

Community College *of* Philadelphia

The Path to Possibilities™

Recommendation to Restructure the Department of Academic Computing
Judith Gay
June 2008

This document describes two recommendations for restructuring the Department of Academic Computing. First, I recommend moving the reporting function of the Student Academic Computer Centers (SACC) from the Department of Academic Computing to the Learning Lab Department. Second I recommend changing the Academic Computing Department from an academic department to an administrative unit that will report to a new Division of Flexible Learning Options and Academic Technology. These recommendations are based on a review of the roles and responsibilities of the units involved; a review of jobs in higher education; and, conversations with individuals in the College and particularly with members of the Academic Computing Department and with the Department Head of the Learning Lab.

Roles and Responsibilities in Academic Affairs

The retirement of the Executive Director of the Library in Summer 2007, coupled with the almost simultaneous vacancies in the deans positions for Educational Support Services (ESS) and the Division of Adult & Community Education (DACE) created an opportunity to think about whether the organization of Academic Affairs in terms of those three units (i.e., Library, ESS and DACE) was optimally aligned with College needs and strategic directions. An additional issue in thinking about ESS was size. ESS in 2007 was a large division, somewhat lacking in terms of coherence. The division grew over time because of the ability of the previous dean to manage a large number of initiatives. Thus, to address concerns about division size, coherence, and alignment, a small group reviewed unit goals and activities and had a series of conversations with persons assigned to the divisions.

The first step in the process was to look at all of the units. The Library at a community college plays an important role in the academic support of students. Unlike libraries in large universities which may focus primarily on supporting faculty scholarship, the mission of the Library at Community College of Philadelphia is clearly centered on student learning. Likewise, as the title Educational Support Services suggests, the primary function of that division was intended to be academic support of student success. Units such as Academic Advising, the Learning Lab and the Center on Disability are excellent examples of units that are consistent with the concept of student academic support. Such a function is well aligned with a major theme in the College Strategic Plan as well as in the Academic Master Plan -- a student-centered culture.

Some units within ESS, however, upon review, seemed more aligned with supporting education through community partnerships and relationships. Examples are the grant-funded KEYS and Gateway to College Programs. Those units seemed more closely aligned with the community based mission of the Division of Adult and Community Education (DACE).

Three units in ESS, Academic Computing, Audiovisual Services and Distance Education, upon review, seemed to be somewhat of an anomaly. Part of the Department of Academic Computing, the Student Academic Computer Centers (SACC), clearly plays a role in supporting student academic success. The other responsibilities of the Academic Computing Department are more aligned with supporting academic faculty. Audiovisual Services has the potential to be reconceived as a multimedia unit aligned with supporting faculty efforts to use media to support their work. The unit involved with supporting distance education reflects the College's commitment to flexibility in learning options. The activities of these units are better aligned with the idea for a Division of Flexible Learning Options and Academic Technology.

Based on the review process, a plan for restructuring was created. Appendix A identifies the realignment of units as presented to Academic Affairs and other college groups in 2006-2007. At the time of those presentations, considerations related to the SACC were in the early stages and a question mark followed SACC in the presentations. Since that time, further review seems to clearly support the placement of SACC in ESS and its separation from the Department of Academic Computing.

Some of the unit changes have already occurred and support the positive benefits of realigning around the mission, goals and objectives of individual units. For example, the Library is now a part of the ESS division. Conversations among faculty in the division support the new concept of a learning commons – wrapping academic support around students in much the same way that there is conversation of wrapping services around students in a one stop shop.

SACC as Part of the Learning Lab Department

Once it seemed clear that the SACCs fit well within ESS while other activities of Academic Computing were a better fit with a new division tentatively named Flexible Learning Options and Academic Technology, a plan needed to be considered for where to locate SACC. As a unit with instructional aides, SACC needed to be part of an academic department. The two options are Library and Learning Lab. My recommendation is that the SACC report as part of the Learning Lab. Both the Library and Learning Lab have completed unit audits in the past few years. The SACC is actually a good fit for both departments but, having the SACC as part of the Learning Lab seems to create an opportunity for providing greater possibilities for the instructional aides in terms of reconsidering how they interact with students. These ideas were shared with members of the Academic Computing Department and with the department head of the Learning Lab.

Academic Computing as an Administrative Unit

Traditionally academic departments involve disciplines with a focus on teaching and scholarship. The teaching at community colleges is focused on undergraduate students. The activities that are part of the reconceived vision of this unit do not involve the teaching of undergraduate students. Furthermore, a review of jobs for academic computing in the *Chronicle* supports this direction. I discussed the history of the development of academic computing as an academic department with Arnold DiBlasi and with Don Friel. I shared my view of the placement of Academic Computing (minus the SACC) in a new division as an administrative unit with them.

Recommendations

1. Move the reporting function of the Student Academic Computer Centers from the Department of Academic Computing to the Learning Lab Department.
2. Change the Department of Academic Computing to an administrative unit located in a new division, Flexible Learning Options and Academic Technology.

Appendix A
Proposed Division Units

Division of Educational Support Services

Primary Mission: Support for student academic success.

Units:

Academic Appeals	Developmental Education
Act Now	Dual Admissions
Advising	ESL
Assessment Center	Learning Lab
CAP	Library
Center on Disability	SACC
CLC	TRIO SSS

Division of Adult & Community Education

Primary Mission: Support education through outreach and community partnerships.

Units:

Adult Literacy Programs	KEYS
ACE	Lifelong Learning
AIC	New Choices/New Options
Advance at College	Tech Prep
Advanced Tech at College	TRIO Upward Bound
Gateway to College	

Division of Flexible Learning Options and Academic Technology

Primary Mission: Enhance education through technology and creative expansion of learning opportunities.

Units:

Academic Computing	Audiovisual Services
Distance Education	Regional Centers & Neighborhood sites
Weekend College	

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

1700 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130-3991-215-751-8351 · (Fax) 215-496-6188-<http://www.ccp.edu>