

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This Section of the *Curriculum Basics* outlines the steps involved in developing an occupational program. (General concepts discussed here may be used for non-occupational programs as well.) The California Education Code requires each college district to verify the need for each existing occupational program every two years. The needs statement, therefore, is the most appropriate place to begin.

Step 1: Establishing need for a new program

According to MPC's Mission Statement, one of its goals is to provide occupational and technical programs that prepare workers for a rapidly changing and global workplace. The first step in designing a program, then, is to gain an understanding of the workplace in our region. There are several ways of accessing this information:

- (1) California Employment Development Department (EDD) – An abundance of information can be gained from EDD's website (www.edd.ca.gov/) and publications. Information regarding the fastest growing jobs in the area and jobs that have the greatest numbers of openings are particularly helpful when determining need. This information can be examined at a county, regional or statewide level, depending on the program being proposed. For example, if the program is the only one of its kind in the state, statewide data would be most appropriate to use.
- (2) MPC's Office of Institutional Research and the office of the Dean of Instruction, Occupational Education – Both of these offices can provide information from a variety of sources as well as guidance concerning the proposed program's "fit" into the framework of other community college programs.

The product of this first step in program development should be a set of numbers that indicates high demand for a specific job or jobs in the region. Evidence that the number of open positions is increasing or that there is a lack of trained applicants for the positions strengthens the need for the program.

Step 2: Skills Assessment

Once the specific need for the program is established, the next step is to identify the skills a person would need for employment in the field. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- (1) Ask employers in the field for a list of skills needed for employment.
DACUM is a formal process for acquiring information from employers.
(Contact your dean for more information.)
- (2) Attend a conference to network with employers in the field.
- (3) Create an advisory committee of area employers that will serve as a resource.
- (4) Research possible national skills standards.
- (5) Rely on personal information.

The end product of this step is a list of actual skills needed by workers to be successful in the field. This does not need to be an exhaustive list; however, it should be detailed enough to be a foundation for generating curriculum.

Step 3: Program Format

The next step is to determine the type of program that will best address the identified need. The following questions should be addressed:

- (1) Would a Certificate of Achievement or an Associate Degree be most appropriate?
- (2) Is the length of time to obtain a degree an issue?
- (3) How many hours are needed to obtain the needed skills?
- (4) Will the program train workers for an entry-level position only or provide skills for advancement as well?
- (5) Should work experience, on-the-job training or an internship be part of the program?
- (6) Is there a need for a fast-track program (Certificate of Completion) that will partially fulfill the requirements of a certificate or a degree?

Although employers are a good resource for information during this stage of program development, they will not be aware of various community college program formats. The best source of this type of information is the Dean. A meeting should be arranged with the dean to discuss the information that

has been collected thus far. The dean can then review the information and provide suggestions regarding different format options.

The outcome of this phase should be a general plan for the type of program to be developed. It is important to be as specific as possible with this because the approval process needed for different types of programs varies. In order to go to the next step, a commitment should be made to a particular format. This will avoid wasting time at a later date.

Step 4: Course Development

In this step, the course outlines are developed that will teach the skills that have been identified. These may be created “from scratch”; however, it is advisable to research efforts at other community colleges that have similar programs. Developing contacts with faculty at other schools may save time and prevent “reinventing the wheel.” There may also be courses in the current college inventory that could be revised to meet the needs of the proposed program. This will also save time when preparing course outlines.

Plan to meet with the Dean during this stage of development as well. The dean will be a resource for the more technical aspects of the course outline. The following items should be accurate and clear:

- (1) Number of units
- (2) Number of lab or lecture hours
- (3) Number of hours of assigned homework
- (4) Teaching units
- (5) Need for arranged hours
- (6) Possible special facilities
- (7) Codes

The course outline forms and accompanying instructions require this and other technical information. The Dean can help expedite some of the more mundane number crunching necessary. This will save time and headaches later when the courses are put together into a sequence for the program itself.

Step 5: Program Packaging

With the courses in place and the type of program determined, it is now time to package the courses into a program. Two items need to be addressed at this point:

- (1) **Program Description:** A description of the program needs to be written that describes in general terms what is available to the student who completes the program.
- (2) **Program Outcomes:** Program outcomes must be developed based on the information collected on the skills needed and the course work that has been developed.

This is also the time to begin thinking about course scheduling:

- (1) Will day or evening classes be more appropriate?
- (2) Should full-semester, eight-week, or shorter courses be considered?
- (3) What sequence of courses best fit the program?
- (4) How do prerequisites or elective courses already in existence fit into the program?

In general, these questions help place the program into the larger matrix of the college's other programs.

One good source of this information is faculty from other programs in the division. Most new programs link in some way with other existing programs. Working with other faculty on this can avoid conflicts in the future. This will be very important in the start-up of the program because initial enrollments can be affected if students cannot easily schedule themselves into the courses.

If the steps up to this point have been done thoroughly, the product will be a complete program package that could almost be placed into the college catalog. This is important because the next step is the program approval process itself. If all of the previous steps have been followed, then it will be a simple task to put the information into a new format. If steps have been skipped or are incomplete, the next step can quickly become a nightmare of confusing requirements.

Step 6: Program Approval

Of all the steps in this process, Program Approval can be the most confusing. If the proposed program is a Certificate of Achievement or an Associate Degree, approval must be obtained from the Chancellor's Office. The current form requires answers to 32 different questions about the program. **Schedule a meeting with the Dean for help in completing this form.** For the most part, if information is complete, it is simply a matter of putting the right things in the correct boxes.

The steps for program approval are fairly straightforward:

- (1) The program packet is approved by the division chair. This approval indicates that the division is aware of the new program and has reviewed any possible consequences it may have to the division.
- (2) The program approval forms are then sent to the Dean for approval. If the Dean has been involved in the program development process, this is simply a formality.
- (3) The forms are sent to the Office of Academic Affairs for approval by the Vice President. (Recommendations for revisions may be made.)
- (4) All forms are forwarded to the Curriculum Advisory Committee for approval. (Recommendations for revisions may be made.)
- (5) The Board of Trustees must approve the program.
- (6) A new **occupational** program must then be sent to a meeting of the regional Deans of occupational education. They will make a recommendation to the Chancellor's Office about the program. In addition, they may have suggestions about the program to be taken back to the college for consideration.
- (7) After the regional Deans recommend the program, the college can then submit the program to the state for approval.

Step 7: State Approval of Programs

The last step of the program approval process is submission to the Chancellor's Office. Once the Chancellor's Office has the necessary paperwork, it will respond within 60 days. If the staff has any questions, they will notify the college with a request for additional information. This automatically extends the 60-day time frame. Often, they may ask questions about specific courses, the program justification or other issues. Once they receive the required input, they will either approve or disapprove the program. If they approve the program, it is then

forwarded to the California Post-Secondary Education Commission (CPEC). CPEC has up to 60 days to review the submission. If CPEC does not comment on the program, it is automatically approved at the end of that time period. If it has questions, the college will be notified.

Important: Until final approval is received for a program, it cannot be advertised or promoted in any way. Many colleges put new programs in their catalogs with an asterisk (*) indicating that the program is pending approval by the Chancellor's Office. Some colleges that have tried to advertise their programs prior to receiving approval have received letters from the Chancellor's Office warning them of the illegality of this. Technically, the Chancellor's Office could disallow any FTES that might be collected in courses from an unapproved program. This becomes serious when a college gets ahead of itself and tries to award certificates. In such a case, the student can be penalized by not receiving a certificate for work he or she has completed. The bottom line is that everything in this process must be completed before the program can be considered a part of the college's program inventory.

For a complete description of the state program approval process, forms and timelines, please see the *Program and Course Approval Handbook* published by the Chancellor's Office. It is available on the Community College Chancellor's Office web site at http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/esed/aa_ir/credit/credit_attachments/hndbk032003.pdf. Hard copies are also available in the Dean's office or in the Office of Academic Affairs.