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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Act 101 Programs

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Introduction

In 1971, the Pennsylvania legislature passed the Higher Education Opportunity Program (commonly referred to as Act 101) to deliver support services to undergraduate students "whose cultural, economic, and educational disadvantages might impede their ability to pursue higher education opportunities successfully"

([http://www.pdehighered.state.pa.us/higher/cwp/view.asp?a=12&Q=41415&higherNav=|10811| &higherNav=|2928|](http://www.pdehighered.state.pa.us/higher/cwp/view.asp?a=12&Q=41415&higherNav=|10811|&higherNav=|2928|)). Higher education institutions compete for grants, which provide resources to support on-campus activities targeted to economically and educationally disadvantaged Pennsylvania college students. Grant money can be used for tutoring, mentoring, counseling, curricular innovations, and cultural enrichment activities.

In February 2008 researchers at Penn State University's Center for the Study of Higher Education began a year-long assessment of Pennsylvania's Act 101 program. This document serves as the final report on those evaluation efforts. The document includes a review of existing literature on programs aimed at low income and underprepared college students—the population that Act 101 programs serve; a report of quantitative findings for two primary outcomes: first-year persistence and college grade point average when students leave Act 101 programs; and a summary and analysis of five institutional case studies. The final section of this report contains programmatic and policy recommendations based on the literature reviewed and data collected for this evaluation.

Literature Review

The language of the Act clearly defines "economically and educationally disadvantaged" students as students who 1) come from families with annual incomes equal to or less than 200% of the poverty level as determined by United States Bureau of the Census, and 2) have predicted

college grade point averages of 2.0 or lower on a 4-point scale (for institutions who regularly use such a predictive formula for admissions) or are judged unlikely to succeed academically at the institution (for institutions who do not use predictive formulas for admission). Both full- and part-time students who meet the criteria are eligible for Act 101 services. According to the program website, the number of students served through Act 101 programs grew from 1,124 in 1971, to over 14,000 in 2004. During the same period, the number of institutions participating in Act 101 grew from 31 to 76, with state appropriations growing from approximately $1 million to over $9.3 million.

Programs, such as those funded by Act 101, which serve students who are *both* economically and educationally disadvantaged are rare (Cheney, Lewis, & Farris, 1995; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, Thomas, & Chunyan, 2008). Cheney et al. reported that one-third of all colleges and universities purported to have at least one outreach program for economically *or* educationally disadvantaged; although, three quarters of those programs only target low-income students. Only 7% of existing programs provide services for students who are both economically and educationally disadvantaged. Perna et al.'s more recent study found that not much has changed over the last decade.

The paucity of programs focused on students who are both economically and educationally disadvantaged limits the empirically-based research exploring the efficacy of such programs. This review, therefore, casts a wide net in order to present the most thorough understanding of services analogous to those funded through the Act 101 grants in Pennsylvania. Attempts were made to identify as many studies as possible that had as their population (or a subpopulation) students who might qualify for Act 101 programs. To expand the number of

articles in this review, however, we reviewed articles that focused solely on economically or educationally disadvantaged.

The literature reviewed focuses on collegiate interventions that have been empirically shown to increase student success, particularly the success of students of low socioeconomic status (SES) and/or students with minimal academic preparation in high school—those students the services of Act 101 are meant to address. This review begins with an overview of the influence on college outcomes of socioeconomic status and academic preparation, establishing justification for programs such as those funded through Act 101. Our review of the literature led to three broad themes, which make up the bulk of this report: interventions addressing deficiencies in academic preparation; interventions addressing academic integration; and interventions addressing social integration. The latter two types of interventions assist low-SES students (who often tend to be first-generation students as well) in overcoming a lack of social and cultural capital. We provide an overview of the characteristics of successful interventions aimed at low SES and/or underprepared college students, followed by recommendations based on improving these interventions.

Importance of Socioeconomic Status And Academic Preparation

Research suggests that a student's socioeconomic status (Cabrera, Burkum, & LaNasa, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and high school preparation (Adelman, 2006) are powerful predictors of college success, particularly in the first years of college. Cabrera and his colleagues, in an analysis of data from the High School and Beyond: 1980 Sophomore Cohort (HS&B/So), found that only 13% of low-SES students earned a college degree by 1993, compared to 57% of students from the highest-SES group. Adelman, in an extensive study of data collected as part of the National Education Longitudinal Study 1988/2000 (NELS 88/2000),

concluded that the quality of a student's high school curriculum was more influential than entrance test scores (i.e., SAT and Act scores) in predicting successful completion of the first-year of college. These conclusions reinforce findings from a similar analysis on a different dataset (Adelman, 1999). Digging deeper, Adelman found that the completion of higher level math classes while in high school appeared to have the single greatest effect on college readiness and successful persistence into the second-year of college.

The interaction of socioeconomic status and academic resources, particularly for students who are low in both, seems to be highly influential in student success. Adelman (2006) concluded that the combination of socioeconomic status and high school academic resources (a composite variable which includes the quality of a student's high school curriculum) was statistically significantly related to eventual degree completion. Students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and have lower quality preparation—students who approximate the students served by Act 101 programs in Pennsylvania—are least likely to persist to degree attainment. Similarly, Cabrera and colleagues (2003) found that students who were from low-SES backgrounds and had minimal academic resources in high school were less likely to graduate from college than moderately- or highly-prepared students from low-SES backgrounds. These findings lead both sets of authors to conclude that a high quality academic preparation in high school can overcome the deleterious effects of a low-SES background; unfortunately, low-SES students are more likely to come to college underprepared.

It is important to note that students with poor academic preparation and/or students from low-SES backgrounds are often first-generation students (Person, Rosenbaum, and Deil-Amen, 2006; Pell Institute, 2004). These students lack basic information (e.g., cultural capital) about higher education, are less likely to receive advice about college from their parents, and often

receive their information about college from questionable sources, such as older peers. The lack of information clouds their planning process and discourages student success (Person, et al.).

Coming from a low-SES background, even when coupled with minimal academic preparation in high school, does not shut the door on college success for students. Cabrera and his colleagues (2003), for example, identified both pre-college (e.g., high school curriculum) and collegiate experiences (e.g., continuous enrollment, academic performance, success in math and science courses) that increase the likelihood that low-SES students will graduate from college. Other researchers (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) have identified out-of-classroom experiences that increase the likelihood of low-SES student success. Comprehensive interventions aimed at these students must address their lack of adequate preparation, and provide means for these students to integrate into the college environment both academically and socially.

Academic Preparation—Remedial and Developmental Education

The negative effects of poor academic preparation on college success cannot be understated. Students who enter college under-prepared enroll in fewer credit hours and stop-out of college more often than their well-prepared peers (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Further, under-prepared students are less likely to graduate from college (Cabrera et al, 2001; Pell Institute, 2004). Perhaps because of the deleterious effects of poor academic preparation, remedial or developmental education has received much attention in the last several years. Developmental education is best defined as instruction for students lacking the necessary skills to perform college-level work. Remedial courses are most often focuses on reading, writing, and/or mathematics (Reason & Colbeck, 2007), important basic skills necessary for college success.

In 2007, the Pennsylvania, the Higher Education Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee convened a hearing to explore the costs and benefits of developmental education at the postsecondary level. In a report and testimony prepared for the hearing, Reason and Colbeck (2007) concluded that research related to developmental education suggests a modest positive influence on overcoming students' academic preparation deficiencies, that developmental education promotes students' persistence into the second year of college; and also that it increases the likelihood that participants will persist to degree completion (when compared with similarly under-prepared students who receive no remedial coursework). These conclusions have been generally supported in research published since this report was prepared, although Bettinger and Long (2004) added that students in developmental education take longer to graduate than students who come to college well prepared..

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlighted the particular importance of academic remediation early in a student's academic career. Remediation in the first semester has been found to be particularly effective in overcoming students' deficiencies, likely because the positive effects of remediation serve as a foundation upon which students can build academic careers.

The direct relationship between participation in developmental education and graduation is difficult to ascertain (Bettinger & Long, 2005; Reason & Colbeck, 2007). In a small, single-site study, Kreysa (2006-2007) found a strong positive relationship between enrolling in developmental coursework and 8-year graduation rates. The improvement in graduation rates for under-prepared students in developmental courses erased any difference in graduation rates for those students when compared to students entering with no academic deficiencies. Similarly, Bahr (2007, 2008) found that successful remediation of deficiencies in math and English results

in increased likelihood of successful educational attainment in community college students. Unfortunately, only one-quarter of the students in need of mathematics remediation in Bahr's data (2008) successfully remediated creating a major concern when considering the efficacy of remedial coursework in postsecondary education.

Academic Integration

Academic integration is comprised of various indicators of the degree to which students are becoming acclimated to the academic "side" of an institution (Tinto, 1993). The definitions often include measures of academic achievement, such as grades and coursework completion (Kuh & Love, 2000). The vast majority of campus-based interventions focus on goals that would be correctly classified as academic integration goals (e.g., academic skill development, mathematics and science instruction, study skills training) (Perna, 2002). Many of the studies reviewed for this report included outcomes that were either directly related to a measure of academic integration (e.g., increasing GPA) or related to making students more comfortable in the academic environment (e.g., social capital building). Findings related to these studies are reviewed in this section.

Developmental, Active, And Intrusive Academic Advising

Developmental, active, and intrusive academic advising appears to positively influence student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Programs that encourage advisors to move beyond course scheduling to build relationships with students, focusing on identifying and achieving students' academic and life goals are considered developmental in nature (Love, 2003); an intervention program that requires advisors to take affirmative actions to contact students regularly are considered intrusive (Pascarella & Terenzini). In a randomized, control group study on a single community college campus, Seidman (1991) found that intrusive

advising increased the first-to-second year persistence by about 20% over a control group sample of students. Pascarella and Terenzini cite several studies that, although less methodologically rigorous, support Seidman's general findings.

<u>Mentoring By Faculty And Staff</u>

Positive mentoring relationships with faculty members are often a byproduct of developmental, active, and intrusive advising relationships. These mentoring relationships are efficacious for underprepared and low-income students. Salinitri (2005), in a quasi-experimental evaluation of formal mentoring program at the University of Windsor (Canada), found that formal mentoring was positively related to college GPA, especially in the first semester, maintenance of good academic standing, lower occurrences of course failures, and ultimately, retention into the second year of college. Mentored first-year students, who were considered "low achieving" based on high school academic records, indicated that peer mentors assisted them with time management and study strategies and served as information sources about university resources. Although this study was conducted outside the United States and is susceptible to self-selection bias (students volunteered to participate in the mentoring program), these findings support the effectiveness of peer mentoring programs for low-achieving college students.

Morales (2008), in a study comparing the resilience of male and female students of color, found that mentoring was effective for these students, although he reported two interesting caveats to this general finding. First, Morales found that women of color were more strongly motivated by career-related goals than were male students of color, although career goals were motivators for the men as well. Morales suggested that career-related information and guidance be a part of intervention programs aimed at women of color. He concluded that women of color,

in particular, could benefit from exposure to career-related experiences through internships and major-/career-related student groups.

Next, Morales (2008) found the gender of a mentor mattered less to women. So, although, men responded better to same-gender mentors, women responded equally well to male or female mentors. Together these findings suggest the importance of mentoring for students of color, and provide some insight into how to structure a mentoring program. Mentoring from a faculty member within a student's possible career field might be a particularly effective lever to improve success for women of color. Although most mentoring programs attempt to match mentor-mentee in terms of important demographic characteristics (e.g. race, gender), this may be less important for women of color.

Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI), when used in the formal manner we use it here, is a program designed to provide extra instruction for specific high risk courses, through the use of collaborative, peer-facilitated learning strategies (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Involvement in SI activities is not limited to low-achieving or low-income students, but is open to all students enrolled in particular courses. A brief discussion of SI is included here because of the efficacy of these interventions for all students. There is some understanding in the literature, nonetheless, that benefits from SI activities might be more powerful for academically underprepared students.

In a large scale synthesis of the literature at the time, Arendale and Martin (Arendale & Martin, 1997) concluded that involvement in SI has a positive effect on students' course grades. These authors also concluded that participation in SI activities was positively related to persistence to graduation. Interestingly, in a study that included "at risk students" who might be more closely related to Act 101-eligible students, Ramirez (1997) found that academically

underprepared students who participated in SI activities were more likely to persist to graduation than were similar students who did not participate in SI activities.

Social Integration

Social integration has been defined in various ways, but is often considered a student's sense of belonging or level of involvement on campus. Generally speaking, the greater the student engagement in college, as measured by time and effort put into educationally purposeful activities, the more likely the student will be expected to persist. Research has shown that students from low SES backgrounds report lower levels of social and co-curricular involvement (Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001) than students from higher SES groups. Institutions with proven records of retention of low SES and under-prepared students find ways to increase their social and co-curricular involvement (Pell Institute, 2004), often through on-campus living, out-of-class engagement with faculty members, and first-year experience programs.

On-Campus Living

Studies related to living on campus consistently show academic benefits of on-campus residence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students living on campus are significantly more likely to persist due to increased social engagement.

Living-learning communities (LLC) are special living options that have received some attention in the higher education literature. LLCs, although structurally heterogeneous, tend to group students, who share one or more academic courses, into special living arrangements. The increased efficacy of living-learning communities (LLC) has yet to be shown conclusively (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and most research offers mixed results about the effect of these living arrangements on persistence (when compared with living on campus, but not in an LLC).

The intensity and quality of the academic programming within the LLC appears to mediate the marginal effects of the LLC.

Out-Of-Class Engagement With Faculty

Positive interactions with faculty members and peers, especially interactions that relate to and extend academic matters, improve student success in college. Faculty-student engagement is linked empirically with increased grade-point average (Anaya & Cole, 2001), persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977), self-reports of learning (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), higher educational aspirations (Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002), and social integration/adjustment (Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999).

On the vast majority of college campuses faculty-student interactions, particularly out-of-class interactions, remain infrequent (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Fortunately, perhaps, the *topic* of these interactions, appears to be much more important than their frequency (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Interactions with an academically substantive focus appear to have a greater effect on knowledge acquisition, critical thinking skills, and academic skill development than do more casual, less-focused contacts. Walpole (2003), for example, found that talking with faculty members about academic matters and working on a faculty member's research project increased the educational aspirations of low SES students.

First-Year Engagement Programs

Although the First-Year Experience (FYE) "movement" in higher education began in the early 1970s, only recently have higher education professionals attempted to move the "movement" beyond the ubiquitous first-year seminar to include a more comprehensive approach to the first year of college (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Proponents of FYE

have encouraged higher education institutions to think about the first year beginning prior to admission and continuing through the ascension into the second-year of college. Further, a comprehensive first year of college will include curricular and co-curricular interventions.

First-Year Seminars (FYS)

Research suggests that participation in first-year seminars (FYS) and the acquisition of academic skills that often accompany FYS participation are powerful predictors of student persistence (Hunter & Linder, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Cuseo (2007) reviewed research relating FYS participation to various measures of persistence, concluding that FYS participation positively influenced persistence within the first year, between the first and second year of college, and to degree completion. Hunter and Linder (2005) concluded that although a few studies present contradictory findings, "the overwhelming majority of first-year seminar research has shown that these courses positively affect retention… [and] graduation rates" (p.288) along with a host of other outcomes.

Cultural Enrichment Activities

Research by Bergin, Cooks, and Bergin (2007) and Cheney et al. (1998) highlights the importance of student engagement with cultural activities, another component of comprehensive FYE programs. Although the primary focus of their study was academic interventions, Cheney and his colleagues (1998) concluded also that "programs that aim primarily at addressing students' academic weaknesses might increase their impact by working on social integration as well" (p. 212). These authors based this conclusion on the relationship (found in a secondary analysis of their data) between attendance at cultural events and persistence into the third year.

Student Group Involvement

Involvement in student groups and organizations also influences student persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005). Those co-curricular activities that serve to increase student involvement in educationally purposeful activities (e.g., student academic groups, service organizations) tend to increase the likelihood of persistence to graduation. The Pell Institute found that institutions can increase the likelihood of low-SES and underprepared student persistence through fostering membership in affinity groups, particularly affinity groups related to student major or career.

Comprehensive Interventions

Although we have presented research in three separate areas for illustrative purposes, the most effective interventions assume a comprehensive approach, addressing academic deficiencies, and academic and social integration of students. Two particular interventions, summer bridge programs and Student Support Services, exemplify the positive effects of this comprehensive approach.

Summer Bridge Programs

Summer bridge programs provide at-risk students the opportunity to acclimate to a college or university environment during the summer prior to the fall in which the students matriculate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These summer programs often focus on building social capital and academic skills: identifying academic support services on campus, developing college-level study skills, and providing academic coursework experiences. Pascarella and Terenzini concluded that summer bridge programs are likely to improve persistence rates among

participants, suggesting that the strength of these programs lies in the opportunity for students to build lasting social and academic support networks early in their academic careers.

      <u>Student Support Services—A Federal TRIO Program</u>

      Student Support Services (SSS) consists of nine federally-sponsored, supplemental academic programs offered to students who are low-income, first-generation, or who demonstrate some physical disability (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These nine programs offer a compressive intervention for at-risk students that include such things as basic skill development, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and cultural education. According to Pascarella and Terenzini the comprehensive approach offered by the SSS program positively affects student success.

      Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, and Goodwin (1998), in a quasi-experimental, longitudinal study of 5,600 students at 50 institutions, found that comprehensive programs that address academic and social integration were more successful. Those institutions at which SSS programs were reportedly blended with other institutional support programs had higher first-to-second-year and second-to-third-year retention rates than did institutions. This finding, according to the authors, suggested institutions should be encouraged to situate SSS programs within larger efforts to support underprepared and low-income students. Creating seamless access to multiple services, including courses, tutoring, counseling, and student orientation, may increase the effect these programs have on student persistence.

      Over and above the structure of the SSS program, specific services like peer tutoring and instructional courses positively affected student outcomes in the Cheney et al. (1998) study. Peer tutoring showed the most consistent positive influence on retention outcomes. Participation in peer tutoring sessions increased a student's likelihood of persisting to both the second and third

year of college. Participation in study skills, writing, and developmental mathematics, reading, and English courses increased students' likelihood of persistence into the second year of college. The positive effects of participation in these activities became non-significant in the model predicting persistence into the third year.

Characteristics of Successful Interventions

Based on an extensive review of the literature, and a career spent studying such programs, Perna (2002) identified five "critical components" (p. 64) of intervention programs aimed at low-SES and under prepared students. These components included

1. goal of increasing the disposition to attend college,

2. experience on a college campus (tours, visits),

3. promotion of college-preparatory coursework,

4. involvement of parents, and

5. outreach as early as 8th grade.

In her study of precollege outreach programs, she found that only one fourth of those targeting low-income students and less than one third of those targeting underprepared students included all five components.

Although several of Perna's critical components are outside the scope of Act 101 programs, particularly since Act 101 programs tend to focus on student success *after* enrolling in college, her findings can inform the work of Act 101 grantees. Insofar as Act 101 programs can reach out to students while in high school, these critical components should be included in their outreach efforts. Given previous research about the importance of preparatory coursework to college success (Adelman, 1999, 2006), promoting rigorous coursework, even during summer bridge programs, appears to be a particularly critical lever for success.

Yourke and Thomas (2003), in a study of six higher education institutions in the United Kingdom which were performing better than average related to the retention of low SES students, found five important areas for success:

1. institutional climate;

2. support and communication prior to, and through, the first-year of college;

3. the use of formative assessment, particularly early in students' academic careers;

4. an emphasis on improving the social aspects of learning; and

5. the willingness of institutions of higher education to adapt in response to the needs of low SES students.

Yourke and Thomas's emphasis on communication of information is particularly important for the purposes of this review.

Communication of information, starting prior to entry and continuing through the first-year of college, is essential to compensate for the lack of cultural capital with which low SES students enter higher education (Cabrera, Burkam, & LaNasa, 2003; Yourke & Thomas, 2003). Building upon Bourdieu's ideas, Yourke and Thomas argue that low SES students, who likely come from homes in which parental education is limited, need to have higher education "demystified" (p. 68). Admissions and financial aid processes need to be directly addressed with these students and students must be given clear and high academic expectations. Personal tutoring of low SES students was identified as a proactive means of conveying information about academic standards and expectations.

Finally, our review of relevant research into programs designed to positively influence the educational outcomes of low-SES and underprepared students leads to several common characteristics of highly effective programs. First, and foremost, successful programs are

comprehensive. These programs are comprehensive in the sense that they do not limit interventions to any one period of time (e.g., first-year of college), but span a period from prior to college enrollment through goal attainment (Perna, 2002). They are also comprehensive in the sense that they address all the needs of the students whom they serve, not simply the students' academic needs (Chaney et al., 1998; Gandara, Larson, Mehan, & Rumberger, 1998). The literature reviewed in this report suggests a framework for understanding the service areas of such programs: academic preparation, academic integration, and social integration.

Academic Preparation

Comprehensive programs to serve underprepared and low-SES students must include services to address the students' lack of academic preparation. Suggestions include:

- Remedial/developmental coursework

- Supplemental instruction and/or academic support for difficult courses

- Peer tutoring

Interventions aimed at remediating a lack of academic preparation must not focus solely on course knowledge and content. Underprepared students will benefit from exposure to specific study and learning strategies.

Academic Integration

Most programs aimed at these students already contain several components that address students' academic integration. The literature reviewed for this report suggests many of these interventions are effective at increasing student's academic performance, persistence, and academic aspirations. Specific interventions should include:

- First-Year Seminars

- Intrusive, developmental advising which includes monitoring of student progress

- Formal mentoring relationships with faculty and peers

These interventions should begin early in the students' academic careers in order to lay a foundation for future success.

Social Integration

This aspect of a comprehensive program may at first appear less important than the other aspects, particularly to faculty members and policy makers unfamiliar with the existing research. The research we reviewed for this report, however, indicates that the integration into the campus environment of low-SES and under-prepared students is essential to their success. Comprehensive programs should focus on and include:

- Activities that build on group cohesion among targeted students

- Cultural activities, including those designed to feature academically successful individuals with whom targeted students can relate

- Student groups designed around major and/or career interests

Quantitative Data Analysis

Introduction

For the quantitative data analysis, Penn State researchers used existing data provided annually to PDE by Act 101 grantees. Our analyses were conducted on data from academic years 2003 through 2006. Because these data were not collected originally for evaluative purposes and there were some problems with the quality and consistency of the data reported by the grantees, the researchers had to make several coding and methodological decisions prior to analysis. First, the variables were cleaned and limited to specific, realistic values (see Appendix A, Table 1). We translated the variables of time spent in tutoring and counseling, which we received as alphanumeric string variables to continuous variables (See Appendix A,

Table 2). Also, we added school characteristics such as size, source of support (public v. private), level (four-year v. two-year), and Carnegie classifications. Finally, nominal data were transformed to dichotomous variables (see Appendix A, Table 4). Additionally, variables that had different values across all four years were coded as the value with the most instances. For example, if a student was coded as female in 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 but male in 2006-2007, she was recoded as female for that later year. In instances where there was no modal value, the variable was recoded as missing. For example, if a student was coded as female in 2003-2004 and male in 2004-2005, the gender variable was recoded as missing.

After running some basic descriptive analyses, we found that most of our data passed tests of normality, with variances in acceptable ranges. The only exception was number of counseling/tutoring contacts and time spent in counseling/tutoring. Ott and Longnecker (2001) suggest transformations of data with outliers that cause exceptionally large variances. Because the data were bounded by zero at the lower end, we used a square root transformation for number of counseling and tutoring contacts and time spent in tutoring and counseling. Finally, we created one database in which each student's data file across all four years was combined into one case (i.e., each student was a single row in the data file). Instances where students were located at different schools were considered two different students and recoded as two separate cases (i.e., the students' data were in two rows—one for each school attended).

Basic Descriptive Comparisons

Once data cleaning was completed, we ran basic descriptive comparisons using means and chi-squares. Because of the large number of cases and the large number of pairwise comparisons, we set alpha at $p. < .001$ for all statistical analyses, a conservative parameter of statistical significance which should decrease the possibilities of Type 1 errors. Appendix B

provides mean comparisons of pre-college characteristics (high school GPA and SAT scores) across different groups. These comparisons indicate that male students had statistically significantly higher high school GPAs and math SAT scores than female students. There was no significant difference for verbal SAT scores.

Pairwise comparisons by race revealed that Asian/Asian-American students had statistically significantly higher high school GPAs than all other racial groups. No other between-group differences were significant. All student groups of color had significantly lower SAT scores than White students, with the exception of Asian-American and Latina/o students, who had higher math SAT scores than other groups in the sample. African-American students had the lowest average SAT scores on both tests.

As one would expect, precollege academic measures were related to the type of postsecondary institution a student attended. Students attending Doctoral-level and Special institutions had the highest high school GPAs and highest SAT scores, significantly higher than students at all other institutions. Average high school GPA grew progressively and proved to be significantly higher for successive Carnegie Classification. No statistical differences in math or verbal SAT scores existed for students attending Associates, Bachelor, and Masters-level institutions. Students attending private institutions and large/very large institutions had significantly higher high school GPAs, whereas students attending public and large/very large institutions performed better on the SAT.

Predicting Persistence

Student persistence was the outcome of primary interest for this evaluation. After basic comparisons were completed, we estimated logistic regression models to determine if participation in Act 101 activities influenced students' decisions to continue in college. Because

the number of students in Act 101 programs who persisted greatly outnumbered the number of students who dropped out, we randomly selected a group of "persisters" proportional to the "non-persisters." Completing the analysis on this reduced, but equally proportioned, data set allowed estimation of a more stable model.

We began with all relevant variables included in the model and, using a stepwise backward deletion procedure, systematically removed non-significant variables until we achieved a parsimonious model in which only significant predictors were included. The initial model included gender, race (minority/non-minority), high school GPA, math SAT score, verbal SAT score, entry age, status at entry into the program (freshman/non-freshman), summer program attendance (yes or no), 1st year GPA, GPA in final year of program, number of contacts for counseling and tutoring, and total time spent in counseling and tutoring. Since we had two types of data for counseling and tutoring (total number of contact and total amount of time spend), we compared models that used these variables (contacts versus time) separately. This analysis indicated that number of contacts was a more powerful predictor of persistence than the total time spent in counseling or tutoring. In models utilizing number of counseling or tutoring contacts, both counseling and tutoring were significant predictors of persistence. In cases where time was used, neither were significant predictors.

The final, reduced model successfully predicted 72.9% of the students who dropped out and 80.6% of the students who persisted. When applied to the entire dataset, our model successfully predicted 80.0% of students who persisted. The pseudo-R^2 of 0.374 can be loosely understood as analogous to other R^2 measures, which would suggest that our models accounts for 37.4% of the variance in the data (see Appendix C, Table 6). Our analysis found the following variables positively predicted persistence into the second year of college:

- Being a person of color

- High School GPA

- Exit GPA

- Counseling contacts

- Tutoring contacts

A student's exit GPA, the GPA reported when a student left the program (for whatever reason) had the strongest effect on persistence.

The following variables had negative relationships with first-year persistence:

- Age

- Entering the Act 101 program as a freshman

- Higher 1st year GPAs

Predicting Exit GPA

Exit GPA is another outcome of interest for the Act 101 evaluation. College-level academic performance (as measured by GPA) is an important outcome itself, but, as our previous analysis indicated, is also a strong predictor of persistence. Using procedures similar to those described above, we estimated a parsimonious model to predict exit GPA. The final model accounted for 92.3% of the variance in exit GPA (see Appendix C, Table 6). The final regression analysis for exit GPA showed that,

- Counseling had no significant effect on exit GPA.

- Being a student of color had a significantly negative effect

- Higher high school GPA had a significantly positive effect

- Verbal SAT was a significant factor but was neither negative nor positive in its effect

- Attending a summer bridge program had a significantly negative effect on exit GPA

- First-year GPA had the strongest significant effect (effect was positive)

- Time spent in tutoring had a positive effect

As one might expect, a student's first-year GPA had the strongest relationship with exit GPA, reinforcing the importance of providing a strong academic foundation for college students.

Supplementary Analyses

Following completion of the primary analyses on each of the outcome variables of interest, we completed two supplementary analyses. First, we attempted to further understand two counterintuitive findings related to attending a summer bridge program. Recall summer bridge participation was not statistically significantly related to persistence and was *negatively* related to a student's exit GPA. Based on information from PDE, we flagged institutions that required 120 contact hours for summer bridge program participants. We then completed the modeling procedures for these institutions with intensive summer bridge programs.

In both analyses, the initial finding remained the same, although we caution against drawing too strong a conclusion from this finding. The list of intensive summer bridge schools was for summer 2008. We made the assumption that many/most of the schools on this list would have included intensive summer bridge programs during the years for which we have data (2003-2006). This assumption, of course, could be erroneous since Act 101 regulations were moving more institutions to a 120 contact hour requirement for summer bridge programs; many schools on the 2008 list may have instituted the 120-hour requirement after our data were collected.

Second, we reviewed the grant applications for the 2008-2009 academic year for each Act 101 institution to identify quantifiable, institutional-level data that could be included in multilevel analyses of three outcomes: first-year GPA, final GPA, and first-year retention. As

with the summer bridge information above, the data extracted from the grant applications were from different years (2008-2009) than the outcome variables under consideration. We recommend caution in interpreting the findings. We identified four variables:

- Percentage of Director's time dedicated exclusively to Act 101
- Number of years the current Director has been with the Act 101 program
- Ratio of students to professional tutors
- Ratio of students to professional counselors

These four variables were included, with the significant variables identified from previous analyses, in a multilevel analysis of each outcome. In general, percentage of the Director's time dedicated to Act 101 activities was the only institution-level variable to significantly related to any of the outcomes. Specifically,

1. The percentage of Director's time allocated to Act 101 was the only additional significant predictor at 0.000 (the higher the better) in predicting 1st year GPA, but added no real predictive power to the model.

2. The percentage of Director's time is allocated to Act 101 was the only additional significant predictor at 0.006 (the higher the better) predicting final GPA, but added little predictive power to the model.

3. The percentage of Director's time allocated to Act 101 was the *only* significant predictor in predicting 1st year retention. In this model, many individual-level variables were no longer significant after accounting for the institution-level predictors. The final model decreased our successful prediction rate as FT entry status, school control, and counseling contacts were no longer significant

Discussion

Analyses of the Act 101 data revealed several interesting findings. In both models, tutoring (whether measured as time spent or contacts made) consistently had a strong positive effect on persistence. The strength in the significance of tutoring may be due to its positive effects on GPA. Several studies have shown tutoring to be an effective method of improving academic performance. Bender (2001) found tutoring and teaching study skills positively affected academic behavior and increased predicted GPA; Bean and Eaton (2001 – 2002) connected tutoring with increased student persistence. Citing the U.S. Department of Education, Weinsheimer (1998) concluded that tutoring had a positive impact on not just retention but also grades, especially during the first year of college. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) indicated a variety of tutoring programs and teaching methods that have had a positive influence on GPA and academic performance, including Supplemental Instruction, collaborative learning, and small group learning. Additionally, comprehensive support programs, including those that incorporate tutoring services, have had a positive influence on graduation and persistence, especially across at-risk populations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

First-year GPA was a strong predictor of both persistence and exit GPA. This finding is consistent with research, which indicates that the first year is critical to students' decisions to graduate. Allen and Robbins (2006) found that first year academic performance not only affects students' decisions to continue but also influences their decision to stay within their major.

These findings, as well as existing research, suggest that interventions in the first year can influence students' decisions to persist. Braxton (2000) suggested that as many as 25% of students leave college within their first year. Therefore, retention practices that help first-year retention are critical in increasing overall retention. Adelman (2006) found that first-year GPAs accounted for as much as by 22% of the variance in degree attainment. Pascarella and Terenzini

(2005) suggested that first-year seminars and other first-year interventions promote persistence

directly and indirectly through both academic and social integration.

Qualitative Case Studies of Five Act 101 Programs

Introduction

As indicated in our original proposal we selected three institutions for our case studies based on objective factors. Specifically, we based our selection on the average persistence rates (PR) over the four years of available data as illustrated by a combination of the percentage of students who had graduated from the institution within four years of entry and those who had persisted. We also sought out different institutional types, so decided to include one large, public, research institution, one institution that is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), and one private university. In keeping with this selection strategy the following institutions were selected:

Temple University　　　　87.35% PR

West Chester University　　84.14% PR

La Salle University　　　　75.43% PR

We also included two other institutions among our case studies. The first was Bloomsburg University, also a PASSHE institution. This school was included because it afforded us access to its six-week Summer Bridge Program (SBP) during the summer of 2008. The second was Harrisburg Area Community College. We included this school because of the number of community and two-year colleges participating in Act 101, and because we thought it important to understand how an Act 101 program operated in this different kind of context.

Persistence rates for these institutions were as follows:

Bloomsburg University   58.44% PR

Harrisburg Area
Community College   75.14% PR (for two years)

The case studies were intended to yield information about how Act 101 programs are organized and enacted at these various institutions and to identify whether among common elements we might be able to detect "best practices" that could be useful for other programs to consider. Prior to conducting the site visits necessary to the investigation, we reviewed the *Guidelines for Act 101 Programs* provided to us by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), read the report titled *The Impact of Act 101 Programs in Pennsylvania* (Higgins & Glanville, 1983), paying particular attention to "Section X, Case Studies," and conducted a pilot case study at our own institution, Penn State University, where the Director and his staff gave generously of their time.

The above activities allowed us to more fully understand the Act 101 Program and, most importantly, the basic components concerning the developmental curriculum, counseling and tutoring services, and the newest component, access to cultural activities. The pilot study enabled us to design interview protocols to be used with various program personnel and also signaled what might be challenges both administering and delivering services.

Site Visits

Site visits to the five selected institutions occurred between July 2008 and February 2009. Our research team had been introduced to Act 101 Program Directors at their annual meeting held in May 2008 and some directors at that meeting indicated their willingness to allow us to visit their campus. Initial solicitations for the case studies were made by e-mail. It was made

clear to the directors contacted that we were looking for programs reporting better-than-average

data and that were generally known to be "good programs." The purpose of our visit was to

attempt to understand what factors or practices contributed to making theirs a "good program."

By adopting this positive strategy we think we were successful in reducing the anxiety that

inevitably is associated with any type of "evaluation." Each of the five programs initially

approached accepted our invitation to participate.

A team of four people worked on the qualitative portion of the evaluation: Dorothy

Evensen, a co-principal investigator and a group of three doctoral students/research assistants.

With the exception of one school (La Salle), all site visits were conducted by two team members

over a full day or day-and-a-half period. Prior to each visit, the program director sent various

program materials that included Student Handbooks, letters and memos from the director to his

or her staff, schedules of classes and course syllabi, and lists of various extra-curricular activities

and events. In addition, each director sent us an itinerary that included the names and titles of

staff persons and administrators associated with the program. With the exception of one school

(Temple) we were able to meet with small groups of students and at all sites we were allowed to

observe at least one class in session.

Two of the site visits took place during the Summer Bridge Program (SBP); however, all

of the four-year institutions included in our study operate SBPs. Indeed, we found in the long run

that "the programs" per se must be looked at holistically. In all cases, the SBP sets the tone for

the program, establishes the level of engagement and commitment necessary for participation,

but most of all serves to give this group of students, who by all conventional indicators are

beginning their college careers "behind" the regularly admitted peer group, the means to advance

their position. The five to seven weeks of intensive work required by each SBP placed these

students ahead of first-year students arriving on the first day of the fall semester in terms of literally knowing the lay of the land enabling them to easily navigate the geography of a large university, in terms of social relations, and in many ways in terms of academics since they had clearly been brought to understand the difference between what is expected in college from what was expected in high school.

Another factor that affected our site visits had been discovered during our pilot work at Penn State. That is, we had not realized that Act 101 is often part of a larger program. At Penn State it was called the Comprehensive Studies Program. This aspect of programs will be discussed more fully when we propose the results of this study.

Data Collection

As noted above, data were collected even before site visits took place and we left each site with armfuls of additional documents and paperwork. These materials were sorted and filed by institution for later analysis. Interviews, most of which were conducted one-on-one, constituted the largest amount of data. Interview protocols were designed based on the information gleaned during our case study. Notes were taken during each interview and a recorder was used only as a way to more fully move the jottings taken during the interviews into more fully developed field notes. These were compiled shortly after the site visits.

We prepared three interviews for the Director. Our first meeting was meant to be informal, and usually took place over a meal the evening before the site visit began. We asked about the history of the Act 101 program, the components, and the personnel. The second interview occurred either at the start of the next day or somewhere in the middle of that day. This interview focused more on administrative duties such as methods of assessment, communication systems, relations with other special admissions programs, and relations with the larger college

or university. We also asked the Director to help us to understand how goals for the program were formulated and evaluated. Finally, the third interview occurred at the very end of the visit and served to clarify and confirm what we had learned over the course of the visit and to reflect on notable achievements, challenges, and constraints.

Protocols were also prepared for other Act 101 staff persons: counselors, advisors, tutors, and students. In addition, most program directors arranged for us to meet with at least one senior administrator to whom the Director reported. In these interviews we asked about the person's background and history with the program, the nature of their work, and what they perceived as effective practices and challenges.

Meetings with students, when able to be arranged, tended to be in groups. In most cases Directors had notified students of our visit and invited students at different years in the program to talk informally with us. As a way to triangulate among informational data, we asked students to tell us what they did in the program, what uses they made of the various components, and which among them they found particularly useful. Finally, we asked them what it meant to them to be part of the Act 101 program at their respective schools.

Our final data source was observational data. At each institution we were invited to observe at least one classroom session of a developmental class. We also observed group counseling sessions and special workshops. One of the benefits of visiting the programs, however, was to observe the day-to-day interactions and simply observe what people do as they see each other in the hallways or talk about a student's progress at lunch. At almost every school we observed some small emergency where usually the Director is called upon to excuse and absence, arrange for after-hours tutoring, help find some extra funding for books, or simply listen to a student trying to negotiate a pressing family problem.

Data Analysis

Before the project began, we had intended that the qualitative data would yield mostly *information* about how each program operated and how particular components contributed to the *success* of each program. Specifically, we were on the lookout for *best practices.* It did not take us long, however, to realize that all of the programs we visited were made up of the same pieces, albeit enacted in different ways. The *way* that a program operated seemed to be a function of the institutional context especially the way the program was able to relate to and make use of additional institutional resources. In other words, the larger the university the more *embedded* the program appeared and the more it was able to rely on accessing supplemental services beyond those afforded directly through Act 101.

But there was something else that made these programs different from each other – something a bit less tangible, but entirely palpable. It was in pursuing this *unknown* that brought us to reconceptualize our analytical scheme.

Superlatives invite skepticism. Framing our analysis in terms of a *best practice* metaphor proved unproductive in that there was no way to ascertain that anything was *best.* We began our revised analysis from the point of *good*. Each of these programs was a *good program* in terms of the statistical analysis. So the question became: *What is it that makes this a good program?* The response to that required a deeper interpretation of the data than would have been undertaken had we concentrated on looking for information about best practices. In particular, this revised analytic method brought us to look into the language used – the repetitions, the metaphors, the allusions, the silences – within written documents, within interviews, and sometimes communicated through pictures on bulletin boards or logos on tee-shirts, to make inferences about what made each program what it is.

We coded the data in terms of concepts. In other words, we did not simply label portions of data in relation to components of the program, but we attempted to capture and name the significance of what was being reported. Some of the concepts produced what are called in qualitative research as *in vivo codes*: *intrusive counseling* and *circle of caring* provide examples of these. Other concepts were arrived at through reflection, memoing, and discussion. Once concepts were compiled, larger patterns were sought. These might be thought of as the *themes* that act as superordinates and can be aggregated under a *main theme* that captures the *Geist,* or *spirit*, of each Act 101 program.

As a way of checking our interpretive work we called upon another tool of qualitative research, what is called the *member check,* to address threats to the validity of our analytical work. Once the analysis – the coding, the identification of themes and main themes – was completed, case reports were composed. These reports were then sent in draft form to the Directors of the five Act 101 programs involved in this part of the study. They were asked to read through the drafts first to determine whether or not our rendition of their program "rang true" for them. Second, they were asked to look at the *information* provided in the text to determine its accuracy. Arrangements were made with the Directors to conduct a telephone interview during which they were asked to share the reactions and responses to the case report. Interviews ran from 30 to 60 minutes and with only one exception, Directors resonated with our interpretation, one saying that we were "right on," another commenting that we "hit the nail on the head". The one Director who did not immediately see the relevance of some of the metaphorical interpretations of her program came to accept them once she realized that some of the concepts were derived from student interviews. In short, she had not considered the new, often strong meanings that students were making as they engaged with the program personnel.

What follows in the next sections are the five, final versions, of the case reports that were composed as described above. These cases are presented in alphabetical order. Certain stylistic conventions should be kept in mind while reading these reports. First, concepts are written in italics and themes are used as headings to various sections. Each report begins by naming the institution and its Director, followed by a heading that captures the main theme governing the program. Quotes are used when referring to the actual language taken from interviews or documents.

Following the case reports is a cross-case analysis where factors found to be general across the five programs are proposed and factors unique to each are discussed and considered in terms of the literature review provided earlier in this research report. Essentially, the qualitative analysis attempts to address the following question:

How can understanding "good programs" contribute to "better practice"?

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania Case Report

Program Title: Act 101/EOP Program

Dr. Irvin Wright, Act 101 Director

Major Theme: Building Community By Starting With Family

Creating a Welcome

There was a time not all that long ago when ethnic minorities and persons of color were not welcome in the town of Bloomsburg. Even into the 1980s Klan activities were recorded. The Director of Bloomsburg University's (BU) Act 101 and Education Opportunity Program recalls that the university's and town's images suffered when instances of racial tension, including a cross-burning incident on campus, received national media coverage. For example, a

Philadelphia-based Black newspaper highlighted the cross burning as evidence that the BU campus had figuratively erected "keep out" signs for many prospective students of color. But BU, he reports, has come a long way since those days and starting in the late '90s has increased its minority enrollments by attending to more active *welcoming.* The Director credits the institution itself that has stepped up its efforts to market BU in urban areas, increased funding for various initiatives aimed at recruiting and retaining minorities and other groups of non-traditional students, and taken affirmative steps to better integrate these students at the campus level. The effects of *creating a welcome* can be seen in positive statements that BU staff persons receive from high school counselors from urban areas when they recommend their students for the Act 101 Program. In short, the welcoming message transmitted from BU announces to prospective students that you can *have a home here.*

Getting the House in Order

Indeed, the Act 101 Program has become one of the primary ways of bringing minority students into the BU family. On average, about three-quarters of BU's minority student population enters the university through the Act 101 program. Each year, about 70 Act 101 students are combined with another approximate 70 students admitted through the Educational Opportunity Program to form a cohort that attends a six-week summer bridge program (SBP). For the message of *welcome* noted above to ring true, however, much has been done to get the *house in order*.

First, there needed to be a pulling together of the *immediate family*, the Act 101/EOP staff per se. Until 2001, the Director reports, staff were fragmented across different locations and simply did not get together regularly even for meetings. There was a general lack of cohesion within the program, and poor communication resulted in "mistrust" among staff persons. So in

2001 a reorganization was launched, staff persons were added, and very recently new facilities were made available concentrating program personnel into new offices in one building. Second, as the program itself grew and its visibility increased, steps were taken to ensure that the program gained "legitimacy" within the larger academic community. For example, as the SBP added courses that "counted" for academic credit and called upon regular faculty to teach such classes, faculty became more involved in the program and recognized its value and the capabilities of its students. Faculty across campus also "come to know" students admitted through Act 101 through the various communication mechanisms required by the program and regularly "come in here and talk to me" about students resulting in what the Director refers to as a "communal atmosphere." Finally, steps needed to be taken to break the tendencies to *socially segregate* across campus whether other- or self-imposed. Hence, the Frederick Douglass Living Learning Community (FDLLC) was launched in 2001. The FDLLC is just one of 11 living and learning communities (LLC) at BU, which are defined as "a group of students who share common academic interests, live together in a residence hall, participate in activities together, and are also enrolled in a cluster of related courses." The goal of the FDLLC was to establish an LLC that fostered an appreciation for diversity and created, as near as possible, a 50/50 balance between whites and students of color who, as part of being members of the same *household,* share housing, classes, teachers, tutors, and out-of-class activities. The FDLLC has proven to be the most popular LLC among Act 101 students. Initiatives such as these have served not only to advertise BU as a welcoming place, but also to make it into a welcoming place.

Our Household

At the head of the BU household for Act 101 students is the Program Director who has a long history with the institution starting from 1975 when he served as a summer counselor,

continuing from 1977 through 1996 when he held the position of Assistant Director of the Act 101/EOP, and culminating through today where he serves in his present capacity as Director. Like a *good parent*, the Act 101 Director is "always available" to students and his *caring* is demonstrated by his open door, which closes when students bring their "serious problems" to him. Again, like a *good parent* he holds regular "talks" with those in his charge during the SBP when each Monday evening from six to seven he gathers students for a "university seminar" structured around various issues that affect them during the SBP or will affect them later as they move into the academic year. The topics of the "talks" center around the *expectations* of the program and "issues that come up" during any given week of the SBP. During the academic year, the Monday evening seminar continues for about 150 Act 101 students and excludes only those approximately 60 students who are in LLCs. The topics of the seminar have included academic transition, social transition, financial aid, intergroup issues, "baggage" from home, drugs and alcohol, career development. and sexual education.

But inevitably a *good parent* needs to act responsibly when pre-emptive talks and proactive efforts fall short. The Director spoke about not wanting the Act 101 students to be "outliers" and to encourage them to enjoy the social aspects of college life. However, if partying gets out of hand and "if they're lying in the street downtown and the cops pick them up, then the next person to know about them is me, and I've got to do something about it." That "something", however, is not what had been done in the past – immediate dismissal. Before that option is taken the Director uses tools such as his seminar and his close knowledge of all students to try to impress upon students that behaviors must change and that they must reach out to the community for help in order to change.

The Act 101 staff appreciates "how helpful" it is "having an experienced and attentive director." Of course, the Act 101 staff persons fill out the *immediate family* of the program. This group of people teaches the developmental courses in reading, writing, and math that do not count for graduation credit, but are necessary to lay the foundation upon which credit-bearing courses will rest. Other faculty teach college-level courses among which are College Composition, Public Speaking, Economics, Philosophy, and Spanish. Act 101 staff persons also coordinate and conduct tutoring and counseling services.

Younger members of the Act 101 *household* are Program Assistants. These are mainly former and successful SBP students who live together with the new SBP students in their residence halls and are available each day to help students negotiate the "little things" that can quickly become "big deals". Program Assistants help facilitate orientation, study halls, and daily activities and also serve as "models of success" for SBP students. For the 2009 session, the SBP hired 11 program assistants and the majority are sophomores and juniors who previously had also participated in the SBP and continue as students in the Act 101 program.

The family *extends* to other areas of the university who are collectively interested in bringing minority students into the fold. For example, the Director reported that persons in Residence Life "have done a nice job of aggressively recruiting students of color to become Community Advisors" (commonly known as residential advisors at other institutions). In fact, this past year, four freshman Act 101 students were selected to be community advisers. This is the highest number in the program's history. The Director credited the Mindfulness course with helping students develop and display the personal reflection skills specifically watched for during the interview process required for the position.

Getting In

Just as a *material contract* solidifies the exchange between a home owner and a new buyer, and as a *virtual contract* constitutes the understandings between parents and their children, so do Act 101 students gain admission to BU by signing a contract. Interestingly, the parents of students also sign the contract. The agreement involves signing on to the *way we do things,* abiding by the *house rules,* and understanding *consequences* that will render the contract null and void. In other words, it is made clear to students how the Director and staff persons have operationalized *what they have to do* when students do not abide by the terms of the contract.

The Way We Do Things/Running the Household

First and foremost, students are apprised that in addition to participating in the structured curriculum of the summer bridge program they must also make good use of mandatory tutoring services, counseling, and study hall time. The SBP day runs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The message to *be prepared* is brought home to students who have a responsibility to complete assignments (to the best of their abilities) before attending a tutoring session. They are also informed of the program's strong belief that "the more we know about the students, the more we can help them get through the first year." Starting in the SBP and continuing through the first academic year, students are required to attend counseling sessions, meet regularly with advisors (both professional and peer advisors), and participate in the Director's weekly evening meeting. However, as noted above, students who are enrolled in living and learning communities are exempted from the latter. These means of *connecting* with the program are combined with other structures like the mentoring program and various leadership opportunities to integrate students into the larger university. Also, students stay connected with the Act 101 program beyond the

first year by serving as Program Assistants, continuing to participate in Living Learning

Communities, or work as peer tutors and student secretaries.

In addition, there are two ways of *running the household* that are unique to this Act 101

Program. The first is a food program that has been a part of the program since 1997. Two

motives drive this program. First, it aligns with the program's *holistic approach* by stressing the

importance of good nutrition and its role in maintaining a healthy body and an alert mind.

Second, the food program secures funds from the federal Summer Food Service Program (see

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Summer/ and brings additional revenues to BU's Act 101 program.

These funds are used to offset student tuition and housing fees.

The second unusual component of BU's Act 101 Program is a seminar in "Mindfulness"

again introduced in the SBP as a weekly, non-credit experience, but extended into coming

academic years amounting to six credits of academic work. The person responsible for designing

and teaching this course describes it as follows:

> Mindfulness practice has its origins in Eastern Buddhist philosophy and refers to the process of being attentive to and aware of what is happening in the present moment with widened attention—attention that notices details that would otherwise be missed. In the United States, Jon Kabat-Zinn introduced the practice in secular settings. Reviews of mindfulness-based programs have supported their efficacy in supporting participants into well-being, improved social relationships, improved psychological mechanisms of self-regulation, and improved symptoms in a number of disorders. In the present context students are introduced to the technique of using a focus on the breath to interrupt the mind's tendency to wander from the task at hand to the past or the future. Anxiety, stress, and other maladaptive thought processes arise from these mind wanderings. Students are taught to notice when these arise and then to use the breath to bring the mind back to the present moment and the task at hand. The mind cannot entertain anxiety, stress, and maladaptive behaviors to learning and simultaneously focus attention on the task at hand. Once maladaptive learning behaviors are noticed, they can be changed. In other words, learning is enhanced when anxiety and stress are mediated. The program provides the students activities designed to support their grasp of the principles of self-regulation that mindfulness practice offers and develop skill and autonomy in the practice.

Students are also informed that their new family (the Act 101 staff) and their larger community (BU faculty, administrators, etc.) have created systems to keep themselves informed about what's going on in the lives of the persons entrusted to their care. Act 101 staff participate in weekly meetings that center on overall programmatic issues plus discussions of individual students' successes or challenges. Faculty who teach 101 students during the academic year are enlisted to communicate through tools like the Midterm Progress Report when a student is in academic jeopardy (defined as a cumulative GPA below 2.25.

House Rules

The *house rules* are spelled out through *expectations* and *consequences.* Some are literally inscribed in materials; others are passed down through repeated utterances made in classes, in meetings, and in hallways. The first concerns the *criteria* upon which the decision to admit to the university is made. Because of the nature of the Act 101 program itself, students know that they are not being admitted through conventional criteria: minimum SAT scores or high school GPAs. Also, they are told that admittance will not rest alone on grades achieved during the SBP, although these are important. Rather, the "criteria include grades ("C" or better in each course taken in the summer), attitudes, and attendance (no more than three unexcused absences over the six week program)." If these criteria are met, the program feels strongly that its main outcome is achieved, that is, students have been taught what to *expect* in the Fall and are ready to begin their college careers. Among these criteria is the "rule" about attitudes inclusive of *behavioral changes* that must occur. The expectation is *you will change* from who you were as a high school student. Loud and boisterous behavior is not allowed and certain language, mannerisms and proprieties are expected to be demonstrated by all students. Finally, in including challenging academic subjects such as Economics, Philosophy, and Foreign Language in the

summer curriculum the program has adopted the *rule* that appropriate challenge affects attitudes. An Economics teacher noted a student in his summer class who came in with no background in the subject, but who showed interest and hard work resulting in an "A" on the first exam. The teacher delighted in the student's reaction. "Hey," he exclaimed, "this is important. I wasn't sure I could take a hardcore subject (like economics), but I can do this stuff."

Students are made aware from the outset of the SBP that *consequences* will follow when rules are not followed. Of course, the ultimate consequence is failure to gain entry into the regular academic year or, perhaps even worse, to be dismissed before the end of the summer session, which, the Director reports, has not happened in over 5 years. At BU, a 2.00 cumulative GPA is the cutoff line for academic dismissal. Before that happens though, students can be placed on an Academic Dismissal List which allows program personnel and relevant faculty to closely monitor the academic performance (grades), attitudes and attendance of students facing troubles. If a student's cumulative GPA is 2.25 or lower, then the student is placed on that list as a preventative measure because academic dismissal will lengthen the student's time to completion and complicate his or her financial aid. The Act 101 program commits to students who find themselves in this situation for two years. In other words, the program will continue to work with students placed on academic probationary lists as long as those students demonstrate a good faith effort towards improvement and allow them two years to demonstrate progress. The Director notes that on average about five students "don't make it" through the SBP or into the fall class. "They know," he reports, "that we can be paying their bus fare home." Nonetheless, the great majority of Act 101 students do not take the bus home, or if they do it is to visit family.

Home Improvements

As has been illustrated in this report, the Act 101 Director and his staff have worked hard at constructing the structures that house the Act 101 family, but they also engage in continued home improvement efforts. For example, the Mindfulness practice has been given a more prominent role and the university curriculum committee just approved it as a course to be counted for full credit. It should also be noted that the professor in charge of that program is involved in an LCC devoted to the "Helping Professions."

Large classes during the SBP continue to be a challenge for faculty and discussions are underway to find ways of reducing class size. The Act 101 staff persons are *mindful*, however, of the program's effectiveness. After the summer of 2008, 139 of the 143 students enrolled continued into the first year, and recent reports indicate that between 75 and 80% of those completed their first year.

Harrisburg Area Community College Case Report

Program Title: Act 101 Program

Marguerite MacDonald, Director

Major Theme: Holding On Before They "Kinda Just Walk Away"

Where To Start

Students who apply to and attend Harrisburg Area Community College aptly fit into the category of "non-traditional." The students in Act 101 range in age from 18 to 60 and the average age of a HACC student in the Fall 2009 semester is 26.9 years-old. The Director of the Act 101 Program, now 14 years in that position, notes that the personal problems that students

arrive with are growing more and more severe, and that, in general, theirs is a transient

population who frequently change residences and frequently change cell phone numbers. Thus,

keeping up with and keeping track of students in the program proves to be a significant

challenge. Add to these challenges the fact that admissions at HACC is "open". In short,

students may enter the community college at any time and the personnel of special programs like

Act 101 need to be prepared to deal with a constant influx.

Finding students who qualify for the Act 101 Program is not a problem at HACC,

however. In the Fall of 2007, total enrollment at the Harrisburg campus at HACC was reported to

be 9,774 and the number of students who met the 200% poverty threshold stipulated by Act 101

legislation was 1,572. Given that the program can accommodate only 200 students in any given

year, it would seem that many students are financially eligible but unable to participate. Selection

also requires that a prospective Act 101 student's placement exam results reflect a deficiency in

at least one skill area (e.g. reading, writing, math) indicating placement in at least one

developmental course. Again, many more qualify than the program can accommodate. Hence,

the difficult part in accepting new Act 101 students is determining who will get in from among

the pool of persons who qualify and apply at the time when they make their general application,

and the pool of those who qualify, do not apply initially, but are invited to apply. According to

the Act 101 website, what the program looks for are "highly motivated students" and for the

roughly 25 new full-time and 25 new part-time students who begin their student life as part of

HACC's Act 101 Program each year, motivation is initially determined by interviews and/or

high school transcripts, if available. As mentioned above, all of this is complicated further by the

fact that admission to HACC is open and new students can show up almost any day of the year.

During the course of the 2008-2009 academic year, 65 new students were admitted to the Act 101 program.

There is almost no question that new students start out being motivated. The persistent question is whether that motivation can be sustained in the face of what are often seen as the exclusions of many of these students' past lives and the exigencies of their present lives. The Act 101 staff persons' main strategy to maintain motivation among their students is *tenacity*. The Director of the program makes clear that, by and large, the services afforded to 101 students are, in kind, not very different from those available to any HACC student. All have access to developmental courses, academic support services such as advising and tutoring, and all can seek personal counseling to help them deal with both scholastic and life problems. However, she notes that the 101 students are part of the only program "with people on their backs, checking up on them." That tenacity is evident to students, one of whom stated, "They make it virtually impossible not to maintain good grades," and another who suggested the program's deep level of investment when she offered, "I really believe that they believe if I fail, they fail." Tenacity is also displayed by looking at the various forms of "reminders" distributed to students both electronically and in hard copy form. The twice-yearly newsletter includes "Dates to Remember", "Did you know…?" sections listing an array of subjects for which tutors are available, a "Reminder" about FAFSA deadlines, a list of workshops, and other items for which a gentle jostle might prove effective.

So the program starts, albeit at various points, by selecting its new students and making sure that its tutors, counselors, director and other personnel *hold on* to them by creating what one student called "a circle of support."

Moving Through Circles

The support services made available to Act 101 students at HACC include the prescribed menu stipulated by the State Guidelines: developmental courses, tutoring, counseling, advising, and opportunities to participate in cultural events. Much of the *circling* relates to the role of the counselors who along with the Director, a former Act 101 counselor herself, are central to the program. As the Director notes, "My counselors do what I call 'intrusive counseling'. They don't just send letters and e-mails – they call them up – they're meeting them outside the classroom. Really getting in there to get them to get to class, communicate with professors, do the things they need to do to be successful. And as we all know, they (students) also have problems with childcare, getting here to campus, so we try to give them the life skills that they need." These counselors maintain "open door policies" which the Director affirms "is key with students at a community college who need to see someone now," whose life circumstances tend to rise too often to "emergency" levels. These remarks allude to the fact that for so many of the Act 101 students life issues remain intertwined with academic issues and that academic support necessarily entails personal support. As one counselor notes, "I think it's more than support. They know that there is someone that they can talk to about academics and personal issues. Sometimes we have the answers; sometimes we don't have the answers. If we don't have the answers, we can refer them on, but we're a place to start and possibly a place to go on from." Also notable is the fact that one of the Act 101 counselors is a former Act 101 student. She makes this fact known and it becomes a basis of strong identification with new students who readily see that there are people who have *been there* in terms of all aspects of the program and probably in many aspects of their lives. It is notable that the first service listed in the Act 101

Student/HACC Agreement, the "contract" for the program, is counseling and it indicates that the counselor is there to "to assist in academic and personal issues."

Adding *identification with students' needs* to *tenacity* results in transforming the *circle of support* into a *circle of caring*. One counselor noted that although each Act 101 student is assigned an academic advisor, many rely on the Act 101 counselors for advice about classes, requirements, and scheduling. She continued that "they come to us, they confide in us because we care." Once students perceive and "believe" that someone cares, then a *circle of caring* or *caring relationship* begins. A student who pronounced himself the "oldest here" recalled that he had "tried HACC back in 2000…and I just kinda walked away." He credited his 2009 return and persistence to the Act 101 counselor who he "talks to" and who "helps me to press on." In other words, when students recognize that someone cares about not only their academic selves, but also about their whole selves, then they are more willing to "press on" and more confident that their efforts will meet with success. The Director also told a story of a recently graduated student who had "bounced around back and forth through school," who "had the ability but was shy," and who just before graduation had become entangled in what seemed an insurmountable problem concerning an elective that might not "count" toward graduation. The Director illustrated the *circling* efforts of a faculty member, two counselors, and herself who together straightened things out. She concluded this story by saying, almost as if it were just occurring to her, "Yeah, I guess we are a caring group of people." It is interesting that in this highly technological age of electronic communication, the program uses hand-written notes at the end of each term to provide students with positive feedback and/or encouragement. Students have been reported to greatly appreciate this effort.

Moving From "A" To "B" To "C"

The Act 101 Program has built in ways to *hold onto* their students academically. Upon entry students are asked to sign a Student-Institution Agreement that articulates the expectations of the program. At orientation students are introduced to "How Act 101 Works" and outlines the requirements for academic counseling (three times per term), financial counseling (one to two times per term), academic advising (one time per term), career counseling (one time per term), and skill-building workshops (2 per term). They are also apprised that supplemental instruction for college-level courses needs to take place three times per week, and needs to be arranged individually. Beyond these in-person services, on-line options are available. Podcasts are available for many of the skill-building workshops, a on-line tutoring service called "Smarthinking" is available 24-hours a day, and counselors are available on the telephone. The Director maintains that because so many of these students hold full-time jobs and have extensive family responsibilities, the program needs to be flexible enough to accommodate their needs.

Students are told that the program will provide free tickets to various events presented by the college's performing artist series and they are also encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities such as those afforded by various clubs and cultural groups and paid positions like serving as an Act 101 tutor in subjects where a student had excelled. Activities such as these, however, typically require students to remain on campus beyond class hours and, again because of the fact that for many a student-life is only one part of his or her life such engagements prove difficult to make and sustain.

Finally, they are told that all of these services are designed to help them get through their academics and allow them to participate in the cultural aspects of college life. However, as the Director notes, none of this is "enforceable." But it is demonstrated to students that success is

"achievable." The program publishes an informational newsletter each semester that includes a welcome to new students, a calendar of program events, HACC's academic calendar, in addition to the features noted above such as articles on study skills and details about tutoring sessions and academic skills workshops. The newsletter is also a space where messages that simultaneously recognize how difficult the educational journey is for many of these non-traditional students while also articulating messages students need to hear. For example, in the February 2009 issue of the *Act 101: Action Line*, the Director took advantage of the New Year's topic of resolutions to point out that the top reason why people don't stick to resolutions is their "inability to enlist help with the often difficult challenge of change." This, of course, is meant to resonate with the primary message of the program that education will change you and that you have help all around you.

A celebratory publication, the Act 101 Alert, goes out at the end of each semester. The Alert contains all the graduates, students on dean's list (GPAs above 3.2) and a list of those students who have achieved 3.0 or higher GPA's, and a separate list of students who earned a 4.0 GPA. The January 2009 Alert listed 19 students who achieved this high distinction.

In addition to the awards presented at HACC's institution-wide Honors Convocation, the 101 program holds a recognition luncheon for graduates, transferees and tutors of the program and the President and VP attend this event as well. Finally, the college holds an Honors Convocation each year where three awards are presented for academic achievement, for perseverance, and for service to the program. Numerous Act 101 students receive awards in each category.

In short, Act 101 students are provided with the means that will lead them through the steps needed to achieve success. Although this process is presented as a somewhat linear

pathway, moving from A to B to C, it appears that way only because of the interventions of the

101 staff persons and the persistence of the 101 students to keep moving on despite setbacks.

Moving Beyond

It is at this Honor's Convocation, attended by the President, the Board of Trustees and

distinguished guests that include Act 101 staff persons, faculty, and students' families, that all

Act 101 graduates are named. Adding to the obvious "success" associated with graduation, last

year the Vice-President suggested that in addition to the names of students, the names of four-

year institutions to which some students were headed should be announced. This, the Director

remembered the Vice-President remarking, became a "commercial" for the various Pennsylvania

State System schools and Penn State. The point is that not only are many of these students

successful in completing their courses of study at HACC, but they are also *moving beyond* to

continue that pattern of success.

Finally, the program itself recognizes the need to *move beyond* the challenges it faces.

One continual challenge involves getting more students to engage with tutoring, to attend

workshops, and to consult with professors. To meet this challenge, staff persons have instituted

orientation updates that provide additional reminders about the effectiveness of these tools and

how to go about making use of them. In particular, this message is delivered on "day one" and

during all mandatory counseling and advising meetings. In order to insure that all staff persons

are conveying these messages professional development is essential. This presents another

challenge, however, since funds for professional development are not available. Hence, staff

mentoring responsibilities fall to personnel already stretched to the limit. For example, the

HACC Act 101 program is *moving beyond* the Harrisburg area and has just begun a program at

its York campus, but it falls to the Harrisburg director to provide mentoring support for the new person overseeing the program there.

The message conveyed through these various support efforts is a simple one: "You can get there from here," but it is also a message that recognizes how complicated that journey may be. Indeed, the Director warns that statistics cannot capture the effects of the Act 101 Program at HACC. She asserts, "A lot of our stuff may not be quantitative data, but there's a lot of day-to-day things that we do with our students …a lot of anecdotal stuff that you can't measure, but darn, you know you're making a difference." The success of this program seems apparent in the differences found within the program, differences illustrated by their tenacity, their caring, and their helping to make those next steps possible, whether they be realized through further education or through a new career.

La Salle University Case Report

Program Title: Academic Discovery Program (Pennsylvania Act 101)

Robert B. Miedel, Act 101 Director

Major Theme: This Is Possible

The Act 101 program at La Salle University, which is known as the Academic Discovery Program (ADP), begins with the message that *this is possible.* The "this" is attending a private university that acknowledges itself as "a premier educational institution…firmly rooted in the 300-year-old tradition of the Christian Brothers and the Brothers' founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle." The "possibility" is introduced by the Director of the ADP, who , working in conjunction with the ADP Admissions Counselor, spends the fall of each academic year conveying this message to college counselors and students at both Catholic and public high schools across

Philadelphia, attending countless numbers of college fairs, and generally maintaining close

written and oral contact with many high school counselors throughout Philadelphia. The message

that *you can go to La Salle* and that *people like you go to La Salle* is further broadcast through

ADP students themselves who host various outreach efforts with high school and middle-school

students who visit the campus throughout the year. ADP students have also taken advantage of

outreach opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to the school and its community. Up

until a few years ago, ADP students offered tutoring services to inner-city elementary school

children as part of a five-year grant secured by the Philadelphia School District through the

federally funded GEAR UP Program. Again, this program afforded another opportunity to

display academic possibilities to those whose prospects might seem far afield from attending a

university like La Salle.

Becoming a student at La Salle might reasonably seem impossible to students because of

financial barriers. However, the message includes information about how "qualified" students

can attend La Salle for a free summer program, how they can receive a financial package of

$32,500 per year ($29,500 per year based on the La Salle contribution, federal and state grants

and $3,500 in a subsidized Stafford Loan for freshmen/$5,500 for sophomores and

upperclassmen). Students are also informed of ways through which they can secure employment

on the campus, and how, if more money is necessary, they can qualify for an additional $31,000

over four years through the Stafford loan program. In essence, the ADP financial package

(consisting mostly of grants) will cover all tuition, with the exception of about $155 per year.

Expenses related to textbooks and costly calculators can also be avoided by making use of an

ADP program that allows students to borrow such items for semester-long periods. There is even

a possibility for students to live on campus and avoid the expense of boarding by taking

advantage of ADP assistance in securing Resident Assistant positions beyond the first year. Once known primarily as a commuter school, La Salle has increased its housing capacity and today about 65 percent of its student body is residential. Again, the university recognizes the benefits of residential college life and strives to break down barriers that would disallow such an option for Act 101 students.

Finally, interested students are told that all of this has been made *possible* through Pennsylvania's Act 101 program and through the commitment of La Salle University "to recruit and retain qualified students, while at the same time striving to attract a more diverse student body: socially, geographically, economically, and racially," a goal specifically articulated in its mission statement. La Salle University tries very hard to make it clear to students who would not normally think about attending a relatively expensive, private college that they *want* students who are motivated and hard-working. . In addition to providing a large portion of the monetary means to allow non-traditional students access, the President and Provost at La Salle signal their high regard for the ADP by attending the orientation session and personally welcoming students and their families.

In short, an agreement is forged between prospective students and the institution based on the idea that both need each other. Students can benefit by gaining admittance to a university for which, under normal circumstances, they would not appear to be either academically prepared or economically able. The university benefits by adding to its student body a diverse group of highly motivated, potentially capable individuals. Like all such agreements, this one entails a series of ways through which the agreement will be actualized.

What WE Do

The centerpiece of the ADP is the seven-week, pre-college summer program that is offered free of charge to approximately 40 Act 101-eligible students. A unique aspect of the ADP is the assumption that all students will be prepared to be mainstreamed into regular college-level classes for the Fall semester. Prior to the start of the summer session, each student participates in a day devoted to assessments and individual interviewing. This individualized attention brings home the notion that although many of the program experiences apply to all, "(a)s much as possible, each student's program is tailored to his or her individual needs."

Academic Support

The purpose of the summer program is to provide a solid base of academic and skill-based courses, all offered for credit, and some, depending on a student's placement, serving to fulfill graduation requirements. For example, it is not unusual to find students in the ADP group who qualify for calculus classes or computer classes. In these cases, arrangements are made to conduct small group sessions or Independent Study with a college professor that provides tailored academic experiences for these advanced students. The summer curriculum for most students, however, consists of courses on Critical Thinking (Reading), Study Skills, Writing, and Math 101 or Intermediate Algebra. Each of these classes is considered simultaneously "developmental" and "college level" reflecting the philosophy of meeting students where they are developmentally and recognizing the developmental nature of the entire college experience. It is also assumed that the developmental process is facilitated when instruction and assistance is provided both inside and outside of the classroom context. Hence, some students may require more supplemental support than others.

Academic support is provided first through the design of a curriculum that seamlessly weaves a theme through language-based courses coordinated by a person long-affiliated with the program and taught by a group of instructors, some of whom have their doctorates, some masters degrees, and one who has her Pennsylvania Teacher Certification. These instructors form a close working group that meets often to discuss both the curriculum itself and the progress of individual students. Formal classes are conducted between 8:30 and 2:30 with a one-hour block mid-morning reserved for counseling, tutoring sessions, both mandated during the summer and into the first year, along with workshops, or study halls.

Essentially, there are three levels of tutors. Students quickly learn that tutoring "invitations" are posted on bulletin boards each week. Teachers themselves hold sessions when students need to individually review lessons or tests. Wednesdays are given over to both professional and/or peer tutoring. Professional tutors are usually college teachers who work with students who demonstrate inherent learning problems often perceived as an inability to generalize what is learned in classes and apply it to new learning tasks. Peer tutors are drawn from the undergraduate pool and indeed are sometimes upper-level ADP students. They are trained to work with students on specific assignments. Students articulate the difference between these two groups of tutors as the ones with whom you "build relationships" and ones who "know how you feel now." What they seem to recognize is that the professional tutor is best equipped to understand and work with students as learners who display strengths and weaknesses and for whom strengths can be rallied to overcome weaknesses. Their understanding of peer tutors encompasses someone who has "been there" and "done well." Tutoring services continue into the academic year where ADP freshmen are assigned to Professional or Peer tutors for at least two hours of tutoring a week. Academic assistance is also provided for members of the larger

university, and ADP students are encouraged to make use of other services such as the Writing Center, especially as they move into the academic year and particularly beyond the first year.

Academic advising serves as a bridge between academic classes and other ADP services. Students meet with the ADP academic advisor at least twice a semester to plan course-taking, discuss career goals, and determine what support services might be necessary to achieve one's goals. In addition a group known as Peer Advisors serve as another way of connecting students with support services. The Chief Counselor, who coordinates this program describes it as follows: "Incoming freshmen are selectively paired with upperclassmen one-on-one . The Peer Advisors serve as the initial source of support, encouragement, information, and referral to the freshmen. The peer advising dyad lasts throughout the freshman year with scheduled bi-weekly meetings. All Peer Advisors must attend an annual six hour training session and at least one additional training session throughout the academic year."

<u>Counseling Support</u>

Beyond academics, the ADP also provides support for the social and emotional contingencies of college life. Counseling is an important component of the ADP. The Assistant Director of the ADP, also the Chief Counselor, has been with the program for seventeen years. He conducts both group and individual counseling sessions with summer ADP students and maintains the mandatory "check in" policy through the academic years, that are twenty-minute sessions once a week for first-year students, every other week for second-years, every three weeks for third-years, and once a month for seniors. He also reports that rarely are sessions restricted to these minimal time slots. The message of counseling is one of empathy – an understanding that we know that so much of your life has to change in order to be successful here, and we know how hard it is going to be to do that. Students quickly learn that what they

bring to counseling sessions is highly confidential and appreciate that the Chief Counselor keeps music playing by his closed office door when a student is inside.

While the abovementioned counseling efforts are meant to draw students in, a second component is used to move people out into the mainstream of university life. These are leadership opportunities. The logic of the process used by the Chief Counselor is to give students practice on their own turf in order to gain experience and confidence to venture out. Students are invited to join a Leadership Council within the ADP that might plan and organize events like dances or professional programs. They are then encouraged to join campus-wide cultural clubs. Their efforts are monitored and "lots of feedback is given" to encourage wider engagement. Eventually, ADP students are expected to pursue slots among the various university leadership positions.

Social Support

Community building is an important part of the ADP. Students are given space and time to be with each other. There is a designated ADP room or lounge where students can be seen playing chess, eating lunch, or sharing notes from classes. It's not unusual to see upper-level ADP around during the summer session – some are invited back to participate in specific programs, some are working as peer advisors or tutors, and some just come to hang out. There are also programs to extend students' social experiences. Wednesday afternoons in the summer are devoted to taking trips to cultural sites around the city or students have an opportunity to try something new like tennis with the Director. If evening events are required (a movie on the "theme" or a lecture), pizza and soda are provided. Finally, special events like Alumni Career Day, the Knowledge Bowl, and the Senior Banquet are held annually.

What YOU Have To Do

First, and most importantly, students need to be *ready*. Again, all students in the ADP are expected to begin the Fall semester as fully mainstreamed students. To ensure readiness students agree to abide by the terms of an Act 101 contract that specifies how they are expected to engage with the services provided through the ADP. The Director reports that the mandated parts of the program are presented as "this is the way it is." He continues that when students know expectations they usually meet them. Students are also apprised of research conducted by the program on itself that clearly indicates, for example, a high correlation between the number of tutoring sessions and grades earned in classes.

Second, students need to remain open to the message that *change* is required. As the Chief Counselor is wont to say, "This is not the thirteenth grade." Many of the attitudes residual from high school about academics, people who do well academically, putting one's social life over academics, need to be reconsidered and adjusted in a college environment. As one student stated, "You're forced out of bad habits." Still, the ADP staff persons prefer cooperation over force, and the sooner certain attitudinal adjustments occur the sooner one can become socialized and ready to take full advantage of this new environment.

The third thing students must do is to *connect*. During the academic year "Connections" meetings are held every two to three weeks. Facilitated by the Chief Counselor these meetings center on current events and provide a forum in which students can get to know each others' connections to world events, to their local community, and to each other. This meeting also provides a context through which leadership is displayed, and staff persons remain on the alert for students who might be shepherded into the leadership opportunities presented above.

Where This Will Get You

A number of ADP staff reported that although the first days of the summer program are met with a palpable resistance on the part of students who would rather be elsewhere, the vast majority complete the program professing pride in their accomplishments and membership in a new community. For this majority, the Fall tends to be described as a "piece of cake." The Chief Counselor suggests that this perception is most likely due to the fact that students enter the academic year able to better manage their time, metaphorically to cut the cake/university into manageable pieces. Students themselves report that as a result of the summer program they "know where to go (for help)" and "know how to get stuff." These are no trivial matters in that confusion about procedures and a reluctance to admit that help is needed tend to put many entering college students behind to the point where they are unable to catch up.

The summer ADP program is all about moving a possibility into a reality. The evidence of the further possibilities that ensue from that possibility being made real can be witnessed in the testimonials of La Salle ADP graduates prominently displayed on the university website. Sometimes the testimonials remains closer to home where, for example, at the end of the 2008 academic year it was an ADP student who won the John J. McShain Award for Public Welfare, one of the most prestigious awards on campus.. Finally, the evidence of the success of the program for those who take advantage of the program is seen on a semester-by-semester basis as those who spend seven weeks of their summer in classes, with tutors, with counselors, and co-constructing a new community continue to show up in classes, be seen on campus, or can be seen giving back to a program that has given them so much.

Temple University Case Report

Program Title: Act 101 Program/Russell Conwell Educational Services Center

Brigitte Johnson, Act 101 Director

Michael Stokes, Director of Russell Conwell Educational Services Center

Major Theme: Contracting Responsibility

Diamonds in the Rough

The Act 101 Program at Temple University is housed within their Russell Conwell

Center (RCC), which serves as the umbrella organization for a variety of programs ranging from

after-school enrichment/readiness opportunities for high school students to initiatives aimed at

post-baccalaureate scholars. The refrain of the noted American speechmaker and founder of what

was to become Temple University, Russell H. Conwell, is frequently cited by staff persons who

work with "diamonds in the rough" to bring them to the best that they can be through education.

The message of *value* that inheres in the diamond symbol is clearly conveyed to the students in

the Act 101 program. Yet, there is also recognition that that value must be drawn out from the

"roughness" resulting from less-than-ideal educational and perhaps life circumstances.

The Contract: Our Offer

<u>We Care</u>

Contracting permeates almost all activities. Students, the 101 staff persons, and other

RCC personnel *contract* to perform certain tasks, within certain timeframes, to the best of their

abilities, and the contract starts with the program staff. The people who make up the program –

the directors, tutors, counselors, various assistants, and other students – hold up their end of the

contract through *active caring and support.* Although early interactions with the program include

parents, who are invited to pre-orientation activities and are always welcome to correspond with

101 staff persons concerning their children's welfare and progress, students are acquainted with a new family that may be conveying different messages. For example, it is not unusual for families of first-generation college students to see college as mainly a way of getting a "good job" and may encourage the college student to pursue a major outside of her interest area in the shortest time possible. Students, however, might find that people at the university are sending different messages: that a job is important, but that learning comes first; that you should pursue what it is you are passionate about not what might be seen as the most lucrative career; that completing your degree while keeping your educational needs and interests in mind is more important than graduating in four years. In other words, your home family and your RCC family both *care*, but might demonstrate caring differently.

Students also come to understand the pervasiveness of caring through early interactions with the Director of Act 101, who in her first meeting with students, refers to information provided by them in application letters. The Director reported that students are often shocked when they realize that someone actually has read their letter. This level of caring and personal attention continues through the Summer Bridge Program (SBP) where *care* is enacted through *watching* for students who can be co-opted by a program to fill leadership roles thus widening the *circle of caring*. Finally, *caring* is communicated materially even to those who do not make it, those who might be in danger of dropping out or those who indeed elect to leave the program. In the former case, a job might be found to provide some funds necessary to remain in school; in the latter case, the Director spoke of "building little bridges" or providing ways for students to return, perhaps finding a community college where academic challenges may not be as rigorous, and mapping out together ways to get back into Temple.

<u>We Support</u>

Personal caring is accompanied by programmatic caring evident in actual *support.* It is this aspect of the way the program works that features what the Director of Act 101 referred to as "the importance of program over people". Turnover through promotions and attrition are facts of life among the Act 101 staff. Together, however, the staff works to clarify, expand upon, and constantly evaluate the components of their support services with the goal of ensuring that excellence continues. Thus, although a cadre of dedicated staff persons is absolutely necessary, it becomes less important that these are always the same people. Thus *support* is embodied through the various components of the program enacted by a changing roster of staff.

For the Act 101 students the program begins between May and June, in other words, prior to the six-week SBP when students are provided with web-based assignments that "allow staff to customize our academic programming and support to your skill level and interests." As a way of encouraging participation in this activity, five students who complete all assignments are awarded prizes. During the SBP, students take two developmental courses, one in English, the other in math, and an Academic Management Seminar taught by academic advisors and student service counselors. The rationale for constructing this dual teacher/counselor role is to increase the extent to which students can be *known*. Advisors admit that this situation forces them to "walk a fine line" between the roles of "strict teacher" and "nurturing and supporting counselor," but believe that such tensions are resolved as students become more accepting of the summer program and more open to them. These counselors report that they gauge their success when the 20 minute required counseling meeting begins to run over an hour, or when students move away from complaints of professors who don't like them, or from listing the books they can't find in the bookstore, to deep conversations about studies and future paths. These conversions do not

come easily, however, but result from "being visible, being available, giving cell phone numbers, texting, e-mailing and sometimes pulling them in to the office," the advisors affirm.

The six-week SBP demands rigorous work, stressing writing and re-writing, the development of academic discourse and critical thinking skills, and not only mastery, but understanding of mathematical concepts. Besides the teachers, who are mainly graduate students, each class is assigned two class assistants, who hold recitations and function as tutors. These tutors, all of whom have received training provided through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) through Level 2 certification, meet with the Tutorial Coordinator for ten hours over the course of the SBP. Individual tutoring is also part of the SBP and attendance is tracked by counselors. The tutoring coordinator also facilitates the formation of student study groups and at intervals over the summer acts as a model teacher delivering mock lectures and working with students to understand requirements of active listening and note-taking.

Two additional components of *support* are introduced during the SBP. The first is Project MENTOR (an acronym that stands for Motivating, Educating, Networking, Teaching through Opportunities and Resources). New students, both in the summer and through the academic year, can request to be matched with a "successful continuing student" who is trained to "bridge the gap between high school and university" and assist students both academically and socially. It is important to note that these "mentors" are drawn from the Act 101 and other RCC programs and as students who have "been there", provide the potential for a strong relationship with students initially reluctant and/or resistant to accepting help. They also symbolize a palpable goal for students who can imagine being able to "do this too."

The second is the Professional Development Workstudy Internship Program. Essentially, this program has been devised to provide financial, academic and social support to students who

demonstrate both financial need and leadership capabilities and although evident during the SBP, is not available to new students until the academic year. The *working* aspect of this program entails 10-12 hours per week where students, who are work study eligible, serve as administrative interns, conduct workshops for program students and develop a program based on student interest. They also attend a weekly Professional Development Seminar during their first year where they both practice skills needed to launch a successful career (interviewing skills, resume writing, etc.) and attend workshops led by persons who have achieved professional and career success. In terms of academic support, the program schedules group study, individual tutoring, and content review sessions to structure study time. This program moves to a focus on leadership as students move beyond the first year and actually become the coordinators of this program, planning, enacting, and overseeing activities for the new cohort. Opportunities also arise for students to become peer tutors, classroom assistants, and program ambassadors.

Finally, there are *outreach support* components to these programs. For example, members of Chi Alpha Epsilon (the national honors society "founded exclusively for students admitted to colleges and universities through various Developmental Programs") engage in community service activities, and many members of this organization participate in the Student Leadership Program, which assists RCC students to connect with larger university leadership opportunities. In this way, Act 101 and RCC students are better mainstreamed into the larger university community.

<u>We Connect</u>

Following up on the idea of mainstreaming, program personnel understand that they have a responsibility to keep their students connected with the larger university and, to that end, have maintained open lines of communication with various university offices. In speaking of the RCC

and Act 101 program's work with the TU admissions office, the Associate Director reports that "they know us" and take care in forwarding admission's files for promising prospective students. Indeed, the RCC has a "liaison" in the admissions office who touts its various programs, including Act 101, at college fairs.

The RCC has also become more connected to the larger university through a recent restructuring whereby the Center moved from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs. This move resulted from an external evaluation and was designed as a way to allow the program more visibility and greater access to support services across the university. Now under the Provost's office, the RCC and Act 101 program is more evident as an academic entity.

Faculty, many of whom have proven to be "allies" also "know" the good work of the RCC and its students. The number of these allies has increased in the last few years since the RCC reduced the number of students served from over 1,400 to around 1,000 with an incoming class of approximately 275 students, about 70 admitted through Act 101. This change has resulted in a slight increase in the academic profile of the incoming class, and perhaps more significantly has also increased the number of students that are motivationally ready for university work. The mandated successful completion of the SBP as a condition for acceptance has helped to end the practice of more students "getting in under the bar."

The program is particularly appreciative of one instructor who "teaches for us" – an English teacher who is highly effective for students who struggle more with reading and are deemed most unlikely to succeed without help. This *dedicated teacher* monitors such students carefully and communicates about their progress and problems with Act 101 personnel. Students are counseled to remain with this teacher through developmental and into regular college courses. In observing one of this teacher's lessons it was easy to spot students who had

internalized some of the strategies she emphasizes: close reading, highlighting and annotating text, asking questions about specific portions of the text, locating areas of confusion in the text.

The *connection* promised on the part of the RCC/Act 101 staff persons includes connections to the students themselves. The message of *community* pervades the physical space and community-building activities serve to enhance the message. For example, the Act 101 program recently held its first Woman to Woman evening that began with ice-breakers, continued with lots of important discussion about the role of women in the university, and ended with a sleepover in the RCC conference room. Movie nights, cultural events, and special programs are other mechanisms for getting students together as a community.

We Have Evidence that Our Program Works

Laced through informational materials, including the RCC Handbook, are statements that bear evidence to the fact that the most sure-fire means to college success is following the guidelines of the program. Announcements that *"Research has proven"* accompany facts and figures about first-year retention rates and the probability of completion. The RCC lets students know that they do their own *research*, and materials affirm that, "Campus management and access to resources are important factors in college success. Students who seek help and know where to go typically perform better and have an easier adjustment to college." Students are explicitly informed that tutoring "works" based on data showing that 90 percent of students tutored for specific courses pass those courses, and that 80 percent of tutored students increase their GPAs. Evidence is also provided during various workshops, especially ones where working professionals whose backgrounds are not so different from the Act 101 or other RCC students, are invited to share their experiences and outline the routes they traveled to their career and

personal success. The message is clearly "You can do this," but accompanied by "You have to do your part."

The Contract: Your Acceptance

Considerations

The themes of *responsibility, choice, and volunteering* resound at the RCC. Early on in the Handbook, a distinction is made between high school "summer school" and the university's "summer session." The former is described as "typically remedial and *mandatory* where students retake a class failed during the year." The latter "functions as another semester where student *voluntarily* take classes to get ahead." (italics added) This message sets the stage for the student to *accept* an important part of the contract: *You will volunteer.* Some components of the Act 101 program are indeed mandatory (number of counseling sessions, participation in cultural activities) since the program must conform to the legal requirements of the 101 statute. However, many components remain voluntary: academic tutoring, procuring a peer mentor, seeking leadership opportunities.

The theme of *responsibility* is encapsulated in the following quote: "You are an adult who is accountable and responsible for your own learning." On the heels of this remark is a reminder of what the program promises: a "seamless series of services" that are "individually tailored." Still, such provisions will amount to little without student *acceptance* of their contractual obligations both in action and spirit. To this end, students are challenged by staff if it is suspected that they are not living up to their ends of the bargain. The Director noted that she sometimes points out the incongruity between a request for special considerations like emergency funds by a person wearing designer clothes.

Students are encouraged to maintain their own evidence base. The academic counselors consult with students in drawing up an Educational Learning and Action Plan that proceeds from the summer and projects five years out. In this document students rally the data they need to be self-reflective and thereby self-regulative. They are advised to *consider* things like home conditions that could negatively impact their academic achievement and devise plans to remedy these situations, articulate their goals, develop strategic plans, all the while remaining mindful of personal learning styles, self-identified gifts, skills, and talents. Students work with the counselor to *consider* the menu of services available through the program and identify those that could be most useful, and helpful to them. Finally, they make yearly projections concerning where they expect to be academically, socially, professionally, and personally. Each year this plan is reviewed and revised.

Tutoring, though voluntary, also hinges on the concept of *responsibility*. The Tutorial Coordinator stressed that he keeps "hammering into tutors is that we want the students to become *independent learners*" – so our job is to make ourselves *obsolete*." *Responsibility,* he argues, will be attained if the tutee him- or herself can *explain the process*, because the tutor has made the process *transparent*. In other words, students must understand the purpose of the session, be prepared to engage with the tutor (not expect the tutor to do the work FOR the student), and understand that most academic problems/challenges require a sustained, continuous effort. With those understandings as foundational, the Tutorial Coordinator admitted that some will "try to do it on their own" but that these students usually face disconfirming evidence and most "take longer, but eventually figure us out."

There is probably nowhere where *responsibility* and *self-direction* are more in evidence than in the various *leadership opportunities* available to 101/RCC students. Leadership is

conceptualized as a way both to buttress the probabilities of academic success and to integrate 101 students across the university. The most salient signs of success is the student beyond the first year who now serves as a Student Ambassador, a classroom assistant, a peer mentor, a member of the Student Program Board that plans ongoing RCC programs with the Director and his staff, an RCC Workshop Presenter at monthly workshops, a Residence Hall Assistant, or a salaried tutor both during the SBP and during the academic year. Each of these positions is operated through the RCC and each requires minimum GPAs, demonstrated leadership skills, and evidence of social and civic responsibility.

As Act 101 students move on to the second year and beyond they are expected to assume more responsibility to continue accessing 101/RCC services when necessary, but they are also expected to begin affording themselves of the resources of the larger university. Counselors report that the balance between dependence and independence is sometimes delicate. One of the Act 101 Educational Counselors noted, "Once they know us/trust us they think we can answer any question." In the second year students are encouraged to build relationships with subject advisors. Some students are reported being resistant to this branching out and are assured that 101 personnel will still see them but that they need to start building relationships "out there". Another counselor noted, "Some are scared of the larger school." But the RCC Director insists that we "can't hold onto them" that "that model doesn't work."

Other Considerations

Despite the *caring through support* or the *choosing to be responsible,* many students struggle and some fail. The 101 Director spoke of some who did not make it through the 2008 SBP: One, the "breadwinner of the family" found attending, not the intellectual requirements, impossible to fulfill. Another failed to "get" basic math and the 101 staff put the student in

contact with Disability Services. But this proved overly onerous to this student who was both

reluctant to pursue such a possibility and was daunted by insurance intricacies. Many students,

however, started off poorly, took hold of the resources, put in the required hours, and got

through. Others demonstrated some success but slumped for a second time bringing into question

their motivations and work ethic. Many of these attained admission, but were required to

continue to enroll in developmental courses, even in those summer courses where they earned a

"C." According to the RCC Director, the policy of having to repeat developmental courses

where only a "C" was earned was put into place to assure that students would be "competent and

competitive in the classroom." Most accept this, but some leave. As the 101 Director stated,

"We don't make that decision, but we give input."

The word *intrusive* was invoked to modify activities such as counseling, tutoring, and

teaching by several 101 staff persons. Students are apprised at the outset of their time with the

program that "we talk to each other" and FERPA regulations are reviewed so that students

understand that this is permissible in order to achieve academic goals. So *intrusive counseling*

might be appropriate when a teacher writes a concerned report. It might be adopted when a

student aspiring to a difficult major like nursing is in danger of falling short. Or it might get

"polite but firm" when a student is failing to show up for tutoring session. The 101 Director

reported that she has tracked students down in classes and on the street. She admitted telling

them that tutoring is mandatory even though they know it is not. Such tactics usually work

reported the Director because in the end "they trust us."

One intervention, however, borders more closely to the mandatory, that is the Academic

Intervention Program (AIP). Again, a *contract* is used to spell out the requirements for those who

either averaged a "C" in the SBP or those whose GPA falls below 2.3. These students are issued

invitations to meet with their advisor. If they fail to do this "holds" are placed on their accounts.

Participation in the AIP requires/mandates frequent tutoring sessions, eight meetings with a

counselor per semester, and attendance at five workshops. Still, this mandate is enforceable only

through the contract, which contains a "decline participation form."

Still, program staff persons are hopeful that the carrots of the program such as academic

honors, leadership opportunities, access to scholarship money, and work study programs are

more powerful that the sticks, which function more like pointed nudges. Temple's Act 101

program is a successful one and the reasons for its success became obvious during the site visit

and review of related materials.

Continued Considerations

Like any good program the staff is aware of areas of challenge and areas that require

increased investments of resources. *Space* was identified as one area of need. The Tutorial

Coordinator mentioned that tutoring often "happens within chaos." The tutoring space is in

many ways homebase for the 101 and RCC students and socializing can often interfere with the

calm and quiet needed for tutoring. He mentioned that tutoring often takes place in another

building or in the library making supervision difficult. Money, not surprisingly, is an issue. From

stocking an up-to-date library of textbooks to better compensating overworked staff, increased

financing would be welcomed. Finally, keeping up with technology, particularly computers,

presents a continuous challenge, but the RCC was recently awarded a university grant and is in

the process of purchasing new computers for the Fall of 2009.

Finally on the wish-list was a desire for Act 101 and the RCC to continue to glean its

deserved recognition across the campus. The Senior Vice Provost acknowledged that "the RCC

is at the heart of Temple's mission to be a transformative environment for students of lesser

means." In some quarters of the university the program is still fighting against its image from the 80s and 90s; in other quarters it is simply invisible. The challenge becomes "how to get the word out" about the programs and the success of so many of their students. An end-of-year ceremony that awards achievement provides one mechanism and access to certain scholarship opportunities brings the programs visibility. However, some suggested that particular university competitions such as undergraduate research awards administered through the Provost's office might "make room for RCC students" interpreting instances of significantly improved and high performance against the excellent (read 4.0 GPA) record of a student who faced no social or economic obstacles.

West Chester University of Pennsylvania Case Report

Program Title: Act 101 Program/Academic Development Program

Dr. Peter T. Kyper, Director, Academic Development Program

Major Theme: Call To Privilege: Many Are There, Few Are Chosen

Recognition

Visit the Academic Development Program (ADP) offices at West Chester University (WCU) and in short order you will hear (from numerous sources) and witness (from prominently displayed commendations) that this is an "award-winning program." Indeed, in 1996, the ADP was named "Outstanding Developmental Program in the Nation" by the National Association for Developmental Educators and has continued to maintain that level of excellence. Beyond that *recognition*, West Chester is highly regarded among the 14 universities in the Pennsylvania State System. The WCU website reports that the total number of annual applicants typically exceeds its entire student population, and touts that "(o)nly 47% of the students who

applied (in 2008) were admitted classifying WCU as selective public institution." The WCU website further affirms its commitment to diversity including economic, racial, and ethnic diversity. As such, WCU takes very seriously its participation in the Act 101 program and incorporates it within its ADP.

Like overall first-year admissions, participation in the ADP, which begins with a residential, five-week, "intensive preparatory summer" experience, is also highly selective. For approximately 800 yearly applicants there will be about 150 spots, an average of about 50 designated for Act 101-eligible students. The message of *privilege* is made clear from the first day of orientation: "You are part of a select group," new ADP students are told. Part of the *selection* process includes an evaluation submitted by high school teachers who assess potential ADP students in terms of motivation, dependability, and openness to seeking help. The message of *being selected* resounds through all components of the program, especially through counseling. It is also made clear that the continued reputation of the program hinges on individual student's personal contribution to that success. This tall order, however, is appropriately and individually sized by the ADP staff persons who affirm that they are "committed to students" who, in turn, are expected to "demonstrate a serious commitment to succeed in college." In addition, program materials and special programs provide testimonials from alumni and upper-class students who have attained high levels of achievement and recognition from the university, national honor organizations, and professional groups. Students are apprised that it was something special in their applications – clear statements about motivation and specific goals, past involvement in community work, evidence of scholastic improvement – that distinguished them from so many others. Based on those indicators of promise, the ADP promises to continue *recognizing*, through an impressive menu of awards,

those who prove themselves *fitting into* "a rigorous program that demands hard work, commitment, and determination."

Negative Recognition

The state of the ADP did not always comport with the description above. The Director reported that when he arrived at WCU some 20 plus years ago he was "greeted" with phone calls from faculty making it clear that neither the cohorts of "unprepared students" nor those who ran "remedial programs" were welcome. Indeed, the ADP label had been used to mark "All Dumb People." *Changing minds* was not an easy task and the Director recalls that it required three to four years of "gentle and friendly confrontations" coupled with involving faculty in curricular work and pushing administrators to recognize that if this category of student is accepted then it produces an obligation to provide effective services. The other side of the formula designed to change attitudes involved the obligation of students. The Director made it clear that "our job is not to molly-coddle, but to educate them." To that end, standards would be set high, and students would be held accountable for their learning. The ADP lived up to the Director's promise and is presently considered one of the most respected programs on campus. Specifically, the Director perceives two components contributing to the success of the program: *structure* and *high expectations*.

The Structure

The *structure* of the ADP rests upon a *contract* that outlines the themes and procedures central to the ADP and Act 101 programs. Concepts such as privilege, diversity, respect/consideration of others, safety, availability of help, and very importantly, defining the term "developmental" are featured in the contractual agreement presented to all new students and revisited each year during a counseling session. Furthermore, the contract articulates

understandings of services, procedures (including disclosures to/by "instructors, counselors, and parents"), responsibilities, and consequences for *breach of contract*. Interestingly, all ADP personnel sign the contract. On their part, students by signing commit themselves to 100% attendance, goal-setting, and goal monitoring. The importance of the contract is brought home to students during their Summer Bridge Program where a panel of counselors and former ADP students make themselves available to answer questions specifically about the contract.

As mentioned above, the program begins with a five-week summer program. This is a large, residential program that is made available to Act 101 students free of charge. Students take six credits, either developmental English or math and a course in reading. Developmental classes "count" toward the GPA, but "do not count" toward graduation requirements. Writing and math classes are capped at 16, and students are tutored one-on-one in writing and in pairs in math. Classes are held in the morning hours and afternoons are reserved for tutoring, mentoring, and counseling. Evening activities are prioritized as "studying, sleeping, and recreation." The supplemental, individualized services of advising, tutoring, peer mentoring, and counseling are designed to demonstrate the promised commitment that program personnel are interested in *getting to know you* as a student and as a person.

<u>Advising</u>

In many ways, the advising component provides the *foundation* of the ADP program. During the summer program students attend a week-long advising seminar that covers the basics of the college journey from understanding the rationale behind general education courses, to devising strategies for selecting a major, to considering what it takes to achieve personal and professional goals. Along with this *formal* program structure, students also meet somewhat *informally but regularly* with their academic advisor, who is also the Assistant Director of Act

101. The tone of the initial one-on-one session is deliberately fashioned to communicate "let's get to know each other" and these meetings evolve into sessions where advisor and advisee work together to build a roadmap based on interests possibly going back to elementary school. Together they construct a plan capable of converting interests into specific goals. The simple message is that you can get "there" from "here". "Here", that is the student's time and place at WCU, is proposed as the most important location on that roadmap, but students are advised that in many cases they need to revise their notions of "school" and "student".

The *message* conveyed through this initial advising can be muddled or even lost when seemingly familiar settings produce old, reflexive responses. For example, the Assistant Director recalled that during one summer session it became "lame" for students to carry trays in the cafeteria. Because this message was crafted by only a select but powerful few, the tray bearers found themselves ridiculed and marked. The ADP Director interpreted this seemingly trivial event as residual of the social pressure from high school contexts that led students to interpret any kind of conformity (even carrying trays) as "dork" behavior. In high school contexts activities like studying, volunteering in class, and seeking help were most likely perceived as equally "dorky" and stigmatizing. Hence, addressing such incidents as the tray incident through advising becomes an important way of changing attitudes and behaviors, making for a more solid *foundation.*

Mentoring

Closely related to the advising component, and devised to *reinforce* the principles of seriousness of purpose and engagement in an egalitarian community, a mentoring component was recently put into place to provide a *conduit* between academic life and residential life. Called

Peer Assistants, this specially-trained[1] group of upper-level undergraduate students, are required to reside in the Resident Halls and plan both "educational and recreational" activities for the ADP students with whom they live and work. In addition, they meet with assigned students both in small groups and individually during the summer essentially "being there" to help students deal with adjustment issues and, if necessary, refer students to appropriate support services. In short, the Peer Assistants, some of whom continue in these positions during the academic year, and as many as possible are drawn from previous ADP cohorts, preclude or intercede in areas that often fall under the radar but prove overwhelming for Resident Assistants and Resident Hall's Directors.

Another aspect of mentoring is a designated Senior Mentor. This position provides a sort of *buffer zone* between the academic and social or personal aspects of campus life. The Senior Mentor oversees the PAs and meets with Resident Life staff to assure that the proper procedures are in place (e.g., ADP students are concentrated in two residential halls making them now "easier to locate"; a 24-hour quiet rule is enforced during the summer; no visitors are allowed in resident halls in the summer), and that campus-wide services and resources are used when needed. Students are encouraged (although not required) to meet with the Senior Mentor and come to see her as the "person to go to" when things aren't working out. For example, she conducts tutoring sessions on topics like study skills, time management, and test analysis if regular tutors' times are filled up. She facilitates the creation of study groups and generally knows "who to go to" when students are unclear about how to match problems with solutions. Finally, it's the Senior Mentor who oversees students whose GPA falls under a 2.0. In those

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[1] Peer Assistants participate in training recommended by the College Reading and Learning Association's (CRLA) International Mentoring Certification Program which includes an eight-day workshop.

cases she helps students draw up and enact an Academic Recovery Plan to ensure that academics get back on track.

Tutoring

The *scaffolding* of the ADP structure is tutoring. Tutors for ADP summer students attend all classes and meet with individual tutees at least one time per week for English and twice a week with student pairs for math. Tutors are undergraduate "peers" who have received an "A" in particular courses, who have a cumulative 2.75 GPA (although typically most maintain 3.0), and, as much as possible, are drawn from the ADP student body. Tutors also participate in an Academic Success Workshop, a five-week experience offered four times a year to all WCU students. Because the ADP tutors are housed under the umbrella of the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC), an operation that coordinates the activities of about 80 tutors per year, it benefits from the highly systematic and coordinated structures of that entity. All tutors participate in CRLA training and moving through the three levels of training is rewarded through pay increases. The Director of Tutoring has also created a way for tutors to learn from each other by enlisting (again for pay) L3 tutors to work with L1 and L2. Tutors are required to keep accurate records of their sessions, write weekly reports to the director, and are observed every semester.

Scaffolding provides an apt metaphor for the tutoring corps since scaffolds represent *temporary supportive structures.* The stated mission of the tutoring program at WCU is to "make the students independent learners." Drilled into tutors is the message that they are not "adding" to what professors have taught, but that they are "pointing out" to students what the professor expects of students concerning "getting" information from readings and class, "studying" that information, and "producing" evidence of understanding and practical use.

The ADP requires tutoring for all developmental courses. Again, structures have been devised whereby students can demonstrate mastery of needed skills. Prior to tutoring students must fill out a form indicating what they are doing in a class and what they want from tutoring. At the end of the session the tutor and student conjointly complete a form evaluating whether or not goals were achieved and if any subsequent sessions are required. Although students take on much of the responsibility concerning the content of the session, they are also held to invariable requirements for the session. To that end, tutors note whether a student arrived on time, was prepared to work, and was attentive during the session. Tutoring is a required activity in the summer session and into the first year and penalties ensue if responsibilities are not fulfilled. For example, two absences result in being dropped from tutoring and being dropped results in a ten percent reduction in the grade for the tutored course. Being unprepared for a session results in being asked to leave that tutoring session and counts as an absence. Accommodations are made for students who may not require tutoring. If, after six weeks of the regular semester, a student is earning an "A" in a course the professor can exempt that student from tutoring. However, if the student's grade falls below an "A" then he or she returns to tutoring. This provision illustrates an important point, that the goal of tutoring is not simply to "pass" as course, but to come as close as possible to earning an "A" in a course.

Counseling

The final component of the ADP structure involves counseling services, which serve multiple ends and function as a *safety net, a reinforcement, and a finishing touch* to ADP students' experiences both through the summer session and through their academic career. Two licensed psychologists from the university counseling program work directly with the ADP and Act 101 students. Both undertake assessment of these students to detect specific learning or

emotional issues that require either their services, those available across the university (e.g.,

services for learning disabled students), or those that may need private referrals. One of these

counselors meets individually with new Act 101 students to draw up a College Student Inventory

which he touts as a "snapshot" of who you were coming into the summer experience and again

going out of it. Counselors also probe for "interferences" that might loom in the background of

these students' lives and may be unknown in their new academic context. The ADP conducts

counseling only on individual bases.

The *reinforcement and finishing* aspects of counseling are indicated through the various

financial opportunities afforded through the ADP. Certain scholarships are made available to

these students, one that reduces their tuition by $2,000 per year. Also, ADP students can compete

for two senior awards of $5,000 each. Lists of ADP students who have achieved recognition for

scholarship and service are prominently displayed in the hallways that lead to the ADP and other

support service offices. Finally, *finishing off* the ADP experience are various leadership

programs made available to students. These are discussed below

Expectations

While the Director and the staff persons were overseeing the creation of structures

outlined above, a way of recognizing the meeting of expectations inherent in those structures was

being devised at WCU by a University Counselor who in 1990 founded the national honor

society, Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) "to recognize the academic achievements of students admitted

to Colleges and Universities through non-traditional criteria who utilize developmental education

support services." As the home of XAE, the West Chester community is particularly attuned to

its students meeting the rigorous requirements of this society by maintaining a 3.0 cumulative

GPA for at least two consecutive semesters. ADP students have further made themselves visible

as serious scholars to the larger university community by donning tee-shirts proclaiming "G4DL" (going for the dean's list). Through such efforts, *minds have changed* about ADP students and faculty allies are today in no shortage. But the program keeps its expectations for its students and itself salient through its message of *appropriate challenge*, that is aligning standards with developmental levels.

Expectations are clearly laid out for students. Simply put, the program *expects* one hundred percent of its *selected* students to complete the summer program and to complete college. Written materials anticipate student questions and provide lists of obstacles that can get in the way: summer jobs, skewed priorities, getting behind, not seeking help early and often. Again, the messages of *exclusivity* and *privilege* are invoked to buttress student motivation. For example, participating in the summer program, often initially met with resentment, is packaged by staff persons as a *privilege* afforded to a *selective few* putting them "ahead of others" who will encounter the university in all of its rigor and enormity for the first time in the Fall.

Finally, an expectation is set concerning community. One part of the summer program focuses on orienting students to environmental aspects of the university. Many ADP students, particularly those in the Act 101 program, come from urban areas and need to learn how to live (and find things) in a suburban setting. Most students come to the summer program leaving old friends behind and staff persons *expect* them to feel alienated and more worried about what their peers think of them rather than what their English professor thinks. As an academic advisor put it, "help students find their niche and academics will follow." Thus, much time is devoted to *fitting* students into their new environment with the *expectation* that attention to this aspect of life will result in the formation of a solid *community* where "we live together, work together, succeed together" and if some are in danger of "failing" we can help them together.

Expectations Fulfilled?

The one hundred percent expectation for students in ADP and Act 101 is featured prominently, but statistics are not hidden. Students are informed that the national average for four-year graduation at four-year, public institutions is about 48 percent. Students in the ADP do not deviate from that average. However, all but a few complete college after five years. Again, the program sees this as consistent with their one hundred percent expectation, but recognizes that students may be under pressure from their families to complete in four years, and indeed that well-intentioned expectation may actually jeopardize the probability of success. Given the time required to get through developmental courses, the time needed to advising and counseling, the time necessary to internalize the message that the help provided by the ADP is for one's own good, students and their families are advised that an additional year to complete college should not be seen as a problem. A more revealing statistic that attests to the efficacy of the ADP and the success of its students is that over forty percent of ADP students on average earn a 3.0 or better GPA.

Ongoing Expectations

One thing that is also evident from a visit to the ADP at WCU is that there are *expectations* for the program itself. In short, staff persons are not resting on the laurels they have rightfully earned and areas of *change* are identified through a process of continued reflection on practice. They remember through their own scholarship that this is a program that has moved from the *Pits to the Pinnacle*[2]*,* but that there is always room at the top for improvement. Interviews with staff persons revealed many instances of major and minor adjustments made to the program. Some of these are accomplished within the program itself: increasing tutoring

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[2] This article written by Saddler & Kyper in a 1995 documents how this was accomplished by setting "academic excellence as the primary goal of the ADP."

hours, mandating tutors to attend <u>all</u> developmental class sessions and set themselves up as "model students". Just this year, the program is instituting a new component. As mentioned earlier students attending the summer program take <u>either</u> developmental English or math. Which one is taken depends on a student's results on a placement exam. The student is assigned to the subject where he or she has best performed. The rationale behind this decision stems from the program's objective of allowing students to achieve excellence, and the logic that it might be better to have 15 versus five weeks devoted to the subject that poses a greater challenge. Although the program maintains the soundness of these justifications, they also worry that time away from math in particular might have consequences. As a way of addressing this dilemma, the program will offer this summer what they are calling "Math Seminar" where those students not taking math will participate in two one-hour sessions devoted to diagnostic work, discussions of how to study math, and talks directed at why students might harbor negative attitudes toward math. This program is being launched in a spirit of experimentation and the Director intends to collect data on how this new component is received by students and whether it has any palpable effect on later math performance.

While changes that affect only the program per se are relatively straightforward to enact, other changes require advocacy work and not a little political clout. For example, the Tutoring Coordinator reported that up until a few years ago the practice was for departments to assign full-time faculty to teach ADP classes last and that syllabi were "all over the place." The Director of the ADP intervened and requested that more full-time faculty be able to offer ADP classes and that they be allowed to teach multiple sections and /or continue into subsequent semesters. It was discovered that some faculty were happy to do this and this has resulted in more coordination and continuity among courses.

The expectations of the ADP to a very large degree have been confirmed, still staff persons caution that confirmatory evidence may not be available in the short term. Certainly, one pointed out, SAT scores do not predict any high degree of success, but tracking student performance over two or three semesters very often proves that the predictions about these "college capable" students were not amiss. Indeed, the *privileges* made available to ADP students - tutoring, advising, leadership opportunities - are by and large offered to students across the university, but few *expect* regularly admitted students to take advantage of them.

Cross-Case Analysis

As noted in the introduction to this qualitative section of the evaluation report, we began our inquiry by assuming that all of our selected Act 101 programs were "good programs" and that the pursuit of "best practices" would fail to capture the essence of what makes them "good." Framing our inquiry in this way situated us within a phenomenological tradition wherein our main task became finding ways of describing what these programs do and finding appropriate names that might best capture their activity. This kind of work is highly interpretive but not idiosyncratic. In composing each case report, we attempted to link data obtained through our site visits to the interpretations being made. Still, because the case reports were presented individually it was left up to the reader to engage in the further interpretive work of making inferences and drawing conclusions about commonalities and differences among the five programs presented.

In this final section we take up that task explicitly. In a sense, this section presents the *results* of the qualitative inquiry by specifying the aspects of the Act 101 programs that contribute to their "goodness."   Our findings concerning the commonalities among these

programs can be reduced to two main concepts: engagement and recognition. Our assertion is that these programs *engage* the students in their charge by first *getting their attention* then *redirecting their attention*. In addition the programs *recognize* and work to get students to *recognize* that *change* stands at the heart of the enterprise they are undertaking. Ultimately, students must change their ways of seeing things, their ways of thinking, and their ways of being. Through embracing and enacting *change*, atudents are promised continued *recognition* through awards, honors, and achievement of the final goal of college graduation..

With regard to differences, we revisit the main themes that introduced each case report demonstrating how enacting such themes reveals the unique aspects of each program and how these themes are very closely linked to the institutions themselves. We then discuss how the findings from this study align with findings from the extant literature reviewed in an earlier section. Finally, we return to the research question that ended our introductory section:

How can understanding "good programs" contribute to "better practice"?

In other words, we attempt to make more concrete recommendations about particular practices that might well be taken up by Act 101 programs and what policies might be considered by PDE.

Commonalities Among Programs

ENGAGEMENT

Assertion 1: A good program engages students by first getting their attention.

Surprising

Nothing captures attention better than a surprise. Both La Salle and West Chester rally the power of surprise to draw students into their programs. It is unlikely that low income students without stellar academic records would think about attending an expensive, private college, but

this realizable possibility is the vehicle that brings each new cohort of Act 101 students to La Salle each summer. West Chester also delivers a surprising message to its chosen students. They sit up and pay attention when they hear that they have been selected from so many and that it is the development of that special something noted by admission's personnel that will allow them to engage in the challenging work ahead. Contracts, evident in all of the programs, can also be seen as attention-getting mechanisms. Students are asked to "sign on" to the program as a responsible adult.

Personalizing

Another method of drawing students in is through personalizing. At HACC, counselors and the director compose hand-written notes to students to commend, to encourage, and sometimes to sympathize. The Director of the Act 101 program at Temple finds students taken aback when she begins citing facts from their lives at their first meeting together. The students quickly realize that they are talking to a person who has taken time to know them. This is particularly unexpected in an institution the size of Temple. At West Chester, what they call "tailoring" begins early as students are placed in developmental courses that reflect areas of relative strength rather than weakness. Recall that their stated goal is to afford students the opportunity to build upon strengths to produce excellence.

Personalizing can also be demonstrated by program personnel who act in ways that show concern or respect for students' more collective identities. At HACC, Act 101 staff persons acknowledge the "other life" of their students and understand when family or work has to take priority over school. At Bloomsburg, an African American director with a thirty-year connection to the university, assumes the role of head of household for a group of students far away from family and familiar settings. Finally, La Salle provides both space and time so that commuting

students can feel and build a sense of community. Each of these strategies is intended to engage students in a new context.

Assertion 2: A good program engages students by demonstrating what engagement looks like or redirecting attention.

Engaging through "fitting in"

One of the primary tasks of any special program is to not look special, to not create stigma for those who participate. The students who enter the university through the Act 101 program must ultimately *fit* and assume their place within the university at large. Four of the five programs visited begin this project through their Summer Bridge Programs (SBP). It is the exclusivity of the SBP that lays the groundwork that will increase the probability of *fitting in.*

Engaging with program services

At La Salle students are simply told, "This is the way it is." To *fit* into La Salle, students must do what has been proven effective for so many students like them. The longevity of key staff persons – especially the Director and Chief Counselor – is invoked to serve as reminders to students that they know what they are doing. At Temple, a similar message is conveyed but it's the longevity of the program itself and the evidence accrued over those many years that are used to convince students that a voluntary acceptance of "the way we do things" is the smart thing to do. The staff at HACC, ever mindful of the often competing needs of its students, use reminders and repetition of the basic message about services available to hold onto their students and direct them toward the various services available to them.

Engaging through modeling

An extremely powerful mechanism of engagement is the construction of models that serve to make visible to constituents the possible outcomes of engagement. The Act 101

programs included in this study accomplished this through various types of near-peer

relationships. Every program had a peer tutoring component where upper-level students who had

performed well in specific courses served as tutors, in many cases not only for Act 101 students

and students in other support programs, but also for students in general. What Act 101 personnel

did, however, was to see to it that peer tutors could be drawn from their own ranks, to make it

known where many of these peer tutors came from, and to create the possibility that any Act 101

student could become a peer tutor.

Beyond the tutoring function, peers were enlisted in other capacities. At La Salle a cadre

of Peer Advisors provided help with new students' transitioning issues and were assigned one-to-

one. Temple employed peers as Class Assistants who held recitation sessions after formal class

meetings. In addition, Temple's Project MENTOR was aimed at ameliorating the transitional

issues arising between high school and college. At West Chester, Peer Assistants lived with new

ADP students in residence halls to provide both support and models of engagement regarding the

academic and social aspects of college. Each of these three institutions relied on the training

materials and systems established through the College Reading and Learning Association

(CRLA) to ensure the quality of these services. Each also delegated to an Act 101 staff person

supervisory responsibility to oversee ongoing peer interactions.

Engaging through leadership

One of the ironies of the Act 101 programs seems to be that by fostering a strong sense of

identity within the 101 cohort, students will be better able to become integrated and part of the

university at large. The Chief Counselor at La Salle had a tested formula to actualize these

different forms of engagement. First, he needed to get students engaged with the program.

Engaged membership, he asserted, followed from leadership and leadership could be

demonstrated in "safe ways" like organizing a special program or a dance for the program. Once success was achieved and acknowledged through lots of positive feedback, then students could be encouraged to move outside the 101 circle to, perhaps equally safe venues like cultural clubs where they could practice their leadership skills in a larger context. The next move up to higher visibility, university-wide positions, then, appeared only logical. Temple enacted a similar process of engagement but a bit more formally through its Professional Development Workstudy Internship Program. Students moved from "small jobs" perhaps doing clerical tasks at the RCC to taking steps to pursue grand professions. A vital component of the internship program was participation in a first-year seminar where students are introduced to new ways of thinking about work, about behavioral conventions of work, and about professional options and requirements.

Each institution visited included a leadership component that worked as a kind of gradual release model moving from dependence to independence. By convincing students that they had the capacity to engage in leadership experiences, confidence was expected to rise, and attention would be redirected to the possibilities for engagement across the university.

Engaged programs

Consistent with the idea of student integration, so were each of these programs integrated across their larger institutions. This typically was the result of persistent efforts on the part of long-standing program directors. The Director at West Chester drew faculty into the ADP confident that they would be impressed with the level of excellence his program demanded. Many responded to his request to assist in designing curricula and became more and more willing to directly teach for the program or participate willingly in various reporting structures involving ADP students. Over a number of years Temple accrued "friends" in admissions who

kept an eye out for strong student prospects, and a "faculty liaison" who was particularly

sensitive to the needs of RCC students.

Many of the program directors noted that they were able to align with the objectives of

college faculty and enlist their support. In most cases, it was the message of high standards that

attracted faculty cooperation. Directors stood confident that they could deliver on their promises

because of the support structures available to Act 101 students. When students attended and

engaged, excellence could follow.

RECOGNITION

Assertion 3: A good program recognizes the obstacles faced by its students and enables

students to recognize what is necessary to overcome obstacles.

Recognizing our own obstacles

The directors of each program freely acknowledged the obstacles their programs had

encountered in the past and what was necessary to overcome obstacles arising from collective

biases and a general lack of understanding. Overcoming deeply held beliefs were recognized as

formidable tasks that required considerable time to rectify. Directors also draw upon institutional

sources of strength to energize their programs. For example, Temple invokes its institutional

symbol, the diamond, as a way to recognize the duty and hope behind the 101 program. La Salle

draws upon the legacy of the founder of its teaching order to reinforce the message that money

should not be an obstacle to education.

Recognizing that college is about change and that changing is not easy

All directors recognized and spoke of resistance. Students in SBPs do not typically want

to "give up their summer" particularly because many of them use this as a time to work and earn

money. But also, many 101 students do not think they need developmental classes because they

plan to work hard in college. They do not think they need tutoring because they can "do it on their own." Nor do they think they need advice or counseling because, after all, they made it this far. Essentially what they believe coming in is that they are doing just fine. It is the job of the program to challenge these beliefs, often gently, but sometimes aggressively (or intrusively), and all programs communicated the message that college is about change. At La Salle, the Chief Counselor delivered this message with empathy and emphasis. At Bloomsburg change would begin with community and new ways of behaving. West Chester, where students were selected by being recognized as someone special, having something different, the program stressed that its staff could help students move difference into success only by getting students to reconceptualize ways of thinking about school and students. For all programs "help" was the operative word; only by affording oneself of the available help was change possible.

       <u>Recognizing where you started and where you're finishing</u>

       As mentioned in an earlier section, one of the most powerful aspects of SBPs is the fact that they allow for those behind to get ahead. Students who had gone through SBPs could not help but noticing that they knew more than students arriving on their campuses for the first time in the fall. This appeared to have a significant impact. Yet it also gave rise to a possible pitfall. It would not do students well to over-interpret their advantage. In other words, students needed to recognize that the developmental work of the program continues. Students in most of the programs continue to pursue developmental courses into the first year. Even at La Salle where mainstreaming is assumed for all, students continue with developmental support through tutoring, especially through the services of professional tutors, into their first year. Coming to grips with the notion of development was evident in all of the programs and in some cases this was linked with the message of change. In short, if college is about change and development

reflects a type of change (e.g., cognitive development; personal development) then all courses and all college activities are "developmental". This message was made very clear at La Salle where SBP courses were considered simultaneously developmental <u>and</u> college level and credited as such.

Recognizing risk

In various ways these programs took risks that, like all risks, entail liabilities. At Temple admission to the institution depended on achieving satisfactory performance in the SBP. In college, "satisfactory" is conventionally considered "C-level" work. But at Temple, earning a "C" in a developmental course in the summer necessitated that it be repeated in the fall. Getting all students to share in the rationale that this would be necessary to make them "competent and competitive" could not be guaranteed. Setting excellence as an expectation as was done at West Chester and Bloomsburg might not be taken seriously by all students. Still we found evidence that these risks paid off. Students at HACC reported appreciating the nudges and the tenacity of Act 101 staff. La Salle students shared that they took comfort in knowing what was expected.

Recognizing the need for safeguards

Programs devised ways to hedge risk and preclude the loss of students. This was accomplished through timely interventions that stepped up existing services and/or required services in cases where students did not demonstrate that they recognized the need. Programs like the Academic Recovery Program at West Chester, the Academic Intervention Program at Temple, and the Academic Dismissal List at Bloomsburg represent examples of the "intrusive" kinds of structures designed to help those who are not helping themselves by engaging with the program services. These programs also constituted ways to pull in students beyond the first or second years who may have grown too distant from the program's support services. Other forms

of safeguards were observed among programs. For example, HACC encouraged students to make use of e- and distance-services related to counseling and tutoring. At La Salle, the practice of keeping students close during their first mainstreamed year was seen as a way of getting them to think of the program first before they found themselves in academic jeopardy.

Recognizing achievements

Each program had multiple ways of recognizing the accomplishments of its students. From the formal Chi Alpha Epsilon chapter to HACC's Act 101 Alert newsletter, programs communicated the high premium they placed on high performance. Also, each program insured that senior administrators like Deans, Provosts, and Presidents recognized, usually through their presence at award ceremonies, the achievements of this group of very special students.

Differences Among Programs

The unique qualities of each program are in the main themes offered at the start of each case report. In this section, these will be addressed directly.

Bloomsburg University: Building Community by Starting with Family

The centrality of the Director to the Bloomsburg Act 101 Program was salient to our team. His connection to many of the students by being an African American and his longevity with the institution seemed to combine to make him a veritable father figure. It is also interesting to note that this is a residential SBP where even though students appear glad to be away from home, so are they reasonably fearful about entering a community very different than the home they know. Bloomsburg offers them a safe home and a caring family that looks out for your body

(through its nutrition program), you mind (through refocusing your attention to the practice of mindfulness), and your intelligence (through engaging you in a real college course).

Harrisburg Area Community College: Holding On Before They "Kinda Just Walk Away"

Among all of the schools visited, HACC appears to be a special case.. The tenacity of the 101 staff is tempered by its caution and recognition that care needs to be taken in dealing with a population of students known to sometimes just disappear from classrooms and corridors. Additionally, they recognize the need to find flexible ways to deliver services and afford opportunities.

La Salle: Constructing Possibility

It has already been pointed out that La Salle draws upon the legacy of its order's founder to construct possibility through equity. The primary goal of the La Salle SBP is to get its 101 cohort ready for the developmental work that is embodied in a college education. Each of the courses taken during the summer is built around a theme that permeates all activities: curricular, social, and cultural. The idea is to get students ready for the playing field by pitching instruction just beyond comfort zones but providing the support necessary to compete. So realizing the possibility of attending this private school is followed by constructing further possibilities – that students will do well during their college years and that they will achieve the ultimate goal of graduation.

Temple: Contracting Responsibility

Temple's program acknowledges its long history of working with diamonds in the rough and has learned that force and mandates "don't work." It relies heavily on the power and the privilege of the contract to engage its students. It also enjoins with students to project and predict "five years out", in a sense making its students co-researchers in the educational experiment that is Act 101.

West Chester: The Call to Privilege: Many Are There, Few Are Chosen

West Chester utilizes its institutional statistics to make its initial point of exclusivity and, somewhat like Temple, 101 staff persons invite students to join in the inquiry that would confirm its forecasts. With an advisor, WCU's 101 students create a "roadmap" tracing how their interests might have ebbed and waned from childhood. With a counselor they take "snapshots" of who they are now and who they become as they proceed through their time in college. As the home of XAE, they rely on students' meeting its requirements to indicate the validity of their chosen status. Their high academic expectations move beyond the classroom to include work done in support and service contexts and they appropriately credit that work.

Conclusion

In many ways, the macro-level differences found among these programs serve to organize the invariable components of Act 101 programs – the curricula, the counseling, the advising, the tutoring, and the opportunity to participate in cultural activities – in a way that contributes to each program's effectiveness.

The five Act 101 programs investigated in this qualitative study yield findings closely aligned with the major categories that structured our review of the literature. Each provides

academic preparation, academic integration, and social integration for a group of students for whom the prognosis for college based on conventional indicators is not very good. We conclude that these "good programs" refute dim predictions, perform exceptional work, and produce large numbers of college graduates who would not "get there", in other words, would not get into these colleges, persist there, and graduate from there, were it not for the Act 101 program.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

We turn now to recommendations for policy and practice. The recommendations presented in this section arise from the literature reviewed and our own data collection. Where conflicting evidence was found (e.g., the efficacy of summer bridge programs), we discussed the competing perspectives and forward a recommendation that is aligned with the weight of the evidence. The recommendations presented below are not prioritized, although we have attempted in the discussion to indicate which recommendations might be more important and potentially efficacious.

Increase Tutoring Opportunities

The importance of tutoring was the most manifest finding from the data collected for this evaluation as well as the literature reviewed. Quantitative analysis revealed that the hours students spent in tutoring were directly related to persistence in the program and academic success (as measured by GPA). Our general recommendation is that Act 101 grantees should find opportunities to increase access to tutoring for student participants and encourage students to avail themselves of these services.

Specifically, we recommend **extending the use of peer tutoring.** The use of peer tutoring is already widespread among participating institutions; our qualitative analysis revealed

that it can be both educationally effective and cost effective especially when the expenses related to peer tutoring can be defrayed by work-study funding. We encourage participating institutions to draw their peer tutors from the ranks of successful Act 101 students. Using advanced Act 101 students as peer tutors has the added benefits of continuing those students' involvement with the program and institution, increasing the likelihood of persistence. Further, the use of successful Act 101 students as peer mentors provides models of academic success for younger Act 101 students.

We caution, however, that the use of peer tutors should not replace or discourage the use of professional tutors. In fact, we recommend that institutions **intentionally proportion peer tutors with professionally trained tutors.** As students in our qualitative study indicated, the professional tutors "understand us as learners." In other words, professional tutors have strong backgrounds in theories of learning and academic development and possess the training professional experience to understand students as "learners," while peers understand what the students are "going through" from an experiential perspective. As was also indicated in the qualitative study, peer tutors and other groups of peer assistants can be systematically trained and supervised. The College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) provides rich resources that can be adopted and adapted by Act 101 personnel.

We also recommend that, where possible, **participating in tutoring activities be made a course requirement.** Schools in the qualitative sample used this technique successfully to increase student participation in tutoring activities. In courses controlled by Act 101 offices, students were required to participate in group tutoring sessions each week. Failure to participate resulted in decreased grades for the course. Conjoining tutoring directly with courses also addresses the comprehensiveness of programs recommended by other empirical work.

Concentrated Services

As one would expect, many Act 101 programs concentrate services for students in the summer leading up to matriculation and during the first year of college. This practice is certainly supported by the literature. We believe providing a foundation of support and service for students in the first year is essential, but we caution against loosening too much the connection to students beyond the first-year of college.

Specifically, we recommend **continued and expanded use of summer bridge programs.** Although the quantitative findings do not sustain this recommendation, the extant literature and the qualitative findings overwhelming support the efficacy of summer bridge programs. These programs, especially with expanded required contact hours, lay the foundation for success in the first-year of college and beyond.

That said, students in the qualitative research indicated **the need for continued connections with the Act 101 program beyond the first year**. Although the aim of Act 101 program should be the gradual decrease of student reliance on their activities, students have differing needs as they move through college. As low-SES and likely first- generation students, Act 101 participants may need assistance to engage with other opportunities within the college or university. We recommend that Act 101 programs **provide intentional leadership training and roles for advanced students in the program, moving students toward assuming such roles within other student groups and across the university.** As students with limited cultural capital, but demonstrated potential, Act 101 students may need mentoring and practice opportunities in order to take advantage of these educationally purposeful activities.

Another way to increase the probability that students beyond the first year make use of available services would be to **institute a later-intervention program** when student's academic

performance seems in jeopardy. Although many of the case study institutions had such a program that was put into action when a particular GPA was not exceeded, it might be worthwhile for schools to experiment with raising the GPA floor slightly especially in schools where students are dropping out (or falling behind) in the third or fourth years.

Building Connections

Programs would do well to **find ways for students to make connections with the program and with the large institution.** Tinto (1993) posited the importance of integration into the college or university on student persistence. Simply stated, students who are more integrated (feel as though they belong; that they fit in), are more likely to persist at the institution. Existing literature and our qualitative analysis suggest that **Act 101 programs should work toward intentionally integrating students into the program first, and use that to ultimately leverage integration in the larger the college or university.**

Specifically, we recommend that Act 101 programs **build a cohort identity with Act 101 students and, when applicable, with other special admissions programs**. Students should see the staff and fellow students as support networks, a group of individuals who care about their success, and to whom they are responsible for their behavior. Although some Directors in the qualitative sample attempted to downplay the Act 101 identity for fear of stigmatizing the students, students on those campuses fully recognized and embraced their status. Programs should build upon this to identify and build support for students.

Further**, the Act 101 cohort identity should be presented to students as one that will gradually sunset.** The ultimate goal of Act 101 services is to equip students with the skills necessary for college and obviate the need for the level of support services initially provided. Students should be encouraged to, and services should be provided that, gradually integrate into

the university as a whole. Notice that this does not mean that services such as advising, tutoring, or counseling are no longer necessary. Indeed, students in the qualitative study were encouraged to continue making use of networks of support, but in later years relying more on major areas of study or less exclusive, university-wide resources.

Act 101 programs should **also utilize culturally-based organizations and activities** as readily available means to integrate students into the broader campus community. Cultural organizations within which Act 101 students might feel comfortable are excellent opportunities for students to practice leadership skills, make connections with students beyond the Act 101 program, and ultimately find a sense of place at the institution.

Build A Sense Of Shared Responsibility

Act 101 programs should focus on equipping students with the skills necessary to succeed in college as well as facilitating a sense of personal responsibility within the student for that success. Act 101 programs should intentionally, and transparently, provide students a roadmap for success, keeping students aware of not only *what* activities are available, but *why* such activities are important.

Specifically, Act 101 programs should **utilize student contracts to set explicit goals and identify a path toward achieving those goals**. Students should be encouraged periodically to reflect upon their progress toward the goals delineated in their contracts and reevaluate them as needed. Contracts should be seen as a tool **to increase the transparency involved in the educational process.** Students should be encouraged to "see" and understand why they are participating in activities and then demonstrate through evidence-producing artifacts that the activities are effective.

While common sense seems to dictate that the onus of academic success lies primarily with the individual students, Act 101 programs challenge that message and replace it with one asserting that academic success is ultimately a shared responsibility. We offer the following specific recommendations as means through which to engrain in students and institutional agents the shared nature of this responsibility:

<u>Build Synergy</u>

The literature review and our qualitative data collection highlight the synergy created when institutional efforts are collaborative. Act 101 programs should build upon existing resources (e.g., tutoring services, Supplemental Instruction, leadership programming) rather than create these services anew. The use of, and possible enhancement of, existing resources makes economic and educational sense.

<u>Early Alert Programs</u>

Act 101 personnel should have procedures in place so that faculty and other staff can alert them to potential concerns about students' academic and personal progress. Another interesting "early alert" came to our attention during data collection for the qualitative study. Not so many years ago, Act 101 students at La Salle were part of a GEAR-UP grant awarded to the Philadelphia Public Schools. The 101 students served as tutors to middle-school students in inner-city high schools. This example provides an creative and excellent way to advertise the power and potential of Act 101 and meets with the "early intervention" recommendation made by Perna (2002). Unfortunately, this program has not received the funding needed to continue.

<u>Consider A Room of Their Own</u>

As indicated by the literature on college engagement, residential programs afford students greater access to activities and services that promote both academic and social integration. Act

101 programs operate in schools that range from strictly residential to entirely commuters. In the qualitative study the schools that ran residential summer bridge programs were able to offer extended activities or special services that added to the uniqueness of their programs and presumably to their effectiveness. At all schools, students were given or found a space in which they could congregate. Especially in light of our recommendation that Act 101 programs strive to develop internal identity with the program early and first, it would seem reasonable to think seriously of finding (or creating) space for commuting Act 101 students that does not interfere with activities like tutoring or counseling.

Partner With Families

Act 101 programs should find ways to integrate students' families into the educational process. The literature related to first-generation students clearly indicates that families can be a source of support for students if institutions intentionally incorporate them into the students' process. Act 101 activities, when appropriate, should be open to families.

Further, Act 101 personnel should recognize that families may have different, often competing goals, for students. First-generation literature discusses the need for students to be "bi-cultural," in the sense that they are negotiating an educational environment that is markedly different from (and sometimes at odds with) their home environments. Act 101 personnel in our qualitative study discussed their perceptions that students in their programs are often being pulled between two cultures. Activities should focus on lessening this cultural gap and equipping students with the skills be negotiate both cultures successfully.

Share successes with other Act 101 program personnel

Our research indicates that Act 101 programs have been successful in improving the success of the students they serve. Act 101 staff should be encouraged to, and provided opportunities to share their successes with staff at other institutions.

Moving Forward

We offer the following recommendations for PDE and Act 101 programs. These recommendations are distinct from those offered previously because they do not directly relate to services provided to Act 101 students. Rather, the following recommendations focus on evaluation procedures and the programmatic structure.

Focus Data Collection On Evaluation

The findings from the quantitative data analysis should be viewed with appropriate skepticism. Although we stand by the findings, we recognize that data used were collected for different purposes. As stated previously researchers needed to make several methodological decisions in order to build a dataset for analytical purposes. We would encourage PDE and Act 101 personnel on the campuses to work together to determine data collection protocols that facilitate the type of evaluation we attempted here. The protocol should be stable in order to build multi-year data sets and designed with analytical, rather than descriptive, procedures in mind. Finally, in order to most efficiently collect and monitor data related to student outcomes institutions should integrate Act 101 data collection with institutional databases whenever possible.

Allow For Institutional Flexibility

Although we recognize the need for consistency when administering a state-wide program at multiple institutions, institutions should be encouraged to meet the needs of their

specific populations through as much flexibility as is possible. It must be understood, however, that as institutions attempt innovative practices, these practices are open to scrutiny and evaluation.

Continue To Include Qualitative Methods In Evaluating Programs

The qualitative study undertaken for this study proceeded from a goal – to describe "best practices", later revised as "good programs." Future inquiries might pursue variations among programs exploring more directly the quality of programmatic interventions such as tutoring, counseling, or curricula.

Consider Conducting A Cost-Benefit Analysis Of The Act 101 Program

This evaluation did not include any examination of the financial and opportunity costs associated with the Act 101 programs, nor did it quantify the benefits that accrued to the institution and their students, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In order to determine whether the funds spent by the Commonwealth and the institutions on the Act 101 program could better be spent by other means (in order to achieve the outcomes mandated in the Act 101 legislation), PDE should consider conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the Act 101 program.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Values Limitations for Specific Variables

Variables Name	Minimum	Maximum	Other Limitations
Entry Year	1956	Current Year	
Entry Month	1	12	
Birth Year			> 16 years before entry year
Birth Month	1	12	
Gender	1	2	
Race	1	6	
High School GPA	0.00	5.00	
GED	0	1	
Verbal SAT	200	800	
Math SAT	200	800	
Income	0	67,200	
Family Size	1	8	
Entry Status	1	6	
Full-Time or Part-Time	1	2	
Beginning Status	1	6	
Cumulative GPA	0.00	5.00	
End Status	1	8	
Reasons for Stopping/Dropping Out	1	14	Only if End Status was 6, 7, or 8
Exit Year	2003	2010	
Exit Month	1	12	
Summer Program			1, 2, or 8

Table 2. Calculations for Time Spent in Counseling or Tutoring

Variable Value	Value Name	Coded Value
A	15 minutes	15
B	16 – 30 minutes	23
C	31 – 45 minutes	38
D	46 – 60 minutes	53
E	60 minutes or more	60

Table 3. New Variables for School Type*

Type	Variable Name
School Size	1 = Small/ Very Small
	2 = Medium
	3 = Large/Very Large
Control	0 = Private
	1 = Public
Level	0 = Two-Year
	1 = Four-Year
Basic Classification	1 = Associates
	2 = Bachelor's
	3 = Master's
	4 = Doctoral/Research
	5 = Special

*Note: Variables were eventually coded to dichotomous

Table 4. Variables Recoded to Dichotomous Values

Original Variable	New Variable	Previous Values	Recoded Values
Gender	Female	1 = Male	0 = No
		2 = Female	1 = Yes
Race	Minority	1 = African American	1 = Yes
		2 = White	0 = No
		3 = Latino	1 = Yes
		4 = Asian	1 = Yes
		5 = American Indian	1 = Yes
		6 = Other	N/A
Full-Time	Full-Time	1 = Full-Time	1 = Yes
		2 = Part-Time	0 = No
Entry Status	Entry Status (F)	1 = Freshman	1 = Yes
		2 = Sophomore	0 = No
		3 = Junior	0 = No
		4 = Senior	0 = No
		5 = Graduate	0 = No
		6 = Other	0 = No
End Status	Persisted	1 = Enrolled Full-Time	1 = Yes
		2 = Enrolled Part-Time	1 = Yes
		3 = Graduated	1 = Yes
		4 = Attained a non-degree	1 = Yes
		5 = Transferred	1 = Yes
		6 = Stopped Out	0 = No
		7 = Dropped out	0 = No
		8 = Terminated	0 = No
Summer	Summer	1 = Yes	1 = Yes
		2 = No	0 = No
		8 = No program Offered	0 = No
School Size	School Size (Small)	1 = Small/ Very Small	1 = Yes
		2 = Medium	0 = No
		3 = Large/Very Large	0 = No
School Size	School Size (Medium)	1 = Small/ Very Small	0 = No
		2 = Medium	1 = Yes
		3 = Large/Very Large	0 = No
Basic Classification	Associates	1 = Associates	1 = Yes
		2 = Bachelor's	0 = No
		3 = Master's	0 = No
		4 = Doctoral/Research	0 = No
		5 = Special	0 = No
Basic Classification	Bachelor's	1 = Associates	0 = No
		2 = Bachelor's	1 = Yes
		3 = Master's	0 = No

		4 = Doctoral/Research	0 = No
		5 = Special	0 = No
Basic Classification	Master's	1 = Associates	0 = No
		2 = Bachelor's	0 = No
		3 = Master's	1 = Yes
		4 = Doctoral/Research	0 = No
		5 = Special	0 = No

Appendix B

Table 5. Comparison of Means

	High School GPA			Math SAT			Verbal SAT		
	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.	Mean	St. Dev.	Sig.
Overall	2.57	1.00		427.15	86.00		429.47	83.08	
Male	2.48	0.95	*	442.00	90.98	*	431.31	85.71	NS
Female	2.63	1.03		417.60	81.48		427.91	81.39	
1: African-American	2.53	0.92	2: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: NS 6: NS	392.50	75.48	2: * 3: * 4: * 5: * 6: *	397.78	75.69	2: * 3: * 4: * 5: NS 6: *
2: White	2.55	1.06	1: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: NS 6: NS	449.75	82.00	1: * 3: * 4: * 5: * 6: *	457.01	78.33	1: * 3: * 4: * 5: * 6: *
3: Latino	2.56	1.10	1: NS 2: NS 4: * 5: NS 6: NS	477.81	77.03	1: * 2: * 4: * 5: NS 6: NS	414.72	79.08	1: * 2: * 4: * 5: NS 6: NS
4: Asian	3.08	0.77	1: * 2: * 3: * 5: * 6: *	501.41	102.36	1: * 2: * 3: * 5: * 6: *	437.13	96.20	1: * 2: * 3: * 5: NS 6: NS
5: American Indian	2.70	0.74	1: NS 2: NS 3: NS 4: * 6: NS	421.73	59.60	1: * 2: * 3: NS 4: * 6: NS	425.77	66.55	1: NS 2: * 3: NS 4: NS 6: NS
6: Other	2.61	0.90	1: NS 2: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: NS	430.84	78.91	1: * 2: * 3: NS 4: * 5: NS	434.51	85.85	1: * 2: * 3: NS 4: NS 5: NS

Table 5 (Cont). Comparison of Means

	High School GPA			Math SAT			Verbal SAT		
1: Associates	1.59	1.34	2: * 3: * 4: * 5: *	419.75	97.07	2: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: *	432.69	97.80	2: NS 3: NS 4: NS 5: *
2: Bachelors	2.16	1.21	1: * 3: * 4: * 5: *	422.13	77.13	1: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: *	426.85	75.99	1: NS 3: NS 4: * 5: *
3: Masters	2.68	0.83	1: * 2: * 4: * 5: *	414.48	78.21	1: NS 2: NS 4: * 5: *	418.92	78.52	1: NS 2: NS 4: * 5: *
4: Doctoral	2.92	0.78	1: * 2: * 3: * 5: NS	460.70	95.72	1: * 2: * 3: * 5: NS	450.66	87.08	1: NS 2: * 3: * 5: *
5: Special	2.94	0.75	1: * 2: * 3: * 4: NS	472.38	98.99	1: * 2: * 3: * 4: NS	501.02	84.15	1: * 2: * 3: * 4: *
2-Year	1.59	1.34	*	419.75	97.07	NS	432.69	97.80	NS
4-Year	2.66	0.90		425.86	84.71		426.93	81.42	
Private	2.66	0.76	*	409.56	79.08	*	410.01	75.94	*
Public	2.48	1.16		449.54	89.21		454.37	85.16	
1: Small/Very Small	2.39	1.14	2: * 3: *	416.17	83.25	2: NS 3: *	422.72	84.07	2: NS 3: *
2: Medium	2.69	0.76	1: * 3: *	420.29	79.14	1: NS 3: *	423.36	78.26	1: NS 3: *
3: Large/Very Large	2.87	0.80	1: * 2: *	454.65	93.44	1: * 2: *	443.13	83.12	1: * 2: *

* Significant at a 0.001 level; NS: not significant

Appendix C

Table 6. Regression Analysis Models

Variables	Predicting Persistence (with exit GPA)			Regression Analysis: Exit GPA		
	Beta	Sig	Direction	Beta	Sig	Direction
Gender						
Race		0.000	+		0.000	-
Entry Age		0.024	-			
HS GPA		0.000	+		0.009	+
Math SAT						
Verbal SAT					0.007	+
Entry Status: Freshman		0.001	-			
Summer					0.000	-
1st Year GPA		0.014	-		0.000	+
Exit GPA		0.000	+			
Total Counseling Contact		0.019	+			
Total Tutoring Contact		0.008	+		0.000	+
Total Counseling Time						
Total Tutoring Time						
Predicted Drop Out	72.9%					
Predicted Persisted (sample cases)	80.6%					
Predicted Persisted (all cases)	80.0%					
-2 Log Likelihood	2795.751					
Pseudo-R^2/ R^2	0.374			0.923		
Chi-Square	869.612					
Significance	0.000			0.000		

* Entry Status: only freshman because cases only exist for freshman and sophomore