



# ~The Get REAL Center~

Re-Entry and Adult Learners

***Step into your FUTURE!***



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# *~The Get REAL Center~*

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## **Background**

The project assigned to our LEAP group was to develop a program for re-entry students, with Debbie Rio and James Giappa-Grossklag as our advisors. In our first meeting with Debbie we discovered that a re-entry program already exists, and that it is guided by a cross-campus committee. Our LEAP group decided that we could be most useful to the college by working with the existing re-entry committee and trying to understand how we could augment their efforts. Those discussions led us to the development of a plan for a physical location to become a center for re-entry students, a place where they can quickly get access to a range of resources to support their efforts, and to build support networks. We also slightly changed the definition of the re-entry student from what the committee established, to 25 years and older instead of 28 years and older.

## **Profile of REAL Student**

The REAL (Re-Entry and Adult Learner) student is 25 or older. Survey results of fall 2008 re-entry students attending the re-entry orientation show that 71% were 35 years old or older. These students may or may not have attended some college classes, but do not have a college degree. They typically work, either full-time or part-time, and may also have a family. They are concerned about managing multiple roles and responsibilities in taking on the new role of student and not having the skills or mental abilities to keep up in a college class. They may also have anxieties about specific subject matter areas, such as math. The decision to start attending college classes may be propelled by a change in life situation (divorce, layoff, health status, and empty nest), a desire for an improved career path, or just the desire to address a long-held dream.

### Rationale for Center

#### **Rationale for Center**

Results from the survey done of students attending the re-entry orientation in fall 2008 indicate that 61% identified a re-entry center as a service that would help keep them in college. Academic and career counseling services were identified by 67% of respondents and 39% identified study groups as a helpful service.

Any student starting college for the first time could use help learning what services are available, and how to access them. These re-entry students may have an even greater need, for they are typically time constrained and more anxious, so one-stop shopping for services could be a significant boost for them.

Additionally, survey data indicate that adult re-entry students would like to be with each other. Seventy-two percent said classes with other adults were important to them, and 26% said social events with other adults could help keep them in college. The re-entry center could become a focal point for meeting other students, networking, forming study groups, and support groups.

## The REAL Center

### Services

The intent of the Real Center is to provide re-entry students with information and support to enable them to successfully establish and achieve their academic and career preparation goals. Center staff will all be knowledgeable about college services and support programs (financial, tutoring, etc) and the Center will have a central library of materials about all these services. The goal is not to deliver all these services, such as tutoring, at the REAL Center, but rather to direct re-entry students to existing services that they could use.

Academic and career counseling services will be provided however, by staff with a special interest in and knowledge of this group of students. Orientations will be provided for new students each term, and there will be ongoing workshops addressing topics of interest to this group, such as test or math anxiety, time management, study skills, sharpening your memory, financial aid options, and writing the perfect essay.

Students will be encouraged to use the services of the Center, and to bring other fellow adult students, by activities such as brown bag lunches, quarterly social activities, and the presence of a comfortable space in which to relax and talk once the Center is in its permanent location.

### Location

#### *Temporary Interim Location*

The Get REAL Center will open fall 2009 in the front area of the vacated Transfer Center in the Student Center building between Health Services and the Student Computer Center. This location will serve as a temporary location until new permanent building/space is ready.

The Center will use existing furniture available in the Transfer Center. Two desks will be placed in the middle of the room in the front facing the entrance to be used as a temporary receptionist counter. It will be staffed by both the Administrative Assistant and Adult Hourly Assistant to greet and assist students. One computer will be available at this front desk for use by the Assistants. In addition, this front area will have chairs for students to be used as a waiting area.

Partitions and desks will be placed toward the rear of the room to create a secluded area for private consultation used by the Counselor and/or Director to meet with students. Ideally, partitions should go all the way up to the ceiling to create an enclosed private office with locking doors.

The middle section of the room will house desks and computers for the Director and Counselor. There will also be tables for working space with printer/scanner/fax/copier machine.

#### *Permanent location*

The permanent location would be a space in the new Library Expansion as part of the Welcome Center for all students. This location is conveniently close to the student parking area. There will be a service counter, consulting rooms, workshop/meeting area, and computer use area in addition to staff desk and

computer space. Hours of operation would be 8am to 8pm to accommodate returning adult work schedules and day care issues. Evening hours would be available for workshops, counseling, and the COUNS 100 course.

Other physical needs at the permanent location would include:

- Physical space of about 1,200 square feet
- Two private offices with solid locking doors for counseling academic, career, and personal matters located in the back of the space
- Small waiting area between these two offices with small round table and 4 chairs
- Large windows in the two private offices that face into the classroom area of the space
- Furniture for two private offices: desk with rounded end that students and counselors sit around to view documents and computer screens, desk chair, 2 chairs for students, bookcase, 3 drawer file cabinet
- Service counter/desk just inside the door with computer, file cabinet, and bookshelf
- Center of space: 12 computer desk that fold down into tables, 2 computers on each desk, network laser jet printers, copy/fax/scanner machine, 2 bookcases for college catalogs, and a whiteboard and computer, projector, overhead and screen for class and workshops

## **Staffing**

### *Duties*

#### Administrative Director

Oversee daily operation of Center in line with Mission Statement  
Perform outreach activities both in-house and outside communities  
Create/maintain good rapport with other college Centers  
Plan/coordinate workshops  
Supervise Administrative Assistant  
Counsel students

#### Counselor

Educate students on educational services  
Assist with Student Education Plan  
Conduct workshops  
Provide personal resource assistance

#### Administrative Assistant

Assist Director with daily operation of Center  
Welcome students to the Center  
Schedule counseling appointments  
Arrange workshops  
Arrange travel  
Order supplies  
Ensure computers are in working order  
Coordinate web/live chat site

## **Supervise the Adult Hourly Assistant**

### **Adult Hourly Assistant**

Assist Administrative Assistant with daily operation of Center

Welcome students to the Center

Provide students with directional guidance to other campus service units

## ***Qualifications***

The administrative Director will be a full time position and will require experience in operating a student services resource center. The Director will be required to have flexible hours to staff the Center during evenings and weekends. The Director will be required to have supervision and counseling skills. Previous outreach experience will be preferred.

The Counselor will be a full time position with knowledge of COC student services operations and experience in counseling students from a variety of backgrounds. Counselor will be required to be able to have flexible hours to meet students and teach counseling classes during evenings and weekends.

The Administrative Assistant will be a full time position with good organizational skills with experience in managing a service center office. Familiarity with COC student services and COC business services operations will be preferred. There will be occasional evening and weekend hours. The Assistant will be required to have supervision skills.

The Adult Hourly Assistant will be a 50% part time position limited to COC employment policy. Familiarity with COC student services operation will be preferred.

## **Marketing**

### **Target Markets**

Given the above definition of the REAL student, there are two target markets that could benefit from the services of the REAL Center. The first is people who are not traditional college student age, but 25 and older, and who are already enrolled at COC. Fall semester 2008 there were 3,663 students,\* or 23% of COC enrollment who were 25 or older, a 147% increase in that age range from fall 2007. The reentry program has served only about 170 students since its start fall semester 2008, through orientations, workshops, and the counseling class. So there are potentially thousands of students already on COC campuses who are probably trying to cope with work, family life, and being a college student. The issues revolving around these multiple life roles are exactly what the services of the REAL Center would help them address, in the service of successfully attaining education and career goals.

The second target market would be Santa Clarita residents who do not have an AA degree or a Bachelors degree, who could be new potential COC students. Sixty-two percent of Santa Clarita residents are age 25 or older, or approximately 110,000 residents (population of 177,045 1/08). Of these residents age 25 and older, 61%, or approximately 67,000 residents, have only elementary education through some college, and therefore could be targets of an "It's not too late to get your college education" campaign. The REAL Center would be positioned as the perfect entry portal to the world of successfully assuming the role of student again, after being focused on other life roles and issues.

Given the current state of the economy a third possible market segment could be SCV residents who already hold a college degree, but who are in career transition because of downsizing, and who are looking to return to school to pick up concrete new skills that would enable them to move in a new career direction. Although approximately 38% of SCV residents hold an Associate degree or higher, more in-depth research would need to be conducted to determine the size of the pool who might be interested in skill-building or career transitioning. Given the timeframe focus of this LEAP project, fall 2009, our group's recommendation is to focus primarily on the first market segment identified above, existing COC students, and to look at approaches to the second and third segments as more long term projects.

\*Number includes first-time or returning students (not continuing), age 25 and older, excluding ISA students.

Data sources: City of Santa Clarita website; COC "Just the Facts," March 2008; COC enrollment management report, Chancellor's Office Referential Files

## **Marketing Activities**

The activities and programs below are intended to focus primarily on current COC students who are 25 and older. The goal is to make them aware of the existence of the REAL Center, the range of services provided at the center, and the benefits to them of utilizing those services. This campaign would take place at the start of registration fall 2009 and run for the fall term. Results of promotional activities could then be evaluated, and adapted as needed for the winter term. The new Director of the Center would be primarily responsible for developing and carrying out this program. If funding for Center staff is not identified or available, the current Re-Entry Committee would be responsible for the marketing program.

### *Faculty/Staff Focus*

Faculty and support staff interacts on a daily basis with this target group, but they may not be used to thinking of these students as a special group, with special needs. To develop awareness about the needs of this group of students, and to gain the support of faculty and staff in referring students to the center, an education campaign could be developed. Possible activities could include:

*Introductory Email to All Faculty and Staff:* Before the start of the fall 2009 term an email could be sent to faculty and staff informing them of the new Get REAL center and its focus. They should be asked to be on the alert for students who could benefit from the Center's services, told how to get the Get REAL center brochures, and be encouraged to refer students to the Center.

*Flex workshops:* Focus on profiles of REAL students, examples of issues in their lives, barriers to academic and career success, services and goals of the REAL center, success stories, and how to identify and refer them to the center.

*"Ask Me about the REAL Center" button:* Enlist the support of enlightened, supportive faculty and staff to wear these buttons during the opening week of the REAL Center. Arm them with business card size slips with "referred by" and the faculty/staff member's name, to hand to the student who inquires. Collect the referral slips from students as they visit the center, and then hold a drawing for a gift card prize for the faculty/staff person who refers the most students.

## *Student Focus*

*Real Center brochure*: Place the brochure developed by the LEAP group in a prominent place in every office students would visit in the course of enrolling for fall classes (admissions, financial aid, etc). Also place it online at the REAL Center website and in the TLC Lab.

*Email campaign*: Continue the email invitation campaign that the re-entry committee has already been doing, to currently enrolled students 25 and older, informing them of the re-entry program, the orientation, and workshops.

*REAL Center Grand Opening Press Release*: Work with PIO to develop a press release about the new REAL Center, students it is intended to serve, its services, and the hoped for outcomes. The goal would be to drive current students to the Center, and to encourage community members who are not currently students that with this support they could return to college and be successful. This should be done early enough before fall 2009 registration to get possible stories in key local publications.

*REAL Center Open House*: Hold an open house event at the new Center during the first couple of weeks of the fall term. Students who have been in the re-entry counseling class or who have attended earlier orientations or workshops could be present, along with the re-entry committee and counselors, to welcome students and help them start networking.

*"Bring a Friend" Student Campaign*: Encourage students who visit the center and utilize the resources to bring another adult re-entry student to the center, by entering their name in a drawing for a gift card each time they bring someone.

*Articles in COC Publications*: Develop one or two articles about the new Get REAL Center and students it serves for publication in *Breaking News*, *Bottom Line*, and *Canyon Call*.

*REAL Center Website Success Story or Student Profile Feature*: Develop a series of student profiles to post on the re-entry program website. These could be success stories, highlight some key achievement, or just a "get to know a fellow student" profile. These snapshots would personalize the website, and by continually adding new ones, provide fresh content to keep students in the habit of visiting the site.

*REAL Center Monthly Brown Bag Lunches*: The Center could sponsor a monthly brown bag lunch with either a speaker or a discussion topic of interest to this group of students. A speaker might address a time management topic, managing stress, or some other topic of interest to the group. There could also be just being a structured discussion of some topic of interest, or just an ice-breaker activity to encourage students to get to know each other.

## Budget

Data below reflect funding required in operating an efficient REAL Center. One time purchases of computer/printer will require replacement in about 3 years.

**District:** Santa Clarita Community College District

### PROGRAM BUDGET

**College:** College of the Canyons

**Project:** REAL Center

Program Year: 2009-2010		
Source of Funds: District		
Object of Expenditure	Classification	Project Funds Requested
1000	Full Time Administrative Director (100% for 12 months)	90,000
1000	Full Time Counselor (100% for 10 months)	80,000
2000	Full Time Administrative Assistant (100% for 12 months)	48,000
3000	Full Time Fringe Benefits @ 40%	87,200
4000	Non-Instructional Supplies	3,000
5000	Guest Speaker Stipends (workshops)	1,000
5000	Mileage for staff	500
5000	Conference travel for staff	3,000
5000	Subscriptions to trade journals	200
5000	Memberships to trade organizations	150
5000	Marketing/Advertising (outreach)	5,000
5000	Printing (brochures, handouts, etc.)	2,000
5000	Outreach Workshop refreshments	500
	<b>TOTAL OPERATION COST:</b>	<b>320,550</b>
ONE TIME PURCHASES:		
6000	Computers (3 for staff; 2 for students) @ \$1,200 ea.	6,000

6000	Printer/Copier/Fax/Scanner (1)	1,500
6000	Furniture: Desks/Chairs/Tables	3,000
	<b>TOTAL ONE TIME PURCHASES:</b>	<b>10,500</b>
	<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>331,050</b>

Data below reflect funding required in operating a REAL Center on an interim basis with limited funding.

**PROGRAM BUDGET:** District: Santa Clarita Community College District

**Limited Funding** College: College of the Canyons

**Project: REAL Center**

Object of Expenditure	Classification	Project Funds Requested
1000	Full Time Administrative Director (100% for 12 months)	90,000
2000	Adult Hourly Clerical Assistant (1000 hrs @ \$15/hr)	15,000
3000	Director Fringe Benefits @ 40%	36,000
3000	Assistant Fringe Benefits @ 15%	2,250
4000	Non-Instructional Supplies	2,000
5000	Guest Speaker Stipends (workshops)	1,000
5000	Mileage/Conference for staff's outreach efforts	2,000
5000	Field Trips to career sites	150
5000	Subscriptions to trade journals	-

5000	Memberships to trade organizations	-
5000	Marketing/Advertising (outreach)	3,000
5000	Printing (brochures, handouts, etc.)	2,000
5000	Outreach Workshop refreshments	100
5000		
6000	Computers (2)	2,400
6000	Printer/Copier/Fax/Scanner, small size	800
<b>Total Project Costs</b>		<b>156,700</b>

### Other Recommendations

1. The LEAP group came to the conclusion that the services provided by the REAL Center would be of benefit to All COC students, and that a bigger picture project could be framed to address that need. The ability to more successfully navigate college life could improve student retention and learning outcomes overall.
2. Focused effort is needed to research outside funding opportunities for the REAL Center. The re-entry committee has identified several, but identifying more grant sleuthing support could accelerate the funding process in this economic climate.
3. The needs of Canyon Country re-entry students should be specifically explored. The orientation workshops done to date have been on the Valencia campus, and the data is from students at the Valencia campus. Since a number of the programs re-entry students participate in are at CCC it would be good to do some survey work or focus groups with those students to discover their main concerns and needs.
4. Since the re-entry program is still in start-up phase it has just scratched the surface of possibilities to serve this student population. Given that none of the LEAP group knew about the program before this project it might be good for the re-entry committee and supporters to focus activities for fall 2009 on inexpensive ways to get the word out on the program to faculty and staff, as well as to incoming re-entry students. That could enlist further support to reach more students.

## **Summary**

To further the goals and activities of the re-entry committee the LEAP project team recommends the opening of the Get REAL Center fall 2009 in the Transfer Center. When the Library Expansion Project is complete the Center would move into that space.

A fully-funded Center would be staffed by 1 part-time and 3 full-time staff members, and would provide counseling, referral, and networking services. It would also organize activities to provide re-entry students with academic and life management skills, and to encourage them to form support and study groups.

A marketing program has been identified, and budgets developed for several staffing scenarios.