For this version of the New Legacy Newsletter we’d like to address the issue of math success at Sierra College as it relates to ethnicity. It was quite surprising for us to learn that in 2009 the overall success rates for African American students in Math D, our graduation requirement math, was only 44%. This number is 12 points below the level of success white students have in the same course (56%). This gap is even wider in Math A with African American students having a success rate of only 34% as compared to 57% compared to white students.

Unfortunately this gap is present when students start their career at Sierra College as roughly 25% of incoming white students assess at the Math D level or higher, while less than 15% of African American students assess at this level. So unfortunately, these students start at a lower level and are less successful as they climb the math ladder to college level mathematics, graduation and transfer. This lack of success in math can be a significant barrier to their future college success.

So that’s the problem, what’s the solution? One of the ways in which the New Legacy program is helping the college address this issue is through an innovative new program, called the New Legacy Counselor Assistance Referral Program. This program which is currently being piloted in the Math and English Departments, attempts to serve all students who are having difficulties in these disciplines. The main thought behind the program is to focus on early intervention and provide the additional resources and support a student may need to be successful. At this time faculty from Math and English as well as a number of counselors are participating in this new program.

One bright spot on the math front is that Hispanic students, who have similar assessment numbers to African American students, are faring better when it comes to course success. Hispanic students’ success rates in Math A (54%) and Math D (48%) are only 3% and 8% lower than white students. Still not an acceptable number but clearly these students are not falling as behind as our African American students.

You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand. ~ Woodrow Wilson