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ABSTRACT

The Transitional Curriculum Program at Virginia State University, which is designed to develop underprepared, dependent learners into independent university students, is described. After distinguishing several types of underprepared learners, the following variables are considered: learner success, role of the instructor, and instructor "support variables." Support variables refer to flexible time schedules for learning, group size and facilities, student testing, and teacher abilities in relation to content knowledge and managerial qualities. The purposes of educational assessment and testing are considered, and norm-referenced testing, criterion-referenced testing, and cutting scores and standards are addressed. The developmental studies component is designed to improve basic skills by providing individually prescribed remedial coursework and skills laboratories. It is anticipated that many of the underprepared students will require more than four years to complete their studies. Under the transitional curriculum model, developmental courses will be taught by faculty from various departments, and resources from the Student Assessment Center will be integrated into instruction. This center will initially diagnose student levels of achievement, monitor student progress, and provide counseling. Faculty development, general studies, and program evaluation components are also considered. (SW)

The Transitional Curriculum Program: Toward Learner Independence Through Developmental Education

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The National Developmental Studies Conference, Atlanta, Georgia

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THE ISSUE OF THE UNDERPREPARED STUDENT

In recent years, institutions of higher education have encountered a different type of college student. While the traditionally well-prepared student can still be found in considerable numbers, the underprepared student now constitutes a substantial sub-population.

Schools around the country have attempted to address the needs of the underprepared student, some being more successful than others. Economic and market factors have forced many institutions to lower admission standards, thereby increasing the number of underprepared students pursuing a college education. Clearly, this is not an isolated problem, but one that has permeated undergraduate education nationwide.

Typically, but not uniformly, the underprepared student is characterized by below average performance on nationally standardized tests measuring verbal and mathematics proficiency. In addition to deficiencies in these two major skill areas, and perhaps as a result of the same, the underprepared student often lacks a positive self-image and the motivation to significantly improve his/her station in life. At Virginia State University, this character description is further complicated by the rural backgrounds of many of our students. Introduction to new and different cultural phenomena is often a source of discomfort and confusion.

Over the past ten years, Virginia State has observed a gradual increase in the number of underprepared students admitted to the institution. Today, the majority of our incoming freshmen score below 700 on the combined verbal and mathematics sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Over 50% of our freshman class read at or below grade 9.0. Deficiences in verbal ability are also reflected in student's oral and written communication skills.

Perfunctory remedial courses cannot adquately attend to the needs of the young person who, due to poverty, academic neglect or discrimination, is underprepared upon entering college. Nor can a fragmented or superficial program aid in the retention of this student, who seeks help in securing academic skills and upward mobility in a career market. Institutions of higher education must redesign programs and redistribute funds to better meet the needs of the underprepared student. Alexander W. Astin, in his book, Four Critical Years, offers this insightful assessment of the issues facing the underprepared student who seeks a college education today:

> Results of the present study indicate that most academic institutions are not designed to meet the needs of the less-well-prepared student. Students with high test scores and high grades generally go to better colleges, they more often live on campus, they get more involved in campus activities, they acquire a broader range of knowledge and skills, they stay longer, they are more likely to persist to graduation and to attain their career objectives, and they are more satisfied with their undergraduate experience. That traditional admissions criteria still predict this wide range of outcomes suggests that institutions have greatly expanded the number of seats available to less-well-prepared students, but have not developed programs that adequately meet their needs. Ideally, one would like to see the correlation between ability and such factors as attainment of career objectives and student satisfaction disappear. Such a change would indicate that the colleges are meeting the needs of traditional students and less-well-prepared students equally (pp. 250-251).

The Virginia State University Transitional Curriculum Program, funded in part by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation of Flint, Michigan, takes as its basic assumption that everyone who pays money to enroll in courses at Virginia State University is capable of learning. Our efforts are directed toward developing instructional programs that are tailored to the entry level of the individual student with respect to both cognitive and affective behaviors.

In general, our efforts are directed toward developing instructional programs that are based on an analysis of the cognitive and affective skills a student brings to VSU, an analysis of the knowledge and skills that are to be mastered by students at VSU, and an understanding of the optimum environment that needs to be created in order for learning directed toward the mastery of the knowledge and skills to take place.

Our ultimate goal is to create "independent learners," or students who are prepared to and actually do take responsibility for their own learning, and who become self-directed within the parameters defined by the program of study they ultimately choose to pursue.

The reality with which we are confronted is that we have "dependent learners" who are ill-equipped for college work, and who rely totally upon the instructor to present the content, define the task, demand appropriate behavior, and invoke sanctions when behavior is not appropriate.

To move away from the latter and toward the former is the purpose of the Transitional Curriculum Program. We are attempting to do this through a carefully designed instructional program that is at once structured and flexible; structured in the sense that a sequence of tasks is defined, including successful level of performance relative to the tasks, and flexible in the sense that the types of activities used with particular individuals or groups of students will vary, as will time on task.

Types of Underprepared Learners

As part of the effort thus far, we have identified three basic types of underprepared learners. They differ not in level of academic development, all lack the skills they need to do college-level work, but they differ significantly in terms of the perceptions they have about the academic

skills they possess, and their capability to learn.

The first type of underprepared student we have labeled as the "resilient learner." These students are characterized by limited academic skills, but have enough confidence in themselves that they are willing to expend energy to master the requisite academic skills. Despite years of repeated failure and frustration, the resilient learner comes to college with a strong willingness to perservere and succeed.

The second type of underprepared student is the "reluctant learner." These students have limited skills, and have little confidence in their ability to master these skills. Unlike the resilient learner, the reluctant learner has been significantly affected by a history of failure and, although he has entered college, is unwilling to risk continued failure in the course of acquiring the skills needed to succeed in college

The third type of underprepared student has been termed the "naive learner." These students have limited skills, but they have a false notion about the skills they possess. They have been rewarded for less than adequate academic performance and believe that they have skills which, in fact, they do not possess. Before doing anything else with the "naive learners," they have to be convinced that they are not presently capable of doing college-level work.

With respect to the design of the program, we have identified a number of variables that we think are crucial to the goal of moving learners from dependence to independence, and we have tried to design the various components of the program to be responsive to these variables.

Learner Success

The first variable we have identified is "learner success." The instructional program must be designed so that the student begins to have successful encounters with learning. In order to get students to respond to the larger challenges confronting them in the curriculum, their appetite

must be aroused by sampling success early on.

That success is a critical variable is supported by Albert Bandura in an article entitled "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change" (1977). In this article, Bandura presents evidence arguing that the most powerful mechanism for affecting behavioral change is "successful performance" relative to the given problem, and that this is true because successful performance is the most effective way of enhancing what he calls "efficacy expectations" (p. 193); which he defines as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce [given] outcomes" (p. 193).

He argues that it is not enough for a person to believe that Behavior A will produce Outcome B, the crucial factor is that the person has to be convinced that he or she is capable of performing Behavior A. In Bandura's model, "...expectations of personal mastery affect both initiation and persistence of coping behavior. The strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations" (p. 193).

Bandura states: "Successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them, particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events. After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced. Indeed, occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort" (p. 195).

Role of the Instructor

The next variable we identified as being basic to the goal of achieving learner independence is the "role of the instructor." It is not too

difficult to see that if "learner success" is an important variable, then the role assumed by the instructor, relative to the learner, is critical as well. We see a need for the role of the instructor to be expanded from the traditional role of college professor as a relatively passive purveyor of information, to a role of active manager of instruction, orchestrating tasks, strategies, climate, and patterns of reinforcement in a fashion responsive to the aptitudes the learner brings to the setting, and in such a way that enhances self-efficacy and increases learner knowledge and skills.

The model of instructional manager is based on the concept of "tutoring as defined by Bloom in his book, Human Characteristics and School Learning. We have identified six factors based on Bloom's discussion which constitute the basic elements of the expanded role of the instructor as manager. These are:

1) Determine current status: given the skill to be mastered, what can the learner do and what does he need to learn how to do.

2) Demonstrate the appropriate technique: explain how the skill is performed, show how it is done; Bloom states that, "The good tutor is likely to have a variety of ways of explaining or illustrating what is to be learned, and he will use one or more ways of presenting the cues which he believes will work best for the particular learner" (p. 113).

3) Facilitate practice or participation: structure the activity in such a way that actively involves the learner in attempting to perform the task.

4) Reinforce the learner: provide verbal and non-verbal encouragement.

5) Assess progress: at appropriate points, ascertain how far down the road to mastery the learner has come and appraise him or her of the analysis.

6) Take corrective action: implement alternative strategies designed to ameliorate specific deficiencies.

In order to function in the non-traditional manner outlined above, an

instructor will obviously need support that is "non-traditional." We have identified four "support variables" upon which an instructor who is to function as manager is dependent.

Flexibility of Time

The first support variable is "flexibility of time." Students learn at different rates, that is no secret. In addition, students who complete certain tasks at a particular rate may not maintain the same relative rate in performing other kinds of tasks. The instructional manager attempts to set a pace for each learner designed to achieve optimum results in both enhancing efficacy expectations and building skills. To do this successfully, the constraint of fitting the task of mastering a skill to a fixed time schedule has to be eliminated, and time has to be allowed to vary according to learner aptitudes and skill to be mastered.

Instructional Capability

The second support variable is "instructional capability." This is a combination of the two factors of group size and facilities. Ideally, the instructor could work one-on-one with a learner for as much time and as intensively as is needed in order to bring the student to mastery level for a skill. In reality, this is not possible. However, the other extreme, one instructor trying to teach 65 students how to read is not practical either. Therefore, instructional capability must be extended by blending instructional managers, facilities, and technology into a design that results in optimum benefit for the maximum number of learners.

Assessment

The third variable is "assessment." In addition to the instructor's own tacit understanding of the progress being made by the learner, assess-

ment information needs to be provided initially relative to the learner's entry level aptitudes, and regularly relative to the learner's progress.

Norm-referenced testing. Norm-referenced testing is most useful in identifying an individual's relative standing in a group. Norms are established by determining how a representative group of persons actually scored on the test. Each individual score falls into an area under a distribution curve where it can be compared to other scores. A student's relative standing on a norm-referenced test can be expressed in terms of a percentile, standard deviation, z score, or other standard score.

Few standardized tests have been normed on populations of academically disadvantaged, unsuccessful or deficient individuals. As a result, when members of this group take tests that have been normed on more heterogeneous populations, their scores are typically lower than their better prepared counterparts. The assumption is that those with lower scores are less likely to do well on a pre-established criterion task. For example, the Scholastic Aptitude Test is administered to high school students in an effort to predict academic success during the first year of college. To the extent that the SAT meets this criterion, it can be said to have high predictive validity.

Criterion-referenced testing. "A criterion-referenced test is one that is deliberately constructed to yield measurements that are directly interpretable in terms of specific performance standards" (Glaser and Nitko, 1971, p. 652). When criterion-referenced testing is advocated, the issue is not how well an individual performs relative to others taking the test, but how much does the individual know about the content under review.

The recent emphasis on criterion-referencing grew naturally from test-

ing's historical role as an instructional variable. Although test instruments were valued primarily for purposes of assessment, they also had great utility in the areas of educational planning, student learning habits, and teacher behavior. Since teaching and learning are influenced by testing, it follows that test construction should reflect the objectives of the instructional program.

A major intent of criterion-referencing is to generalize an individual's performance to a broader range of related behaviors which are referenced under a common domain. If the goal of generalizability cannot be attained, the test has limited applicability. While it may be useful as a teaching device, it does not reveal how well an individual understands the context of the behavior and, thereby, fails to ensure that the testee can maintain the same level of performance on other relevant tasks in the same domain. The issue of domain identification and clarification is especially critical for developmental educators, who must frequently focus on variations of tasks and sub-tasks as a condition of the learner's entry behavior.

The issue of item construction, item review, and item selection require substantial time and effort on the part of teams of persons. Test items must reflect instructional intent and must be generalizable to the domain of instructionally-relevant tasks. (Note - several excellent reviews discuss the topics of criterion-referenced test construction [Nitko, 1980; Roid and Haladyna, 1980; Hambleton, Swaminathan, Algina and Coulson, 1978; Gronlund, 1973; Glaser and Cox, 1968].)

While norm-referenced tests will continue to provide comparative data on individuals and overviews of achievement for groups, criterion-referenced testing is the clear choice for influencing teaching and learning. In de-

velopmental education programs, there is an overriding concern on the part of all participants that the student performs at the desired level. By matching test items to instructional intent and domain specification, the prospects for acceptable performance are improved.

Cutting scores and standards. A cutting score or cut-score is a standard used to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable performance. Cutting scores are used to varying degrees in selection processes. Often, the identification of a cutoff score is a matter of policy, influenced by economic and/or social factors. When an individual is tested and fails to score above a pre-established cutting score, he or she can be denied educational opportunity or accessibility.

Developmental educators have reason to be highly cognizant of the use of cutting scores with norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing. In the case of the former, underprepared students typically score below cutoff scores when general ability or intelligence are being measured. In most instances, this is how these students have been identified as being less-well-prepared or less able. Controversy surrounding the use of standardized, norm-referenced testing does not center on the mere use of cutting scores. The real issue is how these cutting scores are applied, whether in a biased or unbiased manner, and the extent to which they serve as the major determinants in selection. Students who exit developmental education programs will need to score well enough on norm-referenced tests to gain access to advanced options and opportunities.

Turning to the use of cutting scores with criterion-referenced testing, it is apparent that they serve an important function here as well. It is the use of cutting scores that has distinguished mastery testing as a separate

kind of criterion-referenced or domain-referenced testing. Mastery tests invoke absolute standards of performance that separate the competent from the incompetent. While there may still be interest in determining an individual's performance level relative to a specific task, there is an additional concern for making mastery and non-mastery decisions. Minimum competency testing, for example, requires cutting scores to fail those who are not minimally competent (Shepard, p. 34).

Assessment and testing in developmental education programs. Assessment and testing play a major role in education. It is possible to influence instruction and learning by altering the form or intent of a test. For example, multiple choice tests tend to require recall of detailed information. They are not well-suited to tasks requiring such skills as critical thinking or oral and written expression. If students understand that their performance will be determined by the distractors they select, they are not likely to experiment with more expansive thinking and communication skills. The issue is more perplexing for developmental educators who serve a population that has in the past found paper and pencil tests difficult to negotiate with respect to readability and multiple-choice format.

It seems that assessment must serve three broad purposes in developmental education. First, it must serve a diagnostic function to help determine skill behavior upon entry into the program, and prior to each new instructional domain. Criterion-referenced testing, as it is presently practiced, provides limited diagnostic information. While it is more closely related to the content domain, it is often interpreted in terms of the proportion of correct responses. It is important not only to score right and wrong answers, but also to understand why the student responded incorrectly to certain questions.

To do this, test construction procedures must focus on patterns of information that can later be cross-referenced and interpreted in a systematic way.

The second purpose of assessment in developmental education is to measure progress. Progress tests may be pass-fail or graded, but should indicate how well the student has performed relative to a specific learning unit. The form and intent of progress tests should vary according to the nature of the skills required for mastery of a content area. Progress assessments should be administered frequently and on an individual basis. Results should be documented and retrievable. The progress test should typically cover small amounts of information. Sharing of progress test results with testees is recommended as a means of improving student self-efficacy and involvement in the teaching-learning process.

The third purpose is to make mastery/non-mastery decisions. Despite claims by Bloom (1976) and Carroll (1963, 1970), that nearly all students can learn nearly all that needs to be learned, the practical realities of schooling place limits on the proportion of students able to do so. Financial, human, spatial, and temporal resources demand that a viable program serve a continuing influx of less-well-prepared students and that those in the program demonstrate readiness to exit and pursue more advanced coursework.

Instructor Skill

The final variable subsumed under the role of the instructor is the "skill" with which the instructor performs the role of manager. The instructor must be a well-trained manager, as well as a content area specialist. When the blending of these two skills is less than adequate, faculty development efforts and staff hiring become important considerations.

Two additional variables are important to the goal of achieving learner independence.

Student Participation

The first is the degree to which students will allow themselves to "actively participate" in the learning process. They are no longer members of a captive audience, as they were in secondary school. They must make the decision to participate.

Administrative Support

The second variable is "administrative support." This support has to be in the form of adequate facilities for instruction, development of a policy which allows performance, and not time spent in the program, to determine the rate of student progress, and the establishment and enforcement of performance standards that prevent students from entering the mainstream curriculum and graduating without meeting the standards established by the university.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The design of the VSU Transitional Curriculum Model is described in two parts. Immediately following this page is a "network" which graphically displays the major components of the program. A narrative describing each component follows the network. The arrows in the network represent "functional" relationships between components. For example, the arrow coming from component 1.2 indicates that "assessment" will be an on-going activity throughout components 1.1 - 1.4.

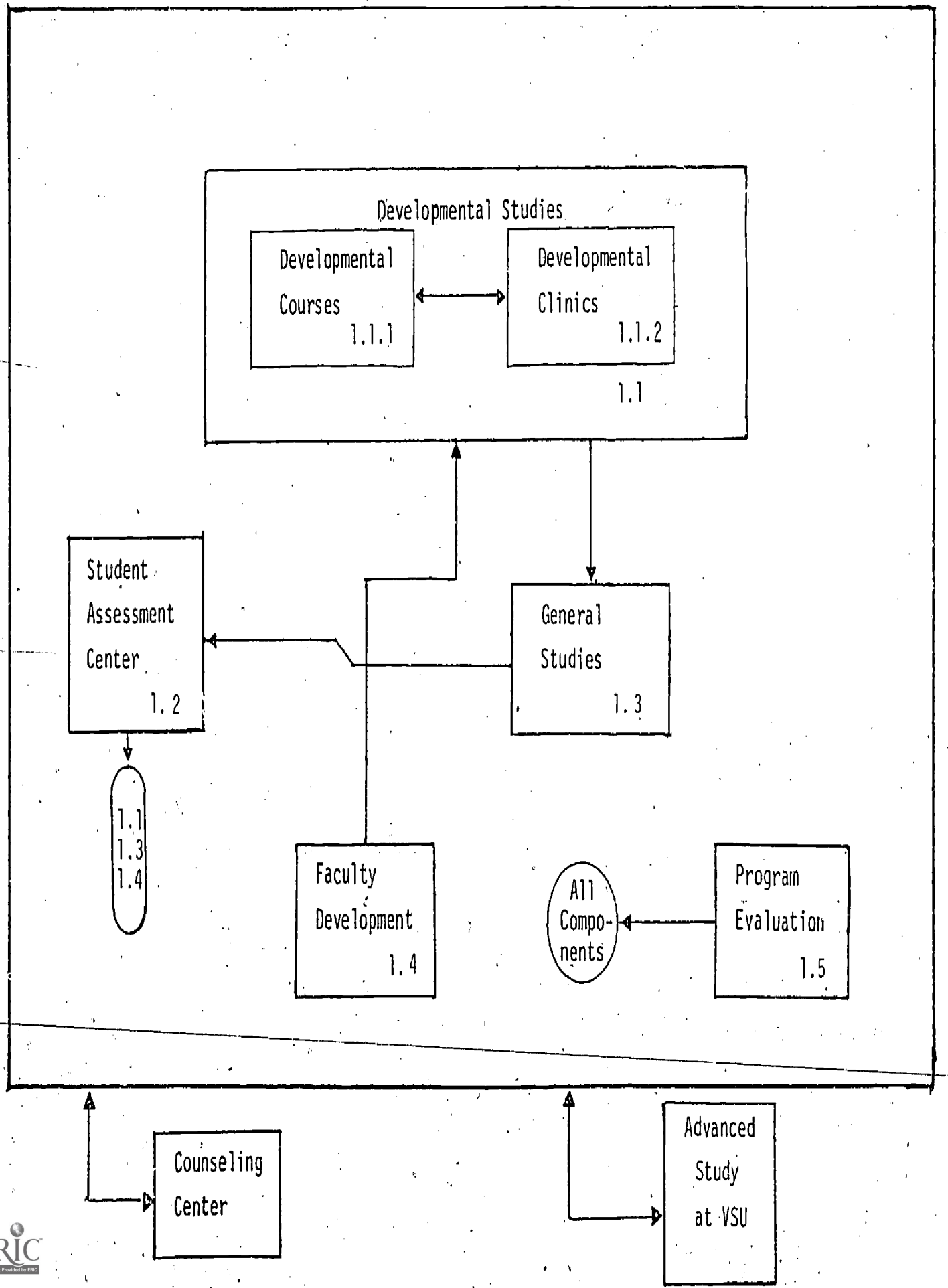
1.1 Developmental Studies

Most of our freshman population will require experience in this phase of the program. Its purpose is to compensate for basic skills deficiences (i.e., reading, speech, writing, mathematics) by providing students with indiyidually prescribed remedial coursework and clinical experiences.

Many of our students work very hard to understand new learning material, but must compensate for basic skills deficiencies in the process of doing so. Often, these students are unable to complete their education in less than 4½ or 5 years. If these students manage to continue their education, in spite of the difficulty of attempting advanced coursework without the necessary basic skills, graduation often finds them seeking a job without ever having remedied the problems associated with the original basic skills deficiencies.

Under the Developmental Studies phase of the program, it is anticipated that many underprepared students will still require more than four years to complete their education. In the case of these students, the additional time will be spent improving reading, writing, speaking, and computational skills. As a result of this phase of the program, we hope to improve student retention by helping students avoid the frustrations associated with

Virginia State University Transitional Curriculum Model



wanting to learn, but lacking the skills to do so.

1.1.1 Developmental Courses

Some of the courses provided under this component are already in operation. As part of instructional development efforts, developmental courses have been introduced by individual departments. In some cases, existing basic skills centers or laboratories have assumed responsibility for teaching these courses.

Under the Transitional Curriculum Model, developmental courses will be taught by faculty members from various departments. Resources from the Student Assessment Center and individual schools and departments will be integrated into classroom instruction.

Students in need of individual attention will be directed to appropriate developmental clinics. Course and clinical personnel will work closely to monitor student progress and to determine the most appropriate learning experiences for each individual.

Courses offered under this phase of the program will be structured to meet Developmental Studies objectives. Pre-specified learning outcomes and provisions for self-paced learning will be essential ingredients in course planning.

Students will be required to demonstrate competency in the major developmental areas of: a) critical reading, b) written and oral communication, c) computation of quantitative data and concepts, and d) coherent and logical thinking. Progress into the General Studies Phase will be contingent upon performance in these above critical areas.

With information provided by the Student Assessment Center and counseling from academic advisors and the Counseling Center, students will find

themselves making progress in an organized and hierarchical fashion, moving from less difficult cognitive operations to more complex operations. By maintaining achievements as fixed, while time is flexible, students will help determine the pace at which they are best able to meet pre-specified learning outcomes.

1.1.2 Developmental Clinics

Under the Transitional Curriculum Program, the skill laboratories will function as instructional units where students are attended to on an individual basis. Specialists in reading, writing, speech, and mathematics will staff the respective clinics. Resources from Developmental Courses, the Student Assessment Center, and the Counseling Center will support the operation of the clinics. Clinic personnel will work with students on an individual basis, making regular use of audio-visual materials, computer-assisted instruction, and other non-traditional approaches to instruction.

1.2 Student Assessment Center

This center will be the hub of the transitional program. It will maintain a profile on each student enrolled at the institution. Faculty, clinic personnel, program managers, and students will have access to individual assessments. Based on the profile, a student's progress will be monitored and improved. This student assessment component will be designed to facilitate student development by providing timely and relevant information to the people responsible for the growth and progress of the student.

Information retrieved from the Student Assessment Center will be used to make decisions about the kinds of academic experiences that would prove most beneficial for each student. Achievement of certain pre-requisite skills and learning outcomes will be monitored and recorded. In addition,

faculty members will retrieve student profiles to help determine which instructional strategies would be most effective in addressing the needs of an individual student or a group of students with similar aptitudes.

This component of the Transitional Curriculum will be responsible for providing: (1) initial diagnosis of individual student levels of achievement in the areas of reading, writing, computation, and oral communication through the use of standardized measures; (2) monitoring of student progress in the program through the analysis of student work-samples, teacher observation and assessment of progress, additional standardized tests, and locally constructed tests; (3) advising students relative to the courses they should take, the support services they should avail themselves of, and their progress through the program; (4) counseling students in the areas of awareness and improvement of self-image, career exploration, and cultural development.

Student monitoring will be based upon a recognition of the unique needs of specific individuals, as well as the common needs of the general student population of Virginia State University. In response to these needs a broad range of data will be collected on students in the program. These will focus upon student's actual performance in the program. The advising and counseling activities will be designed to enable the advisor/counselor to assist the student in deriving the greatest possible benefit, in the areas of academic, personal, career, and cultural development, from his or her experience at Virginia State University

As student profile data is collected, it will be analyzed for each student and a progress report will be placed in the student's file. Each student will have a file which will contain performance data, as well as other

background information. Copies of these files will be kept by advisors and counselors whose responsibility it will be to guide students through not only this program, but his or her entire college career.

The typical student profile contains the following kinds of information: 1) scores on nationally standardized tests; 2) scores on locally constructed measures of competencies; 3) aptitude measures; 4) grade point averages; 5) course grades; 6) indications of learning styles; 7) work samples; 8) personal goals; 9) summary of individual advising sessions. Computer facilities will make possible the rapid storage and retrieval capabilities necessary for this type of operation.

1.3 General Studies

At the present time, the General Studies program at Virginia State University is decentralized to the point that individual schools and departments are responsible for conducting their own general studies programs. As part of the Transitional Curriculum Model, a single university-wide General Studies program will be developed that will build on the Developmental Studies phase and will help students refine the skills learned in that phase, provide them with a broad-based liberal arts education, and prepare them to enter the Advanced Studies phase of their education.

1.4 Faculty Development

The faculty development component of this program is designed to provide faculty members training in and exposure to innovative instructional strategies that focus upon the individualization of instruction and the instructor as manager. Although the University does not intend to forsake the traditional lecture format, the aptitudes of the student population from which Virginia State University draws necessitate the development of more intensive educational experiences characterized by the individualized approach

to instruction.

Students exiting developmental studies frequently suffer the effects of regression in achievement on tasks requiring the application of basic skills. This is a common phenomenon when no mechanism exists for the purpose of providing continuing academic support to these students. While faculty in the developmental program concentrate on improving student performance in reading, writing, speech, and mathematics, faculty teaching more advanced courses tend to place primary emphasis on subject area content. For this reason, faculty development activities must be structured for both developmental and non-developmental faculty.

Developmental studies faculty require exposure to and practice with various instructional strategies which focus on characteristics of the learner, assessment of student performance, and management of instructional resources. Each of these three major areas contains a number of sub-topics which are necessary ingredients in developmental education programs. Faculty development activities which integrate dimensions of learner characteristics, instructional assessment, and classroom management are likely to provide skill experiences that most closely resemble those required for teaching developmental studies.

As was mentioned, non-developmental studies faculty are generally capable of providing quality instruction in specific content areas. The focus of faculty development activities for this group is on ensuring that evidence of learning independence and basic skills mastery will persist, and even grow, during the student's advanced college years. This implies learning how to teach content while placing a continuing emphasis on the basic process skills. To accomplish this, a reliance on reading, writing, speech, and mathematics

must be built into the instructional fabric of the content area. Indeed, if proficiency in the basic skills is essential, it should also be a prerequisite for success in advanced coursework.

1.5 Program Evaluation

In the implementation stage of the program the evaluation is focusing upon the set of critical variables discussed previously. Specifically, data is being collected on: the types of instructional activities taking place in the developmental courses and developmental clinics; the extent to which instructors are functioning in the role of managers, as discussed previously, the extent to which administrative policy making has been responsive to program implementation in the areas of instructional capability, flexibility of time and enforcement of performance standards; the types of services provided in the area of student assessment, and the degree to which these services are contributing to the efforts being made by instructors.

Once the program is fully implemented, the emphasis of the evaluation will shift to assessing the impact the program is having upon students, specifically from the point of view of retention and performance in the mainstream curriculum.

Specific "evaluation questions" are listed in Appendix A.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we are in agreement with Edmund Gordon's observation that, "American society is increasingly concerned with the development of all of its people..." and that "The issue of who is educable has become a function of whom society wants to educate, rather than who is most likely to benefit from the opportunity to learn" (1975, p. 7).

Our society has acknowledged the right of underprepared students to pursue college careers; at the same time, however, students should not be expected to plunge into the swift current of mainstream academia until they are properly prepared to do so. Ellen Ashdown, a former instructor at Florida A & M University, in an article entitled "Humanities on the Front Line," argues:

> If these students are to continue to be admitted to college, and if their degrees are to be more than certificates of a four-year residency, comprehensive programs must be developed to provide their missing skills. High schools should do this but have failed. Until they improve, colleges must assume the responsibility (Change, March 1979, p. 20).

The Transitional Curriculum Program represents the efforts of one institution of higher education to take underprepared, dependent learners, and develop them into independent learners capable of performing successfully at the university level, and contributing meaningfully to the advancement of American society.

Appendix A: Evaluation Questions

1.1.1 Developmental Courses

1. How will the Developmental Studies Program be reviewed and revised?
2. What types of instructional activities take place in each of the Developmental Courses?
3. Does study in Developmental Courses result in improved student performance with respect to reading, writing, speech, and mathematics skills?
4. How many students are served by each Developmental Course during the academic year?

1.1.2 Developmental Clinic

1. What types of instruction are provided in each of the Developmental Clinics?
2. Does instruction in the clinics improve student performance?
3. How many students are served by each Developmental Clinic during the academic year?
4. What are the staffing patterns and operating schedules for the clinics?
5. What is the nature of the relationship between Developmental Clinics and Developmental Courses?

1.2 Student Assessment Center

1. How is student profile data collected and maintained?
2. Are faculty members receiving relevant student data in a timely manner?
3. What types of requests for services are made to the Student Assessment Center?
4. What types of services are actually being provided directly to students?

1.4 Faculty/Staff Development

1. What types of orientation activities were conducted for VSU faculty/staff members?
2. How effective were these orientation activities in making faculty/staff aware of and building support for the program?
3. What types of in-service training activities were conducted for VSU faculty/staff members?
4. Who attended in-service training activities?
5. How effective were the in-service training activities?

Impact of the Transitional Curriculum Program

Recruitment

1. How many students enrolled at VSU because of their participation in the Early Intervention Component?

2. How many students enrolled at VSU because of the Transitional Curriculum Program?

Retention

1. Has the student attrition been reduced by the TCP; if so, to what extent?

2. How does the VSU attrition rate compare to the overall attrition rate for predominantly black colleges and universities? For predominantly white colleges and universities?

Student Performance in the Mainstream Curriculum

1. Do faculty members teaching lower level general studies courses perceive students to be better prepared?

2. Does student performance in the mainstream curriculum indicate that better quality work is being done?

Cost of Program

What are the overall costs for each of the various services being provided through the TCP?

What is the cost of the program on a per student basis?

What evidence is there that the program is cost effective?

*These tasks will be carried out in the second and third fiscal years if continued funding for the program is obtained.

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