BUILDING BRIDGES: THE BASIC SKILLS INITIATIVE
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The development of the Basic Skills Initiative in California mirrors a growing nationwide concern about the ability of colleges to meet the educational needs of students in reading and writing, including ESL, and mathematics. In the past, the institutional perspective has often been that this basic skills instruction needs to occur somewhere else, not at the college level. Community colleges across the country are realizing that we can no longer sidestep this very central part of our mission. The legislative commitment of significant dollars to the Basic Skills Initiative in California reflects that realization.

In May 07, the first regional planning meeting in California for the state-wide Basic Skills Initiative took place at Sierra College. A number of Sacramento City College instructors, counselors, and administrators attended that all-day training. A subset of that group constructed a plan for implementation in Spring 08. With a very short timeline for planning this first phase, the group created a plan to expand the college’s ability to serve basic skills needs in the following areas:

Writing Center
- Increased tutoring services
- Provision of classified support staff
- Instructional support for ESL and English
- Writing Center coordination

Math, ESL, and Reading Labs
- Updating and reconfiguring of the labs to more effectively serve students and accommodate more students

Classroom Interventions
- Providing tutor support in English and Math classrooms using instructor-identified tutors in the content areas
- Providing Counselor support in ENGWR 40 classrooms to consult with students, work with instructors in tailoring instructional time to group needs, and otherwise provide student support

In Spring 08, in addition to the implementations described, the college will be conducting research on the Writing Center and classroom interventions to guide our future efforts. We will conduct information sessions, open forums, and classroom surveys to draw on the expertise of college faculty and counselors, staff, and students in planning Phase 2. In addition to responding as a college to well-documented student needs, we are working together across constituencies and service areas and, in so doing, creating bridges not just for our students but for our campus community, as well.