May 6th 2010

Dr. Griffin:

The English Department, as you know, began last semester to rethink, revision, and discuss significant issues regarding our curriculum, professional development, and hiring processes that directly or indirectly impact student success and our faculty. Our plan which was first presented to the department Curriculum Committee this spring is titled, “We Can Do Better”: A Comprehensive Proposal to Increase Student Success in the English Department at CCSF.

There are three major areas addressed in this proposal:

I. Curricular Restructuring
   A. Alternatives to Forcing Course Repetition
   B. Creating New, Parallel Tracks of Accelerated/Intensive Courses
   C. Designing Courses Around Proven Curricular, Pedagogical, and Student Success Strategies

II. Professional Development
   A. Require All Faculty to Engage in Reading Training
   B. Establish Department Retreat Days
   C. Create a 10-year Professional Development Plan

III. Hiring, Evaluation, and Faculty Retention
   A. Aggressively Scout and Recruit
   B. Commit to “Grow Your Own”
   C. Pilot an Expanded, Intra(departmental Hiring Committee
   D. Develop a Mentoring the Mentors Program
   E. Hold Departmental Faculty Evaluation Training Sessions

These are ambitious in scope, but align with your request address the student achievement gap, particularly under the heading of Academic Support/Curricular Changes as identified in your 4/28/10 email. The English Department is committed to participating in a task force to address these issues. As you confirm, access is crucial, and that is something that the English Department has identified as well. We need more classes.

However, the work that the department has already embarked upon is directed to the three areas listed above. To date, we have established six working groups to develop plans to revise and/or restructure our curriculum. These working groups are comprised of 42 full and part-time faculty (many are signed up for more than one committee) who have begun to meet to set goals for our work in fall 2010. Each group will have its own focus:

- Affective Research and Pedagogy
- Multicultural Pedagogy
- Multilingual Students
- Student Surveys and Focus Groups
• Department Assessment and Self-Study
• Site Visits/Interviews with Staff and Students of Other Colleges

The reasoning behind this strategy is to act on a foundation of knowledge that informs the decision and changes we expect to make to address the needs of our students.

Crucial to making these decisions will be to attend the Accelerated Learning Program’s 2nd Annual Conference on Acceleration, being held in Baltimore, Maryland, this summer. The Community College Baltimore County has already instituted the practice of acceleration and has increased success rates and attrition rates for students placed in developmental writing courses. It would benefit our department to send two faculty, myself and James Sauvé (who is responsible for our proposal, “We Can Do Better”) to attend this conference as it will include presentations from institutions across the country on a variety of approaches to acceleration in developmental writing, reading, math, and ESOL programs. I have already sent the Travel Requisitions to the Vice-Chancellor and would ask your support to allow us to attend.

We understand the need to work with you and be part of this task force to address the challenges that the achievement gap presents. But we will need support from the institution to request this extra work from faculty to execute a major reworking of our curriculum. The department has never been tasked with a request this extensive and complicated and time-sensitive.

Further, the demands of this kind of work within the department, above and beyond the work faculty already are doing, will require some additional remuneration. I would think that release time, at least, would be possible for several crucial faculty members who will be doing the lion’s share of the work. Hopefully, we can discuss this and arrive at fair recompense for this time-consuming and comprehensive restructuring.

Sincerely,

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