

Learning Centre Circle Student Success at UCB-O and the New College

June 24, 2004

Executive Summary:

Our circle proposes to expand the current function of OUC Learning Centres from a prescriptive response for student learning to a more proactive role. In keeping with one of the guiding principles of both UBC – O and the New College - that of “placing students first through student-centered learning” - the current Learning Centres are the ideal setting to encourage such an environment. We believe the present discussions within our institution provide an excellent opportunity to explore the restructuring of “learning centres” into more comprehensive “success centres”. As well, such discussion provides a unique opportunity for UBC- O and the New OC to share services and develop activities to ensure student success.

Presently there are several departments that offer a variety of workshops at OUC. We propose existing student support services such as library seminars, writing centre activities, student success seminars etc. should be funneled through “success centres”. Integrating services would create a vital “hub” that could ultimately be expanded into a first year experience initiative. Regardless of their program, be it ABE, Trades or Academic studies, students arriving at either institution will experience some form of a first “post secondary” year (or semester) and a central hub of learning support and services would provide an ideal starting place for any future first year initiative.

Vision:

Successful students are students who achieve their goals, and a broader Learning Centre mandate could become an integral part of helping students reach those goals. The vision of the circle is to develop integrated, coordinated and proactive “success centres” that can provide a range of learning support services.

- Expand current Learning Centre mandate with primary focus on the achievement of student goals for all levels and all disciplines.
- Continue to provide current learning support activities that reflect individual campus communities
- Integrate existing support programs and activities; i.e. grammar, student success and library seminars, writing workshops, etc. These changes should enhance, not replace, current activities on individual campuses and should continue to emphasize programs and activities that meet the needs of the specific community
- Provide regularly scheduled seminars and activities throughout the year on all campuses

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- A new, positive name. (Significant debate regarding possible name changes resulted in the use of the term “success centre” as a starting point, only because it better reflects the concept and activities we envision).
- Faculty involvement to create a multi disciplinary, integrated environment for learning
- Math and English Teaching Assistants on all campuses
- Provide a coordinator on each campus
- Reclassification of Technician III position to better reflect teaching and learning activities that take place through such centres.

Principles:

An effective “Success Centre” would be based principles that endeavor:

- To focus on enhancing student success
- To provide a proactive rather than prescriptive response to student learning
- To be founded on an organization template or model that allows flexibility
- To develop a consistent set of core services and seminars that can accommodate all campuses. Although emphasis of services may vary according to campus and institutional need, “success centres” could provide a joint approach that can accommodate the overlap of students from both institutions as well as provide continuity of learning support between individual campuses, the new OC and UBC-O
- To increase visible presence of “success centres” through marketing, websites, brochures and posters
- To maintain peer mentor program, but to ensure mentors receive consistent, standard training program
- To establish a “minimum requirement” for staff in working in the centre
- To ensure steering committees of faculty, administrators, learning assistants and student representatives are established on all campuses for greater consistency and communication
- To ensure access to adaptive technology, computers and learning support for all levels and programs
- To ensure “success centres” be an integrated part of “Students” cluster that includes Counseling, Disability Services, Aboriginal Services and Campus Health

Existing support and activities on individual campuses

Learning Centres, counseling, and library faculty currently offer a number of support services, and while they all provide proactive strategies to assist in student success, the circle believes that their effectiveness could be enhanced by delivery through the “hub” aspect of “success centres”. Samples of activity on individual campuses include:

- Learning support through current learning centres
- Teaching Assistants
- Library seminars (Librarians)
- Student success seminars (Counseling staff)

- Disability services
- Grammar workshops (Dept of Modern Languages)
- Writing Centre activities, seminars and workshops (some campuses)
- Educational research activities by staff and faculty (Kalamalka)
- Centralized “Success Centre” providing access to career information, library services and Learning activities (Salmon Arm)

Unfortunately, many opportunities to link these activities to classes are missed largely because they are not coordinated as a single unit, or provided through a location where faculty and students find them easily or can request more information. A central place for delivery of support initiatives will increase the possibility of participation. While coordination between learning centres and support providers occurs to some extent on all campuses, all circle members expressed a wish for greater integration.

Process to expand role of Learning Centres

Much of this discussion focuses on the potential evolution of current Learning Centres to “success centres” and many of the resources that can make this happen are already in place. The expansion process outlined below makes use of existing resources and would be easily implemented. During the transition year, developing stronger success oriented programs could be facilitated by considering the following steps:

- Find a new name that reflects “positive” approach, success initiatives etc.
- Establish regular steering committee meetings at individual campuses (current level of involvement varies from campus to campus with active committees on some campuses and virtually no steering committee on others)
- Increase communication between campuses and institutions
- Incorporate existing support services, seminars etc. into mandate and create an institutional operational model
- Develop a comprehensive marketing and poster campaign
- Create an active website
- Ensure “success centres” have permanent, central locations on all campuses
- Environment should be warm, welcoming and inclusive, focused on proactive learning support and core services.
- Provide an ongoing schedule of activities that is easily accessible, both physically and through the website.
- Create a foundation for the development of a more comprehensive “first year” program through centre
- Provide space for the establishment of a writing centre within the “stand alone Learning Centres” as outlined by the Writing Centre Circle working paper submitted May 14th, 2004.

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Conclusion:

The members of our circle strongly believe students from all programs would benefit by the expansion of the current Learning Centre mandate. A more proactive and integrated student support system as outlined above would ultimately foster the student centered learning environment sought by UBC-O and the New OC.

University Centre Members:

Cindy Bourne	Kalamalka Campus; Learning Centre;
Sharon Robbie	Kalamalka Campus
Megan Mills	Faculty of Business
Derrick Doige	Kalamalka Campus Counseling
Laurel Marsh	Kelowna Learning Centre
Beryl Amaron	Kelowna Learning Centre
Laurie Mink	Counseling, Penticton
Carol Abernathy	ABE – Kalamalka
Susan Cawsey	Salmon Arm
Jennifer Sigalet	Library – Kalamalka / Salmon Arm
Sharon Josephson	Faculty of English/ Professional Communications
Tony Sellar	Acting Principal: Kalamalka
Joan Smeyers	Administration: Kalamalka
Sandra Mendoza	Penticton
Janet Mantyka	Penticton
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