions/mathematics/resourcecenter/)

**Pasadena City College**  
**TLC Counseling**  
**Susan Medeiros**

Evangelina Quintanar is the counselor for the TLC Program. She was a former adjunct counselor with EOP&S. My discussion with her was insightful from several angles, but the overall message was clear: Pull together a committed and enthusiastic staff that understand the issues of the “emerging student” and want to be a part of this learning community.

The counselor felt it was important that the students have a physical space as an important part of a community of learners. The TLC is a community comprised of the students, staff, and tutor / mentors. The space is a hub, a meeting place where students converge to study together and to meet with tutor / mentors, staff, and instructors. In addition, students use the TLC as their “home base” where they feel connected with each other. The TCC creates a supportive environment, and an important aspect of this support comes from how the students support each other.

The counselor also emphasized the importance of an ongoing relationship with students. They move from one phase into the next, but there is a continuing connection that may go beyond the XL summer / first year as students return as tutors and mentors or in the career paths program. The quality of the .XL Summer Bridge experience was in its intensity, in its continuity, and in its community. These students feed back into the program and contribute to its strength.

The TLC networks with other PCC programs and services, making the referrals to help its students access needed resources. It struck me that the proximity of MESA to the TLC was brilliant! Perhaps it was simply a matter of practicality in space available, but I see its benefits in much more than shared resources (example- MESA tutors.) One glance at the MESA program and it is obvious that these are on-task students that have created learning communities for their mutual benefit. This is an excellent role model for the XL group in the TLC. MESA has a nearby recruitment pool in TLC as well.

TLC and EOP&S share student populations. Although I did not get the perspective of PCC EOP&S, I did get the impression from the TLC counselor that they regularly communicate. TLC counselor refers students to EOP&S. As EOP&S and TLC are located in different buildings, the counselor indicated that efforts to keep communicating in multiple ways were important. In other words, professional networking was essential. An example of

collaboration is the end-of-year XL Recognition Dinner. XL students who are EOP&S are recognized, and the EOP&S staff is invited. I believe that TLC pays for this event, but it is a shared experience.

The counselor also works with the students who are in the Career Paths such as Nursing, Teaching, Art / Design. My understanding is that some of these are re-entry students. I believe that .XL participants sometimes transition into Career Paths. However, some students want to join Career Paths during the first year. It is not encouraged, but not prohibited.

Ms. Quintanar walked me through the XL program and how the counselor contributes. The TLC recruiter goes to the local high schools and continuation schools to present information about the TLC and the XL program specifically. General information about PCC is also given. (The PCC recruiters also give out information about TLC / XL.) PCC and the XL program applications are given out to interested high school students. The recruiters bring the PCC applications back to the PCC Admissions office. The XL applications are collected at the TLC. Letters are sent out to potential XL students. Students must respond to this letter acknowledging their continuing interest. If they do, they are sent another letter with information about coming to assessment testing. The students are scheduled in blocks of time.

The counselor reviews the assessment results and identifies students who are potentials for the Summer Bridge / First Year. These are mainly students who tested in Math and / or English at below Associate level. However, students testing at elementary algebra who are willing to take pre-algebra in the summer program can be part of XL.

Identified potential students are sent a letter inviting them to an XL program orientation. These students are placed in specific cohorts (A and B) based on their test results. There is another group that tested higher in math (intermediate algebra) and English. These students are put into XL Now- and begin in fall, not summer.

Note: There is a PCC relationship with the local continuation school where students can take up to 15 units of college credit that can be used to meet high school graduation requirements. XL recruits from these students as well.

The counselor indicated that the Summer Bridge program schedule works around the high schools' scheduled ending time. Much communication happens with the local high schools.

Summer Bridge Orientation for students and parents is given the Wednesday prior to classes beginning. During the three hour orientation staff helps the students to get fee waivers and picture identification cards. (The AB540 student issues are handled by the staff as well.) XL alumni are used as guides or ambassadors and lead campus tours.

As there is a high number of Spanish-speaking parents, the counselor conducts the parent segment of the Orientation in Spanish and English. Parent activities are aimed at creating an understanding of the college culture and its academic expectations. These are first generation

students and these parents do not understand the collegiate environment. The counselor works with the parents to get “a commitment of support.”

The Summer Bridge is an intensive 6 weeks program in which students are taking Math and English classes. There is 2-3 hours of study time. During this time the counselor presents workshops on study skills topics. The counselor mentioned that the Summer Bridge program is changing to include a study skills class. This is in response to a need for developing these skills early in the program. The counselor also helps these students with miscellaneous counseling issues and develops an ongoing relationship with them. She indicated that much of what she does is work with financial need issues. She helps direct these students to resources. The summer program has three field trips. The ropes course helps to build community and mutual trust. The program also visits USC and the beach. The ropes course is the most expensive but is considered valuable.

The counselor also helps the students to be correctly placed in the fall First Year Experience courses of math, English and guidance (Counseling 12 – Personal Growth.) The counselor teaches the guidance course. An additional unit is added to make up a full load of classes. The students are prepared to transition into First Year Experience. The XL students continue to stay together as a learning community. The counselor helps the students to develop educational plans, explore career goals, and other counseling services. She said that about 40% of what she does is to resolve financial issues. I was impressed with the intensive study sessions held two weeks prior to finals. Tutors are available and pizza is provided in the TLC.

After First Year Experience students are transitioned into the broader college programs, but the alumni of the XL programs return as mentor / tutors and guides. There is continuity – a key to their success. When entering the XL program in the summer, the students’ pictures are put on the TLC wall. The TLC is working on keeping track of the XL alumni and posting information on the TLC wall- Wall of Fame. This is very helpful in providing the current XL group with role models and evidence that they too can succeed.

My understanding is the Math Jam and Math Path is a separate program at the TLC. In Math Jam, students first take a baseline assessment test, then participate in two weeks of exclusive Math study, then reassess, and continue on in a Math path that leads them into a more advanced sequence of math levels. It is a way to get a jump start on the math sequence. It is total immersion in math. The MESA program then recruits from the Math Path students for those interested in pursuing math, engineering, and science majors.

Summary thoughts:

I think that having the counselor within the space of the TLC is very valuable as the students feel they have access to her services. Counseling appointments are scheduled, but I observed that students could drop-in with questions as well. I think the students felt that there were less barriers – including physical barriers – to this resource. There was a sense of connection as the relationship with counselor and student was ongoing.

Definitely the process of developing college success skills happens over time. Having this ongoing infusion of skills development as part of the program contributes to its success. The integration of “academic skills” and “soft skills” is important.

**Pasadena City College**  
**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

Adrienne Webster

While visiting Pasadena City College with the AWE subcommittee I had the opportunity to tour the College’s Child Development Center located a couple of blocks from the main campus. The children’s environments were clearly designed by very thoughtful teachers. Inspired by Reggio Emilio, the classrooms had appealing displays particularly of natural materials. Teachers invited connections between home and school with magnet boards and banners created by parents for their children. Documentation of both the children’s and teacher’s thinking and work was visible throughout the center. The visit inspired me to lead our Child Care Center teachers in a reflective planning process for the classrooms in our new Child Development Facility. More information about the Pasadena City College Child Development Center can be found at:

<http://www.paccd.cc.ca.us/instadm/socsci/ece/cdc/cdc.htm>.