The Student Support Services' counseling departments were invited to share their perspectives on the strategies required of underprepared students at City College. Eight departments were represented in the presentation, with each counselor relating the story of an underprepared student with whom they had worked who succeeded through the basic skills program. The presenters included:

Robert Clark, Counselor in the African American Scholars Program (AASP)
Andre De Cordova, Counselor in the Continuing Student Counseling Department
Maria Franco, Counselor in the New Student Counseling Department
Alvin Jenkins, Director of Educational Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)
Paul Johnson, Chair of Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS)
Susana Mayorga, Counselor for the Latino Services Network
Lindy McKnight, Chair of the Continuing Student Counseling Department
Indiana Quadra, Chair of the Career Development and Planning Center (CDPC)
Lisa Romano, Counselor in the New Student Counseling Department

Stories emphasized the characteristics of the student and the nature of interventions which were incorporated into the learning experience. Following each story, faculty and staff in the audience were asked to identify the key characteristics of the students and the types of interventions provided.

The primary student characteristics identified through the array of stories included:

- First generation, low skills, lots of personal issues, and low income
- Lacking in confidence, motivated, and street savvy
- High school perception of City College
- Not afraid to ask for help
- Learned from positive experiences
- Determined and confident
- Mature with parental responsibilities and outside involvements with an inflexible schedule
- Working in the program and beyond
- Bi-lingual
- Shared what learned with other students
- Internalized skills development externally
- Labeled with behavior problems
- Possessing ‘hidden disabilities’
• Articulate, outgoing, and middle class
• Worked and persevered to overcome frustrations
• Stigmatized by fear and avoidance with a previously undocumented disability
• Low self-esteem with a high sense of initiative
• Natural talent unrealized and unrecognized
• Assuming personal responsibility
• Procrastinator who is distracted by fear

Interventions which were successful with the students described in the story included:
• Mentoring and peer advising
• Safety net
• Financial Aid
• Ability to work on campus
• Taught to ask for help
• Guidance and Lern classes
• Tutoring
• Referrals and EOPS assistance
• Participation in external programs
• Personal interest
• Longitudinal support and consistency of support
• Counselor-student-instructor dialogue
• Referrals to other programs
• Safety net
• Faculty flexibility to accommodate student schedules
• Ability to work on campus
• Participation in related leadership conference
• Student required to meet with instructor outside of class every other week
• Program provided opportunities with increasing responsibility
• Nurture and nurturing
• Teamwork among faculty and staff
• Tenacity
• Proper diagnosis of the problem
• Educational accommodations
• Confidentiality
• Tutorial support in the strategy lab
• Intrusive follow-up
• Teamwork to mitigate against disappearance
• Customized response
• Special programs
• Financial support
• Instructor-counselor case management approach
• Worked on campus
• Educational plan
• Engagement and encouragement
• Peer impact
• Partnerships with other students
• Work on campus
• Counseling shove – tough love
• Collaboration

During the question and answer period which followed, a variety of inquiries and comments were made, resulting in the identification of the following themes in an effort to help define the critical elements of success:
• Customized support
• Engagement with the student
• Peer support and mentoring
• Increasing expectations
• Development of confidence and belief
• Community support
• Personally known by faculty, staff and peers
• Longevity and consistency of support

During the next and last meeting for the semester, the comments made in all of the presentations hosted this semester will be reconsidered, leading to the development of various basic skills scenarios for consideration in the fall of 2004. Please join us for this important discussion.