

Standard IIB. Student Support Services

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services.

IIB-1. The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.

Description

The College offers a variety of comprehensive student services including: Admissions and Records; Assessment; Athletics; CalWORKS; Career and Transfer Center; Child Development Center; Counseling; Disabled Student Programs and Services; Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS); Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE); Financial Aid; Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP); K-16 Bridge Program; Student Employment; Student Support Services (TRIO); Upward Bound Program (TRIO); Upward Bound Math and Science Program (TRIO). Student services managers are provided training in preparation and planning for the Program Review, Allocation, and Institutional Strategies for Excellence (P.R.A.I.S.E.) report (See P.R.A.I.S.E. Workshop Training document). The P.R.A.I.S.E. Report process provides the method for evaluation and enhancement of Student Service Services areas to identify areas in need of improvement and those demonstrating successful performance in meeting ongoing student needs to validate that services effectively meet student needs. Specific student support service areas are subject to state and federal reviews, audits and compliance with the reporting of regulatory and statistical student outcomes.

All student support services areas are committed to student success, whether the student support services are provided directly or indirectly to students. Admissions and Records supports student learning with essential augmentation to the registration process. Students have access to register for classes through the online Web-Advisor registration system and the opportunity to be added to a class waitlist for closed class sections using the authorization code process. Direct support for student learning is also provided by the Assessment Center and the Career and Transfer Center. Financial Aid supports student learning by providing financial resources to defray the costs for classes and materials and reduce financial challenges so that students can focus on their academic studies.

EOPS, CalWORKS and DSPS programs assist students to focus on their academic studies by providing access to priority registration, special testing accommodations, counseling, book vouchers and childcare assistance. Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math and Science Programs and GEAR-UP also serve to demystify the complex educational process and foster a College-going culture for students. These programs provide students access to additional tutoring and counseling services; supplemental instruction; summer enrichment programs and academic incentives.

The K-16 Bridge Program (Item IIB-1) is a collaborative outreach program serving as a partnership to the High Desert high schools and middle schools. The goal of the K-16 Bridge Program is to have all high school students enrolled in College before graduation. The K-16 Bridge Program has increased the number of high school students who have access to College information and early matriculation services; preliminary research demonstrates good retention rates for that cohort of students (Item IIB-4). The program supports and further accomplishes the statewide matriculation goals of providing access to the College for all students; assessing students at off-site locations; providing online orientation; counseling and advising; monitoring students' academic progress; providing training for staff, faculty and administrators; ensuring coordination; conducting meaningful matriculation research; and ensuring that students know their rights and responsibilities in the College environment. Through the K-16 Bridge Program, students have equitable access to information about College options and careers; as well as simplifying the application, assessment, and enrollment processes. The K-16 Bridge Program has also made significant progress toward the College's student equity goals. As articulated in the College's Student Equity Plan (Item IIB-5) and its Basic Skills Initiative, there is a critical need for the College to serve its underprepared student population. In November 2008, the K-16 Bridge Program was recognized by the California Community College Chancellor as a model program for all other community colleges throughout the State.

IIB-2. The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

IIB-2a. General Information:

- *Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site*
- *Address of the Institution*
- *Educational Mission*
- *Course, Program, and Degree Offerings*
- *Academic Calendar and Program Length*
- *Academic Freedom Statement*
- *Available Student Financial Aid*
- *Available Learning Resources*
- *Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty*
- *Names of Governing Board Members*

Description

Students are provided a catalog with wide-ranging, defined, correct and current information. The catalog is updated and published annually. The College catalog can be accessed in two ways: a hard copy which can be purchased at the Rams' Bookstore or an online version accessed through the College website at www.vvc.edu. The College's official name, address, telephone number and web site address are listed on the back cover of our catalog and are easy for students to see.

The catalog enables students to gain accurate and precise information about the College regarding the availability of its course, program, degree and certificate offerings. A section of the catalog called "Moving On" gives students the requirements needed to earn certificates, degrees or transfer to a university. The "Programs of Study" area is dedicated to the individual certificates and degrees that the College offers and the requirements needed to complete each one. Courses and their descriptions are also laid out in the catalog listed under Course Descriptions.

The catalog also gives the mission of the College as well as the vision, values and goals pursuant to Board Policy 1200 (Item IIB-13). The catalog has an academic freedom statement that states in part that academic freedom "promotes the free exercise of intelligence and student learning." The academic calendar informs students when a term begins and ends, dates of holidays, grade submission deadlines, College recesses and the date of our annual commencement ceremony. A section of the catalog provides information of the various types of student financial aid offered ranging from grants, scholarships and loans which assist students as a way to assist in financing their education.

There are many learning resources available to students on campus and information is provided in the catalog. The learning resources that are described are Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS), Language Lab, tutoring, library, the Writing Center, and the Communications

Lab. These learning resources are outlined with the specific services that are offered, location of services, contact information and, in some cases, hours of operation.

The catalog also lists the names and degrees of College administrators and faculty. Additionally, the name of the college or university where their degree was earned is also given. Board of Trustees members' names are not included in the most recent catalog but are available from the College website (Item IIB-9) and in the class schedule (Item IIB-14).

IIB-2b. Requirements:

- *Admissions*
- *Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations*
- *Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer*

Description

Admission eligibility and residency requirements are outlined comprehensively in the catalog. These requirements are governed by the laws of the state of California as well as regulations that have been implemented by the Board of Trustees.

The catalog explains the essential information regarding student fees and other financial obligations for students. Enrollment fees, nonresident tuition, nonresident tuition waiver, and other mandatory and optional fees are specified. In addition, refund of fee policies, textbooks and small supply information is outlined.

The catalog (Item IIB-6) outlines the degree, certificate, and graduation and transfer information completely and comprehensively. The requirements for associate degrees, certificates of achievement (18 or more units), certificates of career preparation (less than 18 units) and transfer requirements to four-year universities are detailed in the catalog and give students a wealth of information that will assist them with planning for the future and help them to outline a timeline for certificate and degree completion.

IIB-2c. Major Policies Affecting Students:

- *Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty*
- *Nondiscrimination*
- *Acceptance of Transfer Credits*
- *Grievance and Complaint Procedures*
- *Sexual Harassment*
- *Refund of Fees*

Description

The section of the catalog titled "Managing your Education" references most of the academic regulations and academic honesty policies of the College. These policies are clearly outlined and

defined for students to access and refer to as needed. Students will find the nondiscrimination policy, student grievance and complaint procedure, sexual harassment, and refund of fees policies defined in the catalog as well. These policies are reviewed frequently and remain current as the catalog is published on an annual basis.

IIB-2d. Locations or publications where other policies may be found

Description

As noted above, most academic regulations and policies can be found in the College catalog and website. In addition to the catalog, policies can be located in the President's office, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services office, in the Admissions and Records office, on the the College website and in the student handbook.

IIB-3. The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.

IIB-3a. The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.

Description

The College offers a comprehensive range of student services that reflect its diverse student population. Admissions and Records, Registration, the Bursar's office, Financial Aid and the Assessment Center are open five days a week. The Admissions and Records, Registration, the Bursar's office and the Financial Aid office are generally open Monday-Tuesday 8:30 am-7:00 pm and Wednesday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30pm. The Assessment Center provides walk-in service for students to accommodate their testing needs. In addition, local feeder high schools whose staff have been trained and certified as proctors provide testing at their own campuses. In the Summer of 2010, during their peak testing time, the Assessment Center used a block schedule format for students Monday-Wednesday, with walk-in access on Thursdays. General counseling services are also open at 8:30 am five days a week (Monday-Thursday until 7:00 pm and Fridays until 5:00 pm).

Most services have been consolidated into two buildings for student convenience and are fully accessible and well-marked. Such services as the registration and admissions application process may also be accessed online, allowing students greater flexibility, and providing shorter lines and better quality for students who feel more comfortable registering on-campus. English as a Second Language (ESL) and placement assessment serve non-English speaking students in the Assessment Center, which also administers placement tests to get students into the classes that will optimize their educational experience. EOPS and DSPS provide help and services for

disadvantaged students. The Student Handbook provides supplemental information that helps them access necessary services.

IIB-3b. The institution provides an environment that encourages personal and civic responsibility, as well as intellectual, aesthetic, and personal development for all of its students.

Description

Co-curricular activities such as teams, clubs, and academic organizations help students to hone their skills and meet with like-minded students, faculty, and staff. These provide students enjoyment and social opportunities that enhance their work in classrooms and laboratories by broadening their experience, and gives them a chance to excel at activities that are not evaluated by a grade. The College has 14 athletic teams that participate in the Foothill Athletic Conference. It supports 18 clubs, academic organizations, local and national support organizations, and a student newspaper. Athletics have taken great strides at the College. The teams place consistently in the top half of the Foothill Conference, and basketball and football have often played in post-season. One of the baseball coaches won the 2010 Howard W. Lowder award given to the most improved baseball program in the conference. The Associated Student Body was recognized as Community College of the Year in 2004 and has repeated that honor over the past several years.

The Model United Nations club (MUN) has just advanced to program status. MUN has gone to the annual conferences in Washington, D.C. and New York for the last six years, competing against more than 3,000 students from over 190 institutions, including top universities; MUN has scored in the top 5 percent, one year outscoring Harvard. Students from MUN have transferred to such universities as UC Berkeley.

Biology students have conducted research in East Timor for several terms under the guidance of one of the College's biology professors. The successes of the program and the depth of the research have caused the East Timor government to designate the College as the only academic institution to conduct biological research in East Timor. In addition, the research has been archived in The Smithsonian Institute.

IIB-3c. The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates counseling and/or academic advising programs to support student development and success and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

Description

The College has nine full-time and several part-time general counseling faculty. For the nine general counselors, the current student to counselor ratio is about 1100:1, whereas the CCC Board of Governors recommends a ratio of 370:1. Two years ago, the department hired an

additional counselor who handles standard counseling duties but has a special focus on running the Transfer Center and coordinating with services offered in the Career Center. The Transfer Center fills the need of linking with universities and campus transfer organizations such as the Honors Program.

Counseling faculty members are committed to helping students achieve their educational and career goals. Whether students wish to take one course, earn a certificate or an associate degree, or transfer to a four-year College or university, counselors are available to help them clarify goals and discuss personal issues in confidence. The Counseling Department is centrally located in a prominently visible building near the main entrance of campus. Upon application to the College, students are directed to make this office one of their first steps. New Student Orientation is scheduled through the Counseling appointment desk. Most orientation sessions are facilitated by specially trained staff, but counselors may assist with this function, especially in peak enrollment seasons.

A significant number of students attending the College live too far away from campus to reasonably commute to the Counseling Center for their planning. For those students and others who prefer the convenience of web-based help, online advisement is available via email where counselors can answer questions about individual graduation requirements and more.

Many of the counselors teach guidance courses and all of them conduct workshops to serve students with their personal, educational and career growth. Counselors also help students by sharing student perspective with College policy makers; they participate in important College-wide committees, such as the Senate and the Curriculum Committee in which decisions that impact students are sometimes made and where counselors can provide input from their interaction with students. Transfer and Articulation function counselors help students by bridging College courses to those at the University of California, California State University and private Colleges nationwide.

Students are given the opportunity to voice their opinions about their counseling experiences on a survey form obtained at the counseling reception desk. Guidance course instructors are also rated by students through a survey process. The Counseling Department chair has reported in recent P.R.A.I.S.E. reports that student satisfaction overall for the one-on-one counseling function as well as classroom instruction has been good, in spite of the unfavorable student-to-counselor ratio and other budget-related reductions. The department chair and her designees also conduct training and update sessions for high school personnel who assist in the advisement of the K-16 Bridge Program so that there is some level of continuity between information delivered to high school seniors in the program and the guidance they receive upon matriculation at the College.

IIB-3d. The institution designs and maintains appropriate programs, practices, and services that support and enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Description

The College has a diverse student body, which is reflected in a variety of clubs and organizations. For four years, the College has established a Puente program, which focuses, though not exclusively, on Hispanic students' process of completing associate programs and transferring to four-year institutions. The College has many events that celebrate local, regional, and national diversity, such as Culture Craze. It is sponsored by the Diversity Committee, and it brings to the College outside vendors to celebrate the foods of many cultures. The English as a Second Language department (ESL) has an annual recognition ceremony, at which students present their original writing.

IIB-3e. The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing biases.

Description

The admissions department of the College re-evaluates admissions procedures as a practice of matriculation, which is on a six-year cycle. The College has used an online application process for many years, but also made available to students a paper application. The transition from paper application to applying for admissions online has given students greater access to the application process. Most students now use the online application as the method for completing the admissions process. We accommodate special needs and ESL students when a paper application is needed to complete the process.

Placement services have long depended on standardized testing, but the English department has recently tested and brought into practice Accuplacer, an assessment program that requires students to write an essay for placement into classes, thus providing a closer assessment of the skills students would actually use in the composition classes that comprise most of the institution's curriculum. Standardized tests have a tendency to bias results in the favor of more affluent students who are more familiar with the cultural slant from which the tests derive; having students write enables the school to more accurately place students based on their actual abilities.

IIB-3f. The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records.

Description

Within the last two years, the College has transferred all its student records into a document-imaging system and is scanning current documents into digital form. This has given the College a greater emphasis on green technology and allowed it to securely store sensitive material. The College has established multiple firewalls to protect the integrity of security systems. A Student

Record/Directory Information notice is published in the catalog which refers to the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; Item IIB-7). This act protects the privacy of student records. FERPA regulation policies are followed and can be found in the Admissions and Records office and the Office of the Dean of Student Services. Only students may access their matriculation information through personal passwords; passwords for faculty, staff, and administration personnel are also unique.

IIB-4. The institution evaluates student support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

Description

The College evaluates student services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement. All student services areas are provided training in preparation and planning for the Program Review, Allocation, and Institutional Strategies for Excellence (P.R.A.I.S.E.) report (Item IIB-11). The P.R.A.I.S.E. Report process provides the method for evaluation and enhancement of Student Service Services areas to identify areas in need of improvement and those demonstrating successful performance in meeting ongoing student needs to validate that services effectively meet student needs. The P.R.A.I.S.E. Report process was designed to be conducted annually, and all student services managers attended P.R.A.I.S.E. training; however, not all Student Support Services areas participated in the P.R.A.I.S.E. process.

Additionally, specific student support service areas, such as EOPS, DSPS and the federally funded grant programs are also subject to additional state and federal reviews, audits and compliance with the reporting of regulatory and statistical student outcomes.

Evaluation, Standard IIB

Despite an enrollment surge in the midst of a funding decline, the College continues to provide services aimed at helping its students meet their learning objectives. Utilizing technology to improve efficiency and convenience for students (especially avoiding standing in long lines of the past), the College has recently activated paperless class add registration. Students are no longer required to stand in line at the Admission and Records window in order to submit an instructor's signed add slip; they simply acquire an authorization code from their instructors that can be entered on the web-based registration system to unlock a class that was previously filled to capacity.

The success contract component of a larger system for student early alert is now in place. For students in jeopardy of academic or progress dismissal, the College places a hold on their term registration. They receive a letter that encourages them to seek consult with a counselor to

complete a contract of success oriented intervention strategies for the upcoming term. This process helps ensure that at risk students are taking goal-appropriate courses, identifying personal barriers and learning about techniques used to overcome them prior to registration.

Understanding that funding challenges have put us in a position of serving more with less, the College has been successful in making accessibility a priority. Grant funded services are especially making the most of their opportunities to take the College to the community. Title V-HSI grant enabled staff outreach to students across the service area, offering workshops and satellite classes at the Downtown Center, located near neighborhoods where cross-town transportation barriers could, otherwise, pose a challenge to student success. The Bridge Program continues to be a model for providing access to prospective College students; high school students learn about College life and how to be successful here long before they fully matriculate at the College. Bridge Program staff partner with and train high school staff to offer workshops aimed at facilitating a seamless transition to College.

Counseling, EOPS/CARE, DSPS, Puente, CalWorks, Title V-HSI, Transfer Center, Career Center, Financial Aid and the other Student Services departments offer various in-person workshops and excursions on topics designed to foster academic and personal well-being, but a segment of our population is not suited for these face-to-face services. For students who need it, counseling advisement is available by email to counselor@vvc.edu. Similarly, a live window encounter is no longer a necessity for many financial aid students, as the Financial Aid office posts important communications on each student's secure web-based registration menu page (WebAdvisor). The Financial Aid department also updates its webpage regularly, providing FAQ's and links to information students need. Internet saavy students needing information and forms are often able to save a special trip to campus for Admissions and Records business, too.

The P.R.A.I.S.E. Report process is an effective method for assessing the quality of Student Support Service areas. The Student Support Services areas are committed to student success and to the improvement of service delivery to students. Administrative Procedure 3250, the institutional planning policy and procedure, is in the development process and will serve as the policy to standardize implementation of the P.R.A.I.S.E. Program Review process for all departments.

Summary of Opportunities for Improvement, Standard IIB

Pre-term interventions like the "Success Contract" and mid-term progress reports like those used in the special population programs (EOPS/CARE, Puente, for example) offer another layer of learning support that warrant further study to determine whether completion, grade average and persistence do indeed improve. Additionally, the processes themselves also need to be evaluated to determine whether improvements are needed.

Planning Agenda, Standard IIB

The Division of Student Services will expand the Early Alert program to improve student progress, persistence, and success by enabling an electronic request by faculty for early support intervention no later than August 2011 and completing the implementation and evaluation of the "Success Contract" by January 2012 (Standard IIB-1, IIB-4).

Evidence in Support of Standard IIB

- Item IIB-1. [K-16 Bridge Website](#)
- Item IIB-2. [The Campaign for College Opportunity Website](#)
- Item IIB-3. [Bridge Cohort 2008 in Annual Report 2009](#)
- Item IIB-4. [Student Equity Plan, September 2008](#)
- Item IIB-5. [2010-2011 College Catalog](#)
- Item IIB-6. [AACRAO's FERPA Guide](#)
- Item IIB-7. [VVC Student Handbook, 2009](#)
- Item IIB-8. [Student Services Website](#)
- Item IIB-9. [Administrative Procedure 1202, Implementing Institutional Effectiveness](#)
- Item IIB-10. [P.R.A.I.S.E. Website](#)
- Item IIB-11. [Division Summary Template](#)
- Item IIB-12. [Board Policy 1200, District Vision, Mission and Values](#)
- Item IIB-13. [Class Schedule, Spring 2011](#)