This issue of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) "Bulletin" describes various academic support services provided by community colleges to strengthen instruction and to assist staff members in their own development. Introductory comments discuss the relationship between academic support services and classroom instruction, with particular focus on the role of these services in expanding the opportunities for learning available to educationally disadvantaged students. The next section considers the role of student assessment and placement, focusing on comprehensive assessment and placement services for new students, testing in basic skill areas, and mandatory placement programs ensuring student enrollment in curricula appropriate to skill levels. The next section looks at efforts to provide appropriate curricula in a clearly defined sequence, providing examples of major curricula revision projects in community colleges. Next, a discussion is presented of the role of tutoring, counseling, and technological supports in a total academic system. This discussion highlights the use of learning resource centers, integrated support services, and the use of Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations (PLATO) at the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC). Finally, the importance of professional development programs in improving the instructional process is underscored. The "Bulletin" includes a brief description of CCC's academic support services workshop. (HB)
Assisting Student Learning

This issue of the Bulletin was prepared by Don Barshis, Professor of English, Loop College, and Former Executive Director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, City Colleges of Chicago.

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Assisting Student Learning

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Until the nation's common school system turns out competent, literate graduates as the rule rather than the exception, community colleges adhering to open admissions policies must continue to find ways to educate significant numbers of underprepared college aspirants. The strains put upon traditional teaching resources and support personnel—faculty and counselors—have compelled these colleges to explore new areas of assistance for their instructional teams in order to expand the opportunities for learning available to educationally disadvantaged students.

The various academic support services described in this report in no way substitute for quality classroom instruction; rather, they augment a resource that has become overtaxed with problems not previously experienced by today's teaching professionals. Competent classroom instructors can still work wonders for underprepared students, provided that their classroom populations are reasonably homogeneous in entry-level skills and that their skills levels roughly correspond to the entry prerequisites for the course. But, if these conditions are not present—as they often are not in colleges with loosely run assessment programs, inadequate course prerequisites, or insufficient developmental level courses—then even the best classroom magician can conjure up substantial course achievement rates.

Academic support services assist instructors determined to create optimum learning conditions for their programs. These services provide a systematic "wrap-around" for equally systematic instruction that focuses on student learning. This instruction is typically based on Benjamin Bloom's Mastery Learning, Fred Keller's Personalized System of Instruction (PSI), or the different Competency-Based Education (CBE) programs operating nationally. It has at its core individualization within a highly structured learning program designed to bring students to greater levels of achievement than before deemed possible. When instructors work to provide these ideal learning conditions amidst the time constraints of the typical college term, they require assistance in increasing "time-on-task" opportunities for their students and in addressing the learning styles and cultural characteristics of heterogenous groups. This issue of the Bulletin describes various kinds of modifications that colleges have made to strengthen the instructional services and to assist staff members in their own development.

Assessment/Placement

Most colleges serving a significant number of academically underprepared students have either resolved or are confronting the issue of whether or not to institute comprehensive assessment and placement procedures for new students. Required testing in reading, writing, and math—with scores or grade level equivalents used as the basis for placement into the institutions' entry-level curriculum options—is the most common variant of a comprehensive assessment/placement program. Other institutions administer tests in one or two of these basic skills areas and supplement their assessment data with required admission tests on such national achievement measures as the ACT or College Board examinations. Still others use combinations of skills assessment, prior school
features periodic personalized student progress letters; and Valencia (Florida) Community College's mail-in assessment program with student self-programming recommendations showing that the majority of new students will seek developmental course help for subjects in which they feel deficient. In order to ensure the best matches possible between instructors and students, a number of colleges, including Pima (Arizona), Triton (Illinois), and Moun-

appropriate curriculum is one that uses those competencies as entry prerequisites and controls student entry into programs requiring more advanced proficiencies. For example, the City Colleges of Chicago Nursing Program requires that students read at the 11th grade level; write reasonably literate, standard English paragraphs; and compute at the intermediate algebra level—all competencies measurable by the battery of placement tests that each new CCC student must take. Students who score below these competency levels are not denied entry to the City Colleges, an avowed open admission institution. They are, however, prevented from entering the nursing sequence in their first term, and instead are being directed to a comprehensive remedial/developmental sequence whose exit competencies are those very same Nursing Program entrance requirements. Upon institution of this rigorous curriculum sequence and the establishment of direct correlations between placement practices and program requirements, the number of CCC nursing students who passed their state certification exam on the first try jumped (depending on school) by 10 to 28% over a three year period, with two of the colleges achieving over 97% pass rates.

Similar rigorous approaches to creating appropriate entry level curricula have characterized the major renewal efforts in general education at Miami-Dade, in the developmental program at New York's La Guardia Community College, and in the St. Louis Community College and the Cuyahoga (Ohio) Community College District. Such efforts are not without problems. Faculty resistance to what they perceive as a mechanistic approach to curriculum and instruction makes competency a fighting word in a number of academic departments. The design of lower-level remedial/developmental curricula to serve the academically underprepared student is often viewed by faculty professionals as a demeaning use of their time and talent. In addition, the proliferation of large scale developmental education programs often comes at the expense of favorite elective courses that have suffered from declining enrollments in a time of overall academic decline. Finally, legitimate concern over issues of declining levels of college-level or
critical literacy has focused attention on the quality of teaching and levels of expectations present in many of the larger remedial programs in the nation's community colleges. These and other issues surrounding curriculum design and renewal efforts make the process of major curriculum change and improvement a lengthy and frequently embittering experience. Although serious educators seem undaunted in their willingness to undertake the challenge.

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**Tutoring, Counseling, and Technological Supports**

Tutoring, counseling, and technological supports may be best understood in the larger context of the total academic system. The key to understanding successful practices in the area of learning supports lies in the idea of focused services. Many colleges have put large sums of money—much of it from grants—into creating elaborate paraprofessional resources that soon disappear upon grant expiration. If the resources achieve institutionalization, they are often collected into a separate Learning Resource Center whose services await those students who are willing to use them. Unfortunately, the students who most need these services are the least likely to seek them out on their own. As a result, tutors, counselors, and the array of technological supports to improve the quality of student learning often fail to assist their most needy clients. Accordingly, they suffer from major image problems stemming from this underutilization, problems that make these services easy targets whenever budget cutbacks must be made.

A number of colleges have addressed the problem of how best to utilize support resources by integrating them into the same academic programs that they were designed to augment. In Chicago, tutors have left the Resource Center to sit in developmental classes and work directly with the students in group activities. Supplemental instruction carried on by peer tutors—modeled on the successful University of Missouri at St. Louis program—extends learning time in difficult, high attrition classes at Triton (Illinois). Teacher assistants work with master instructors in large individual instruction. District representatives who highlighted features from their own college district's support services covered such topics as comprehensive assessment programs, model developmental programs, applied research projects, and creative uses of institutional technological supports to augment the instructional process. City Colleges of Chicago faculty and staff presented aspects of the CCC development program, research studies conducted by CCC's Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning on effective teaching and learning, and methods of using the CCC PLATO computer support system to supplement instruction. Arthur Cohen of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, who summarized the day's proceedings, placed the emphasis on academic support services in a proper historical context, noting that the focus has shifted from programs that merely sort students to programs that provide supports that enable students to succeed in their academic pursuits. He left the group with the warning that until faculty and staff in the community colleges fully accept the belief that students have the right to succeed and act accordingly in their service, even the best designed comprehensive educational program and support system will not reach its full potential.

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**The Academic Support Services Workshop in Chicago**

In May of 1983, City College of Chicago hosted the sixth in a series of workshops sponsored by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges in its "Advancing the Liberal Arts" Project. The workshop, entitled "Academic Support Services," featured presentations by Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago and representatives from each of the urban community college districts participating in the project. Bloom's keynote presentation, "The Two Sigma Effect," described several alterable variables in the teaching/learning process that could bring conventional group instructional processes closer to the superior achievement levels possible in one-on-one tutoring or individual instruction. District representatives who highlighted features from their own college district's support services covered such topics as comprehensive assessment programs, model developmental programs, applied research projects, and creative uses of institutional technological supports to augment the instructional process. City Colleges of Chicago faculty and staff presented aspects of the CCC development program, research studies conducted by CCC's Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning on effective teaching and learning, and methods of using the CCC PLATO computer support system to supplement instruction. Arthur Cohen of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, who summarized the day's proceedings, placed the emphasis on academic support services in a proper historical context, noting that the focus has shifted from programs that merely sort students to programs that provide supports that enable students to succeed in their academic pursuits. He left the group with the warning that until faculty and staff in the community colleges fully accept the belief that students have the right to succeed and act accordingly in their service, even the best designed comprehensive educational program and support system will not reach its full potential.
through CCC's linkage with both the University of Illinois and Control Data's Minneapolis program bank. CCC instructors require developmental students to log specific numbers of hours on PLATO as part of their course requirements, and faculty regularly develop new PLATO lessons as part of their work in PLATO Users and PLATO Authors in-service courses. In every one of these instances, concerned educators recognize among in-service programs nationally, essentially because administrators and trustees want to see some kind of tangible results for their commitment of resources. The track record of these programs on effective pedagogy has been mixed, with the better programs avoiding prescriptive or formulaic approaches to improve teaching. Master teacher seminars, week-end retreats to examine curriculum and instructional effectiveness, and continuing education or graduate credit equivalency for courses in pedagogy have all proven to be successful approaches to improving instructional quality.

Recently much emphasis has been directed to the personal or human development needs of faculty and staff. Programs to address teacher burn-out, retraining needs, personal problems, and life cycle changes experienced by faculty have received increased support from administrators who are concerned with rampant morale declines among their aging and career-atrophied instructors. Again, large urban districts like Chicago, Cuyahoga, Dallas, Maricopa, and Miami-Dade have taken the lead in tailoring development programs to the human needs of their faculty. The Maricopa combination of early-retirement, flex-time, and optional benefits has removed the shackles of forced employment from the teaching staff. Cuyahoga's Scholar-in-Residence Program has rekindled professional identity interest among the staff by utilizing the talents of the faculty to entertain, discuss, and plan as scholar equals with their colleagues and administrators. Chicago's joint Teacher Education Program with the Institute for Psychoanalysis has taken more than 100 CCC's faculty through self-awareness curricula on interpersonal transaction, crosscultural communication, and the teacher as learner.

A professional development program that occurs within the context of an institution's total organizational development program has the greatest likelihood of success...