Program: PAL-Peer Assisted Learning
Coordinator: Gilbert Contreras

Names of those participating in the report: Gilbert Contreras and Carol Welsh

Date: 12-7-07

Program Mission:
The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Program provides students with an opportunity to participate in weekly study group and tutoring sessions for historically difficult, developmental courses. These sessions are open to any Cypress College student enrolled in a PAL designated course. In these study group sessions, PAL tutors assist students by reviewing the class materials and homework assignments, participating in collaborative learning activities that reinforce course work, and preparing for exams by working through practice test questions. The primary goals of the PAL Program are to assist students in understanding the learning process by demonstrating how to study, help students earn better grades by facilitating effective learning strategies and techniques, and maximize comprehension and retention through collaborative learning activities.

Core Measures:
Provide applicable information regarding trends in: unduplicated students, enrollments, visits, and course success rates.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollments by CRN</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Rate in PAL sessions</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Success Rates (C or better)—PAL participants</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Rates (C or better)—Non-PAL</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA—PAL</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA—Non-PAL</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Completion — PAL</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Completion — Non PAL</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 ENGLISH UTAP classes were excluded.
Budget Trends. Provide trend information regarding the allocated budget / actual expenditures for the past several years of the program. Note any special circumstances below the table.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocated</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actual Expenditures</td>
<td>$14,047.05</td>
<td>$49,625.60</td>
<td>$61,371.70</td>
<td>$70,624.06</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative: Strengths and challenges.

Strengths: Use this section to briefly reflect upon major accomplishments of the program.

Since 2004, the PAL Program has demonstrated efficacy in serving a diverse student population at Cypress College. As the PAL Program has grown over the years, it has helped students achieve academic success by complementing their formal instruction in the classroom with collaboratively learning activities in study groups. Moreover, PAL assists Cypress College in the important business of addressing student needs—and addressing those needs where the student can most benefit. Many students enter the community college system without the basic skills, necessary background, or experience to be successful college students. PAL strives to teach students how to learn, master the learning process, and empowers students to become active agents in their educational journey. PAL facilitates learning and equips students with the necessary tools to compete in the classroom and workforce.

The major accomplishments of the PAL Program at Cypress College include (1) Annual Data Demonstrating Student Success, (2) Program Growth and Faculty Support, and (3) Enhancing the Professional Development of PAL Tutors.

Student Success

The Core Measures Table suggests that PAL has played a substantial role in positive student outcomes. Year after year, students participating in PAL show higher success rates (earning a “C” or better in the course) than students who do not participate in PAL. Also, students participating in the PAL Program have higher GPA’s on average. Finally, the yearly data suggests that PAL participants are more likely to complete the course than non-PAL students. The data provides compelling evidence that PAL helps students learn—not only the content of the course, but the essential critical thinking aspects of understanding the learning process. In particular, collaborative learning provides “non-traditional” students from diverse backgrounds with an additional toolbox to succeed in the community college setting and beyond. Ultimately, the PAL Program empowers participants to become better college students.

Program Growth and Faculty Support

Despite the scarcity of available rooms and the high turnover of PAL Tutors, the PAL Program at Cypress College has grown since its inception. In the Spring of 2004, PAL was offered in 6 courses and served 98 students. During the Spring 2007 semester, PAL was offered in 20 courses and served 146 students. Most impressive about the growth of the PAL Program is the continued student success in developmental math courses. One concern regarding the future growth of the PAL program is that the growth will not be directed by student needs or data, rather the PAL Program will be limited by the availability of classrooms and funding.

In addition to the growth in student participation, there has been a growing community of support among the faculty. Stuart Rosenberg, Chair of the English Department, says “students benefit from SI and PAL because
they get to work with other interested, engaged students and a well-trained inspirational leader.” Math Instructor, Christina Plett says “students who enroll in a class with SI or PAL improve their understanding of the course material and their performance on homework, quizzes, and tests.” Each semester there is a larger number of faculty interested in the PAL program, however, numerous courses are not selected to participate due to budget constraints and scarcity of classrooms.

PAL contributes to a safe and supportive campus environment for students. SI has also produced some positive outcomes that are much more difficult to measure. For example, how do we measure the student who would have earned a “D” in Math 40, but earned a “C” because of participating in PAL? Or, how do we measure the impact of PAL if the same student would have dropped the course without the assistance or support network of the study group? These immeasurable outcomes have important implications on student enrollment, achievement, and success. The PAL Program plays an important role in the network of instructional staff and student support services in their efforts to provide a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment for Cypress College students.

**Professional Development of PAL Tutors**

The professional development of the PAL Tutor is one of the most important components of the PAL Program. For many students, the PAL Program provides them with their first employment opportunity—especially in the higher educational setting. PAL Tutors receive extensive training regarding facilitation skills, dimensions of diversity, conflict resolution, and much more. In addition, they collaborate with Cypress College instructional staff and serve as a resource for students. The PAL Tutor position provides students with extremely important experience that translates into enhanced critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills. In fact, some of the PAL Tutors advanced to become classroom teachers, tutors in the Learning Resource Center, graduate or professional school students.

**Challenges:** Please provide any insight into significant challenges or obstacles that may have curtailed the success of the program. Identify the types of changes necessary for improvement.

Institutional commitment in addition to institutional support continues to challenge the PAL Program at Cypress College. Cypress College has been supportive of PAL Program efforts and the positive outcomes, but PAL struggles to find adequate classroom space. Institutional commitment in the form of funding and facilities are essential to the long-term success of the PAL Program. Funding for the PAL Program comes from Title V resources, which is in its final year of its funding cycle. Moreover, the SI/PAL Program requires and Administrative Assistant at the 100% commitment. Currently, the SI/PAL Program shares an Administrative Assistant with the Learning Resource Center at 50% time.

In addition to the upcoming challenges associated with funding, the PAL Program confronts the issue of classroom scarcity. The current process to schedule study groups entails the PAL Program Director soliciting rooms from the Division Office Managers (once all rooms have been allocated for courses and other Departmental priorities). The process really limits the scope of the PAL Program because there is instability toward the beginning of the semester and each Division Office Manager is territorial regarding room space—that may translate into lower attendance by students and impact the selection of PAL Tutors based on their personal schedules. The ideal situation would allocate room space for formal study group sessions so that students and PAL Tutors can manage their time to include participation in the PAL Program.

In addition to the funding and facilities concerns, the PAL Program transitions under the new leadership of a management position. The turnover in leadership from a coordinator to a manager presents new working relationships within the PAL Program and between the PAL Program and the rest of the Cypress College campus.
Long-range Plan and Objectives

In the following section, identify general goals and specific, measurable objectives your area plans to achieve within the next three years. Programs should identify 3-5 goals, with at least one goal per year. Goals set for next year that require fiscal resources must also be submitted as a Budget Request and Action Plan (separate form).

I. Goal: Institutional Commitment for Collaborative Learning at Cypress College

Supports Strategic Direction (if applicable): Direction 2, Goal 4: Develop student services strategies to improve retention, persistence, and student success of an increasingly diverse student population.

1. Objective: Administrative Assistant (100%)
   1.1. Person(s) responsible:
   1.2. Timeframe:
   1.3. Fiscal resources needed (if not applicable, indicate “NA”):

2. Objective: Secure classrooms entirely allocated for study group sessions (5).
   2.1. Person(s) responsible:
   2.2. Timeframe:
   2.3. Fiscal resources needed (if not applicable, indicate “NA”):

3. Objective: Utilize research to more clearly identify “difficult” courses.
   3.1. Person(s) responsible:
   3.2. Timeframe:
   3.3. Fiscal resources needed (if not applicable, indicate “NA”):

Use the above outline format to add additional goals or objectives as necessary.

Reminder: If fiscal resources are needed for next year’s goals, submit a separate Budget Request and Action Plan for budget unit review.