



the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

The Bridging Research, Information, and Cultures Initiative (BRIC)

Technical Assistance Program Application: Los Medanos College

- 1. The overarching purpose of the BRIC initiative is to strengthen inquiry-based practice at institutions. Describe your institution's historical and current use of information and evidence to inform planning and make decisions. Identify projects or initiatives that have been successful in using information. Additionally, identify areas where gaps exist in either the use or availability of information or evidence. In this latter domain, where would you like to see the college evolve?**

Los Medanos College (LMC) has demonstrated its historical and current commitment to assessment and data-driven decision-making. However, the college needs technical assistance to use the results to actually improve student learning and outcomes.

In 2004, LMC's Academic Senate formed the college-wide Teaching and Learning Project (TLP). Charged with coordinating on-going campus assessment efforts, this committee and its five sub-groups (Developmental Education, General Education, Occupational Education, Student Services, Library/Learning Support Services) lead pilot assessments of Institutional and Program Level Outcomes. The TLP struggles with linking its findings to identifying and actually implementing interventions for improvement of student learning.

In 2010, with student learning outcomes included in almost all of our course outlines, the TLP is beginning to coordinate the assessment of course-level outcomes. This semester we are assessing 47 courses, with plans to assess all courses within a five-year cycle. Most of our faculty and staff, including our research staff, are novices in how best to use assessment information and we lack the in-house expertise for related college-wide professional development. We also struggle with how to systematically and efficiently "align" assessment efforts at the institutional, program and course levels.

We have examples of successful assessment practices – particularly in our Developmental Education program where we have conducted a five-year longitudinal study of student retention, success and persistence and involved faculty inquiry groups to interpret data to drive improvement and planning decisions. Additional examples of LMC's inquiry-based practices include: 1) development of our Educational Master Plan using internal and external environmental scans, 2) linkage of our Program Review and Planning Process to our budget decision-making, 3) review of data trends for scheduling decisions made by our Enrollment

Management Committee, and 4) creation of Umoja and AVID programs based upon interpretation and discussions of data. However, these practices are occurring in isolated pockets and are not systemic or shared across campus.

To further deepen our understanding and use of data and to support our commitment to equity-focused assessment and planning, we have contracted with USC's Center for Urban Education (CUE) to guide us in the use of equity-based assessment instruments and processes to help us "close the loop". LMC's CUE Team is in the middle of this one-year commitment and participants are recognizing that LMC is weak in its capabilities to ask the right questions, interpret data and formulate action steps which will improve student outcomes. We are left with many questions and the desire to expand our assessment capacity and expertise.

We are making progress, yet large gaps exist in our assessment efforts. It is evident that we are awkward and clumsy in our ability to measure and understand evidence of direct student learning. While data are available to us, we do not always know how to interpret and translate evidence into action -- what questions to ask and how to close the loop. Our vision is to evolve our fragmented research practices into an integrated college-wide assessment culture which makes informed, data-driven decisions with its heart in student learning and improved outcomes.(500)

- 2. The TAP is designed to collaborate with existing campus infrastructures to Strengthen the capacity of the practitioners at the institution. Examples of such infrastructures include Student Success Committees, Basic Skills Committees, Student Learning Outcomes Committees, Faculty Inquiry Groups, Flex Days, and department meetings. Describe the existing internal and external institutional structures that could be involved in the implementation of this project. Include the functions served by these groups and how they could expand your institution's ability to improve programs and services through the use of timely and relevant information and evidence. Describe how these institutions fit into your governance structure. (300 words maximum)**

Central to LMC's decision-making structure is the Shared Governance Council (SGC). This group -- with membership from Associated Students, Academic Senate, Classified Senate, and Management -- is responsible for facilitating collaborative decision-making at LMC. As "keeper of the Educational Master Plan", the SGC is responsible for working closely with the president to set the strategic priorities and focus of the college. In order to make informed decisions, the SCG needs timely access to relevant information and evidence -- and members need the assessment and planning expertise to understand and to act on this information.

To accomplish its goals, the SGC authorizes other campus committees with specific roles and responsibilities including Research and Planning, Teaching and Learning Project (TLP), Institutional Development for Equity and Access (IDEA), Professional Development, and the

Technology Committees. Similar to SGC, each of these groups has the need for appropriate and timely research, and interpretation and analysis of data for active planning and implementation. Committees need to assess the results of their actions – “What impact has their work had on student learning and what can they do to improve their impact in the future?”

These committees interrelate with each other, as well as with instructional, student services, and administrative units campus-wide. The college’s Program Review and Planning process, administered annually by the Research and Planning Committee to all units and programs on campus, links directly to LMC’s resource development and allocation development processes, as well as to the college’s professional development, technology and equity priorities, all of which are approved through the SGC.

The ultimate goal of these interrelated processes and functions is improvement of student learning. In order to be effective, structures on campus must have access to relevant information and the capacity to understand how to best use this information to inform their decision-making. (298)

3. What actions do you expect the college to take as a result of participating in TAP? Are there particular changes you hope to implement as a result?

LMC’s planning and assessment process has improved but remains fragmented. We have pieces of assessment happening in many places but it feels like we are working on a 100-piece puzzle, have 80 of the pieces and have not put all of those pieces together. We lack coordination, integration, and completion of the assessment process, including college-wide sharing of assessment data. We intend to conduct a major review of assessment activities currently occurring in pockets throughout the college. Our goal is to build our capacity to assure that the planning and assessment cycle becomes a natural and expected element of our culture which is understood and embraced by the campus as standard practice for the improvement of student learning.

We need technical assistance in order for the college community to engage in assessment in a systemic and meaningful way. We want to establish on-going professional development opportunities so we can learn what questions to ask, what data to request, how to understand the data and how to use it to meaningfully in order to improve college effectiveness and student learning. The assessment cycle should become a valued, natural part of the yearly routine in which faculty, staff, management and students participate – not seen as an “add on” or extra work due to external mandates.

Currently, there are many faculty, staff, students and managers talking about college effectiveness and how to improve student learning. We want this dialog to continue and to expand in a systematic way so that meetings and planning sessions are based on the sharing and

analysis of data and the development strategies identified to improve student learning. As the community grows more comfortable with the assessment process, we hope to create a college-wide synergistic planning and assessment structure resulting in improvement of student learning and college effectiveness. (299)

- 4. The BRIC Initiative is preparing resources on the following topics. Select between one and three topics on which your institution would like to collaborate with the BRIC team in the 2010-11 academic year. Please ensure that at least one of your selections is from the CORE MODULES list.**

CORE MODULES

- A. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes
- B. Using an Equity Lens to Assess Student Learning
- C. Assessing Student Services Outcomes

SUPPORT MODULES

- 1. Building Information Capacity and Promoting a Culture of Inquiry
- 2. Assessing Institutional Effectiveness
- 3. Assessing Basic Skills Outcomes
- 4. Maximizing the Program Review Process
- 5. Turning Data into Meaningful Action

Los Medanos College needs the greatest technical assistance in the following areas:

CORE MODULES

- A. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

SUPPORT MODULES

- 2. Assessing Institutional Effectiveness
- 5. Turning Data into Meaningful Action

- 5. If your institution is selected as a participant, identify the individuals who would collaborate with the individuals in the BRIC teams. Please list their names and titles.**

The Los Medanos College team will consist of a cross constituent group and will include members from the Teaching and Learning Project, Shared Governance Council, and Research and Planning. Participants include:

- 1. Tawny L. Beal, Sr. Academic Manager (**Lead**)
- 2. Mike Grillo, Fire Faculty and Chair of Career Technical Education Committee
- 3. Kiran Kamath, Dean of Career Technical Education
- 4. Richard Livingston, Sr. Dean of Instruction
- 5. Cindy McGrath, Journalism Faculty and Chair of GE Committee

6. Gail Newman, Sr. Dean of Student Services
7. Michael Norris, Math Faculty and President Academic Senate
8. Gil Rodriguez, Dean of Liberal Arts & Science (**Lead**)
9. Tue Rust, Math Faculty and Chair of Developmental Education
10. Humberto Sale, College Research Coordinator (**Lead**)
11. Janice Townsend, Child Development Faculty and Lead of CSLOs
12. Julie Von Bergen, Math Faculty and Math Developmental Education Lead
13. Katalina Wethington, English Faculty and English Developmental Education Lead