EVALUATION OF LEARNING ENHANCEMENT CENTER STAFF, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES: A SURVEY OF STUDENT ATTITUDES

by

Linda L. Hopf

LIBRARY - OTTAWA UNIVERSITY
OTTAWA, KANS.

A Master’s Research Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

Master of Arts

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY

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EVALUATION OF LEARNING ENHANCEMENT CENTER, STAFF, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES: A SURVEY OF STUDENT ATTITUDES

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has been approved

July 1998

APPROVED:

__________________________

ACCEPTED:

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies
ABSTRACT

An increasing emphasis in accountability and change within postsecondary educational institutions makes it imperative that assessment be made relative to the effectiveness of the instructional support services being provided to the community college student. The information gathered from the assessment may then guide the school toward program improvement, ensuring that the academic support needs of its students are being met.

The purpose of this study was to assess the students' perception of the staff, services, and facilities of the Learning enhancement Center at Mesa Community college. The study was designed to determine if the services, facilities, and staff of the Learning Enhancement Center meet the students instructional support needs. The research was based on the question of whether or not the Learning Enhancement Center was meeting the academic needs of its students.

The population involved approximately 800 Mesa Community College students registered to use the tutoring services provided by the Learning Enhancement Center during the Spring semester of the 1998. A sample of 160 students was chosen using a systematic sampling method.
The students' perceptions were positive overall with a few, but important exceptions. The students indicated that they felt the services did little to influence their continuation in school from one semester to the next and that the noise level in the facility interfered with their learning. The researcher concluded further investigation would be necessary to determine if the students responding to the question of whether the services provided by the Learning Enhancement Center was because they were at risk of failing the course or were merely seeking assistance to improve their grade. Recommendations to move or provide sound proofing materials in the current area to provide an environment that is conducive to learning was made and forwarded to the department chair and supervisory dean.
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In this time of accountability and change within educational institutions it is important that an assessment be made related to the effectiveness of the instructional support services being provided to the community college student who may be underprepared for academic success. Many times, decisions to add services or discontinue them are made based on informal observations by the administration and staff. A more formal means of decision making is needed. Administration and staff can use the information resulting from this study to make more informed decisions regarding the services provided to the under prepared students who attend the college.

Assessment is possible through surveys that ask for the students' perception of the staff, services, and facilities of the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) found in the Maricopa Community College District (MCCD). The MCCD has entered into a new and expanded phase of student outcome assessment and planning to meet the needs of all its students, and therefore, the input from the students who
utilize these academic support services they will help provide direction for the LEC.

**Development of the Problem**

Traditionally, in many educational systems, the process of strategic planning has been hierarchical, i.e., decisions flowing from the administration down to faculty, staff and students. Since the beginning of this decade, many educational institutions have begun to use a less bureaucratic form of management whereby all stakeholders share in the process of planning, problem-solving, and implementation of ideas (Krueger, 1993). This study followed the nonbureaucratic concept and surveyed the students' needs and attitudes in order to lay a foundation for future guidelines for a more effective program.

The desired benefit of this evaluation was a comprehensive diagnostic program review to identify problem areas to be evaluated and suggest actions to improve program planning, decision making and operations as it relates to the students' academic success. A challenge faced in doing this study was the lack of information regarding student attitudes about the Learning Enhancement Center staff and services and the perceived effects the services and staff have on student learning. The lack of information was due in part to the fact that during the past
decade, demands on the Center have increased. Demands on staff such as more active recruitment, steady growth of special student populations, higher expectation of service delivery to the newly expanded off-campus sites, and reduction of full-time staff from three to one have reduced the amount of time allowed to do self-studies of the program's strengths and weaknesses or to gather evaluations from students.

Need for the Study

As more underprepared students enter college, they experience academic difficulties which impede their progress and may put them in jeopardy of academic dismissal. It is the intention of the LEC to provide the academic support needs of these students.

Examination and documentation of student academic support needs and attitudes toward the staff, services, and the facilities of the LEC could assist in establishing an understanding of the worth of the LEC services, justifying its cost, deciding appropriate resource allocation, determining the ability to appropriately direct allocations and providing an instructional support service that meets the needs of the diverse learners entering the institution.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the students' perception of the staff, services, and facility of the Learning Enhancement Center as it applied to meeting the students' academic support needs.

Research Question

What are the students' perceptions of the quality of the staff, services, and facilities of the Learning Enhancement Center at Mesa Community College as it applies to meeting their academic support needs?

Definition of Terms

Learning Enhancement Center: The LEC at Mesa Community college is a student service that provides academic support services to all student populations. Student-focused services include study skills workshops, basic skills preparation programs in mathematics and reading, appointment one-on-one, drop-in and group tutoring, and computer-assisted instruction.

Learning Assistance: For the purposes of this study the term Learning Assistance refers to the academic support services provided to an entire college community including students, faculty, and staff. Learning Assistance is offered through various methods to help students develop both specific skills and general learning strategies.
including tutoring, study skills seminars/workshops, and multimedia and computer-based learning. In addition, learning assistance staff consult with faculty, staff, and support service personnel to coordinate the academic support students need (Rubin, 1991).
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of the literature in this chapter establishes an understanding of the learning assistance program's worth; identify the students requiring academic assistance; academic needs; determine how resources for learning assistance programs are allocated and are best managed. This information provided a foundation to the evaluation.

Understanding the Worth of the Learning Assistance Program

Learning assistance has a very definite historical foundation within American higher education. Traditionally, a wide range of institutions have provided academic assistance for under prepared students which acknowledges a tradition of learning assistance in American higher education. Awareness of this tradition helps administrators and faculty understand that these programs have been a part of American higher education since colonial times and are an integral part of the institution (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Clowes & Towles, 1985).

The manner in which institutions dealt with the issues surrounding the diversity of student academic support needs
through history is similar to how they have been dealt with over the past four decades. Tutoring and developmental programs are among the most common (Maxwell, 1997; Brier, 1987; Cross, 1971).

Another commonality of learning assistance is the tension between the traditionalist and reformist which has always existed in higher education. Frequently, traditionalists come from within the educational system. They argue that student enrollment must be selective so that high academic standards can be maintained. They also defend the merits of prescribed curricula and don’t believe their institutions should tailor their offerings to the particular needs of students. Typically, traditionalists would charge individuals rather than institutions with the full responsibility for succeeding or failing in an educational endeavor (Casazza & Silverman, 1996).

By contrast, reformists usually come from outside the system. Often it is the federal government through its funding policies or legislation, that promotes the reformist ideal of granting increased access to colleges and universities. Potential employers also have advocated greater access because of the changing demands of the workplace. Such advocates argue that in a democracy, education is the right of every citizen and a means for advancement. They further point out that curricula must be
relevant and must prepare individuals for their roles in society. They also urge colleges and universities to facilitate student success by providing the necessary support mechanisms (Casazza & Silverman, 1996).

Maxwell (1997) and Cross (1971) point out that it is the influence of traditionalist and reformist philosophies that has lead to changes in the education system. Educators attempt to find a balance between the democratic ideals of the reformist within a traditional educational system. Consequently, the differences between the reformists and traditionalist evolves around how to maintain academic standards while opening the doors to an increasingly diverse student body. Educators discovered that it is not enough to have an open door admissions policy; rather, schools must be willing to provide the academic support necessary to allow students the chance to succeed.

In an attempt to compromise, McCabe (1982) stated that academic standards can be maintained even improved, while serving the diverse populations that have been allowed access. He also believed that the community colleges have been more successful in enrolling diverse, under prepared students than in serving them effectively, and calls for redesigning the postsecondary system.

It is time to carefully examine the current environment and to realistically redesign the postsecondary system, especially the community college, to become a positive
force in improving our society. The combined effect of the changing nature of work in America, along with a severe decline in communications skills of youth, have resulted in a societal dilemma that is so serious as to fairly be called a crisis. Quite simply, the increased requirement for academic skills for employability, combined with the decline in those skills among young Americans, leaves literally millions of individuals inadequately prepared and unable to gain employment and thus unable to sustain themselves as productive members of the society. (p. 7)

McCabe (1982) explained that the community college must place emphasis on achievement and maintain high expectations for program completion. Neither the individual or society benefits when students are simply passed through without gaining the needed competencies. McCabe (1982) believed that “the goal should be excellence for everyone” (p. 8), and that programs must be organized to provide direction and special assistance as needed, so that each student has the best opportunity to succeed.

Trow (1982) takes an opposing stand and believes that schools underestimate the cost and difficulties of providing the academic support needed and allow their learning assistance programs to fall to financial and political pressures. Trow (1982) believed it is the role of the secondary schools to adequately prepare students for postsecondary level course work.

Debate continues regarding the justification for allowing students who require remedial or developmental courses to enter institutions of higher learning. These
students continue to enter, under current policies, and the colleges and universities have a responsibility to adhere to their missions statements which promises to "provide opportunities for lifelong learning to a diverse student population" and "to provide: Student support by way of comprehensive, college-wide services to meet the academic, civic, emotional, physical, practical and social needs of students to help them fulfill their personal and career goals" (Mesa Community College student catalog, p. 2).

Identifying the Needs of the Diverse Learner

Although the under prepared student has existed since the beginning of higher education in this country, the demographics and the needs of these students change reflecting the changing conditions of our society (Boylan, 1987; Hardin, 1988; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995).

Today's college student population is increasingly diverse. Students represent a wider range of socioeconomic levels and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. More women continue to enter a postsecondary education and the number of adults continued to increase. Many of the students are the first in their families to attend college and often rank in the lowest third of their high school class (Cross, 1971; Hardin, 1988; Maxwell, 1997).
Students with disabilities were granted easier access to college and also given assurances of academic assistance with the passing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Schools were charged to provide reasonable accommodation, and the number of disabled students attending college has grown steadily since the 1970s (Hardin, 1988). These students are not only faced with academic challenges, but the challenges of dealing with hearing aids, wheelchairs, Braille texts, computers, and access to all things to which abled bodied students have easy access. Schools and professors are usually eager to help students who have outward signs of a disability, but those with learning disabilities don't get the same understanding and accommodation that their physically disabled counterparts receive (Hardin, 1988).

Another significant population in terms of growth in higher education is that of international students and students for whom English is a second language (Maxwell, 1997). Academic assistance is offered to them through formal course work and tutoring (Casazza & Silverman, 1996). These students typically need help with reading and writing. Even superior students require assistance with communication skills (Hardin, 1988).
Resource Allocation and Management

Learning Assistance programs are funded in many different ways. Some programs depend entirely on "soft" money obtained from outside sources while others are fully supported within the institution. Other learning assistance programs are financed through a combinations of these sources (Maxwell, 1997).

Sources of funding often determine the stability of a program and the commitment of an institution. Programs supported entirely by campus funds tend to be more stable than those receiving money from outside agencies. Programs dependent on outside funding are often more volatile; sometimes causing the need to reapply for support on a regular basis (Maxwell, 1997). No matter where the funds come from, they need to be managed prudently. Higher education is always subject to financial cutback; hence, the program's budge administrator must be a keen financial manager (Casazza & Silverman, 1996).

Since most learning assistance programs are not revenue producing, they are often at risk for budget reduction. Decisions concerning distribution of funds need to be made with care and consideration for the continued growth and development of the learning assistance program (Maxwell, 1997).
Casazza and Silverman (1996) admit that resource reduction can actually lead to new and creative ways of accomplishing tasks, and the combined effort of a team of individuals can result in renewed commitment to support the program and its objectives. However, they don’t suggest that the reductions be passively accepted. They encourage the proactive stance of the manager and recommend the program be well-planned and prepared to deal creatively with reductions that are likely to occur.

Summary

A historical perspective brings about an understanding that learning assistance has had a place in American higher education since its beginning, thus legitimizing its place within today’s education system. The conflict between the traditionalist and reformist philosophies spurs change and causes educators to constantly justify their program’s beliefs and principles.

The continued influx of underprepared and diverse students requiring academic support will continue to strain budgets. Constrained budgets will force program managers to manage their allocations prudently and find new and creative ways to expand their programs.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the students' perception of the staff, services, and facility of the Learning Enhancement Center as it applies to meeting the students' academic support needs. The research question answered by this study was: What are the students' perceptions of the quality of the staff, services, and facilities of the Learning Enhancement Center at Mesa Community College as it applies to meeting their academic support needs?

Research Design

The study was a descriptive type using a survey. The researcher believed that this design was an appropriate method to gather the opinions of the students. The survey was chosen rather than the interview because of the size of the sample and the researcher believed the students were more likely to answer the survey questions more candidly.

The following instruments were used to collect data needed to conduct this evaluation:

A survey developed by the directors of the Learning Assistance Centers within the MCCD in cooperation with the
Deans of Student Services Council and the district office of Student Development Services. A copy is found as Appendix H.

This instrument was used to measure the perceptions of a sample of 160 students who used the LEC during the Spring semester of 1998.

The LEC's database records of students who received tutoring during the Spring semester of 1998.

Campus and district demographic data was obtained from Mesa Community College's Office of Institutional Research and Development.

The study was designed to measure student perceptions as to effectiveness of services, preferences for tutoring, modes, availability and helpfulness of support resources, and evaluation of LEC personnel and facilities.

Population and Sample

The population involved approximately 800 Mesa Community College students registered to use the tutoring services provided by the LEC during the spring semester of the 1998. A sample of 160 students was chosen using the systematic sampling method. Starting with the first name, every fifth name was chosen from an alphabetical list of the total population.
Students were asked to provide demographic information that include age (by group), gender, ethnicity, credit hours completed, current student status (full-time or part-time student), the number of hours currently enrolled and the time of day they primarily attend classes. This information will be used to determine if a representative sample has been chosen.

Assumptions and Limitations

Due to time and cost constraints the subjects were limited to the main campus of the Mesa Community College.

It is also assumed that all the students taking part in this study will answer the survey honestly.

Procedures

A sample of 160 students was selected using a systematic sampling method. The student records from the LEC database were numbered. Starting with the first name, every fifth name was chosen from an alphabetic list of the total population. All students selected chose to take part in the study. The students participation was voluntary. Those chosen to fill out the survey were handed the instrument upon arrival for their last tutoring appointment of the Spring semester of 1998. Surveying the students during this time of the semester allowed sufficient time for the students to have experienced the services in question.
The participants were given verbal instructions by the LEC part-time student staff members. The verbal instructions included the staff member previewing the written directions on the instrument. The students were assured their participation would be kept in strict confidence and the data gathered would be reported anonymously. The participants were told they would be able to obtain survey results at the reception desk in the LEC the week of August 1, 1998.

To ensure continuity, written and verbal directions were given by the researcher at one gathering to the personnel on staff who would be administering the survey. Those staff included the department receptionists and tutors. These staff members were chosen to administer the survey based on the premise that they have the most direct and regular contact with those students who use the Center. A copy of the written instructions are found as Appendix I.

The time period of administration and collection was April 27th through May 8th 1998.

The surveys were tabulated and analyzed. The results are presented in Chapter 4 in text and graphic form.

Instrumentation

A survey developed by the directors of the Learning Assistance Centers within the MCCD in cooperation with the
Deans of Student Services Council and the district office of Student Development Services was used. This instrument was chosen so that data would be compared with data collected previously and data that will be collected in the future. This will help to establish reliability of the instrument. Validity was established through:

1. Determining if the sample was demographically representative of the total population.
2. Establishing that the survey questions fit the research objective.
3. Undergoing scrutiny of a group consisting of area experts.

The students were requested to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 as a measure of their reaction to the degree the LEC staff, program, and facility adequately and effectively fulfills their academic support needs.

A five point Likert Scale will be used and the significance of the numbers will be as follows: (1) as an indication that the student *strongly agrees*, (2) as an indication that the student *agrees*; (3) as an indication that the student *disagrees*, (4) that the student *strongly disagrees*, (5) that the service was *not applicable* to the student.
By means of this survey instrument, students' attitudes concerning the effectiveness of the staff, services, and adequacy of the facilities provided by the LEC will be obtained. The effectiveness of services was to be measured according to the following criteria:

Grade improved
Were better prepared for exams
Improved study skills or habits
Were better prepared for college level course work
Improved ability to identify what and how to study
Reduced anxiety level
Better management of time
Improved memory skills
Completed a course that may have been dropped earlier
Developed a personalized study management process or learning plan

The students' preferences for the modes of tutoring were chosen among the following:

One-on-one appointment
Drop-in (one-on-one)
Computer assisted instruction
Group

The availability and helpfulness of instructional support resources was to be measured by the student indicating the use of the following materials:
Books
Computer software
Handouts
Videos
Faculty materials
Multimedia
Audio Cassettes
The evaluation of the LEC personnel and facilities was to be measured by the following criteria:

Friendly, courteous, and helpful.
Ease of location.
Adequacy of space.
Noise level interferes with learning.
Staff is available when I need them.
Tutors are knowledgeable.
Receptionist(s) are knowledgeable.
Staff made referrals when appropriate.

Method of Analysis

The demographics will be compared to those of the population to determine if the sample is representative of that group.

The responses were summarized and the results were represented by totals and percentages for each question.
The outcomes will be ranked based on the sum of the percentages from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Demographics

It was determined that the demographics of the sample were representative of the population being studied and of those on the campus at large through comparison of the LEC database and through campus demographic data provided by the college's Office of Institutional Research and Development. The percentages and frequencies are listed categorically in Table 1 and are depicted Graphically in Appendices A-G.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Respondent Demographics</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Survey Respondents n=160</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Sample</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGE (by group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17-22</td>
<td>43.12</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>33.75</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>13.12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-53</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
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<td>54-64</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57.50</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHNICITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>14.38</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Alaskan Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.88</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.25</td>
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<tr>
<th>TIME OF DAY PRIMARILY ATTEND CLASSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mornings (AM)</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(noon to 5PM)</td>
<td>16.88</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evenings (PM)</td>
<td>16.88</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM and afternoon</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon and PM</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends + 1 other</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Combination</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<th>CURRENT STUDENT STATUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>58.75</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
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Findings and Results

The result of this study are based on data collected through a survey of 160 students who used LEC tutoring services during the Spring semester of 1998. The data was collected during the period of April 27th, 1998 and May 8th, 1998 for the purpose of this research project.

The student responses to the students perceptions regarding any effect the LEC services may have had on a particular academic skills and attitudes are shown in Table 2. The outcomes are ranked based on the sum of the percentages of strongly agree to strongly disagree responses. The findings of this section of the survey indicate that the students perceive the effectiveness of the LEC services to be considerable with the exception of the
areas of improved memory skills, study management, and course persistence. A measure falling below the 80 percentile was considered by the researcher to be an area of concern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Effectiveness of the LEC Services</th>
<th>% Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better prepared for exams</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade improved</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better prepared for college level course work</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced anxiety</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved study skills or habits</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better manage time</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved memory skills</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed personalized study management</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or learning plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed the course when may have dropped</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 3 shows the mode of tutoring preference.

The results show that the students have a preference for one-on-one appointment tutoring and favor group tutoring the least.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Mode of Tutoring Preference</th>
<th>% Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment for one-on-one</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-in (one-on-one)</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-aided</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this set of questions was to determine which types of instructional support resources were considered the most helpful by those who had used the
materials. Results show that computer software was the most helpful of the resources used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpfulness of Instructional Support Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio cassettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 5 reflects the attitudes toward the personnel and facilities of the LEC.

The findings show that the students indicate an overall approval rating for personnel and facilities with the exception of the noise level of the environment. This is considered by the researcher to be a significant result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the LEC Personnel and Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is friendly, courteous and helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors were knowledgeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEC was easy for me to locate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff were available when I needed them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space in the LEC was adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise level interferes with learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the students' perception of the staff, services, and facilities of the Learning Enhancement Center at Mesa Community College as it applied to meeting the student's academic support needs.

A review of the literature sought to establish an understanding of the learning assistance programs worth; identify the students requiring assistance and their academic needs; determine how resources for these programs are allocated and are best managed. Although ample literature has been published on the establishing and operating of college learning assistance centers, little has been written about systematic evaluations for these units within the college system.

A sample of 160 students from a population of 800 students who used the LEC in Spring semester of 1998 were surveyed using an instrument developed by the district's Learning Assistance Center directors. Students were surveyed at the conclusion of the semester because it was believed that this would allow a significant amount of time
for the students to experience the services provided by the center.

The results of the survey indicated that the students' overall perceptions of the services, personnel, and facilities as it pertains to their learning were positive with the following exceptions: (1) students responded that the services did not have a notable influence on their course persistence; (2) students indicated that the noise level interfered with their ability to learn; (3) group tutoring is their least preferred method of delivery; (4) students did not feel they received ample instruction in how to improve their memory skills or develop individual study management plans; (5) with the exception of the computer software, the students felt that all other support materials were not especially helpful.

Conclusions

The researcher concludes that although the students responded in a relatively positive manner there were important findings and finding of moderate concern.

Course Persistence: The researcher considers this to be the most important of the findings and has the greatest implications because the literature revealed that course persistence is the primary purpose of learning assistance and often the criteria used by the administration to
determine whether the programs will continue to be financed. It may be considered that the students responding to the survey were not at risk of failing the class but were seeking assistance merely to improve their grade. Further analysis of the database information provided by the student requesting tutoring may confirm this.

**Noise level:** The center has a responsibility to provide an environment conducive to learning. This can be of considerable magnitude to those students with learning disabilities. This factor could put them further at risk.

**Group tutoring:** The disfavor of group tutoring has budgetary implications in that it is more cost effective to provide tutoring in groups when applicable. This may be a matter of guiding students toward this method with instruction on how this can effectively facilitate their learning.

**Supplemental materials:** With the exception of the computer software, the students indicated that the resources were not especially helpful. It will be necessary for further inquiry and review of the materials as to why the supplementary resources did not assist in the success of their course work.
Recommendations

Further evaluation should be considered to determine the factors in question and how they effect the students chance for academic success. If this institution is to meet its responsibility of providing the needed academic support to the many students it enrolls through its open door admissions policy; they need to be willing to address and correct the factors brought to light by this evaluation.

The researcher offers the following recommendations: (1) further investigation into the reasons why students felt that tutoring does not contribute to their persistence in school; (2) recommendations to the administration and department chair to move the tutoring activities or place sound proofing materials in the current are to provide an environment that is conducive to learning; (3) a student orientation prior to students registering for tutoring services. This would assist students to understand the benefits of group tutoring; (4) In-service training for tutor and part-time staff so they may properly assist students with general and specific study skills needed for their academic success; (5) an investigation and review of supplementary instructional materials to determine if they are content specific. Materials that are outdated or damaged can be replaced and those that may be abstract could
be labeled to be used with the aid of a tutor; (6) students could be surveyed early in the semester and again at the end of the semester. This could determine more clearly if the staff and services of the LEC effected their learning.

Evaluation is most effective when it is based on clear and focused goals and objectives. Through the process of inquiry comes the framework and direction for program improvement. Through program improvement we show our commitment to the students we serve.


APPENDIX A

AGE
APPENDIX B

GENDER
GENDER

Male

Female
APPENDIX C

ETHNICITY
ETHNICITY

- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 69
- Asian: 26
- Black: 22
- Hispanic: 19
- White: 14
- Other: 10
APPENDIX D

TIME OF DAY ATTENDING
TIME OF DAY ATTENDING

AM
AFTERNOON
PM
AM & PM
AFTERNOON & PM
WEEKENDS
CURRENT STUDENT STATUS

NEW STUDENT
RETURNING STUDENT
CONTINUEING STUDENT
NON-STUDENT
APPENDIX F

HOURS CURRENTLY ENROLLED
HOURS CURRENTLY ENROLLED

PART TIME  FULL TIME

63

97
CREDIT HOURS COMPLETED

- 0 HOURS
- 16-30 HOURS
- 46-60 HOURS
- 1-15 HOURS
- 31-45 HOURS
- 61+ HOURS
STUDENT SURVEY

DIRECTIONS - Please fill in the corresponding letter for each of the following questions 1 through 7 on the answer sheet provided.

1. Ethnicity
   A. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   B. Asian or Pacific Islander
   C. Black, Non-Hispanic
   D. Hispanic
   E. White, Non-Hispanic
   F. Other

2. Age Group
   A. 17-22
   B. 23-30
   C. 31-40
   D. 41-53
   E. 54-64
   F. 65+

3. Gender
   A. Male
   B. Female

4. When do you primarily attend classes? (Mark ONLY ONE)
   A. Morning (before noon)
   B. Afternoon (noon to 5PM)
   C. Evening (5PM or later)
   D. Morning and afternoon
   E. Afternoon and evening
   F. Weekends
   G. Weekends and one other class time
   H. Other combination

5. What is your current student status? (Mark ONLY ONE)
   A. New Student this semester
   B. Continuing Student from 1st semester
   C. Returning Student
   D. Other

6. Are you currently enrolled? (Mark ONLY ONE)
   A. Part Time (11 or less credits)
   B. Full Time (12 or more credits)

7. How many college credit hours have you completed? (Mark ONLY ONE)
   A. 0
   B. 1-15
   C. 16-30
   D. 31-45
   E. 46-60
   F. 61+

Directions for completing the remainder of the survey: Using the answer sheet provided and making sure that each numbered portion of the following statements corresponds to the answer number you fill in on your answer sheet.
Please mark the number from the scale below that clearly represents your degree of agreement or disagreement with each numbered portion of the following grouped and individual statements below.

SCALE: 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree 5=Not Applicable

By using the Learning Enhancement Center services, I

8. Feel my grade improved.
9. Completed the course when I may have dropped it earlier.
10. Improved my study skills or habits.
11. Improved my ability to identify what and how to study.
12. Improved my memory skills.
13. Feel better prepared for college level course work.
14. Reduced my anxiety level.
15. Can better manage my time.
16. Developed a personalized study management or learning plan.
17. Feel better prepared for exams.

I prefer tutoring be available for (choose ALL that apply)
18. Appointment for one-on-one.
19. Drop-in.
20. Group tutoring.

Instructional support resources were helpful. I have used the following:
22. Books
23. Videos
24. Audio cassettes
25. Faculty materials
26. Computer software
27. Handouts
28. Multimedia
29. The LEC staff is friendly, courteous, and helpful.
30. The LEC was easy for me to locate.
31. The LEC space was adequate.
32. The noise level in the LEC interferes with learning.
33. The LEC staff were available when I needed them.
34. The tutors were knowledgeable.
ANSWER SHEET

1. A B C D E F
   □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ ^
APPENDIX I

INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION
Instruction Sheet for Survey Administrators

1. Give Survey to Student

2. Instruments will not be computer scored. Therefore, students are not required to use a pencil.

3. Review the instructions on the instrument with the students. Answer any question they may have.

4. Tell them to leave the survey with you as soon as they complete it.

5. Remind students that their responses will remain anonymous and that they can obtain the results of the survey the first week in August, 1998 at the LEC reception desk.

6. As the students return the completed surveys to you (remember to thank them for participating in the survey), please put the surveys in the envelope provided. Seal the envelope once all the completed surveys are inside.

7. I will pick them up promptly the morning of May 11.