

## CHAPTER 4

# CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

Based on an analysis of the college's internal and external challenges, this chapter presents recommendations in four areas essential to the ongoing success of the college:

- Student Access;
- Student Success;
- College Systems; and
- Community Responsiveness.

Each section begins with a summary of the relevant challenges followed by recommendations that are intentionally broad enough to cover the ten-year term of this Educational Master Plan. The specific, measurable steps the college will take to implement these recommendations will be developed in three-year strategic plans, in keeping with the integrated planning process described in Chapter 1. These strategic plans will include specific action steps, timelines, and parties responsible for completing or ensuring the completion of the action steps.

This chapter defines a robust agenda for institutional improvement. The opportunities for progress and the strengths of the college's faculty and staff are equal to the college's challenges. With these recommendations as a guide, the college will take full advantage of those opportunities and strengths.

### Student Access

The Challenge: The college's enrollment, while declining in recent years, has stabilized. However, due to a variety of factors, the college cannot rely on population growth leading to significant enrollment growth.

Population growth in the College of Marin service area is stable and will not lead to a significant increase in enrollment. The college has yet to develop a complete offering of courses and services that would allow students to take advantage of anytime/anywhere delivery of instruction and services or to access on-campus course offerings at non-traditional times (evenings, weekends) on a large scale. On-campus attendance is still required for students to complete general education courses, programs, and degrees and that coursework is offered within a relatively limited time schedule. Over the past five years, several newspaper articles have reinforced the perception that the college's culture is one of conflict, a perception that diminishes the college's reputation.

### Recommendations

**Student Access 1.** Systematically address the reality and the perception that the college has a culture of conflict and mistrust.

**Student Access 2.** Assess and make changes as needed in the class scheduling practices throughout the Marin Community College District, including the consideration of various non-traditional scheduling options, additional distance education offerings, and new career technical education courses and programs to meet business and community needs. Develop, implement and annually assess plans for more effective, accessible scheduling practices.

(Includes:

- Community Responsiveness 5 which states: *Assess and make changes as needed in the class scheduling patterns and practices so that the times, days, and methods of delivering instruction match the needs of commuters and working adults.*); and
- Student Access 4 which states: *Develop, implement and annually assess plans to improve student access, including enrollment at the Indian Valley Campus.*

**Student Access 3.** Support distance education and effective use of instructional technology by providing:

- the hardware and software needed to offer online courses successfully,
- expansion of faculty and student training in an online environment; and
- evaluation of all aspects of distance education and other instructional technology, including assessment of our ADA compliance.

**Student Access 4.** (Note: This recommendation has been eliminated as a separate recommendation; has been combined into Student Access 2.) Develop, implement and annually assess plans to improve student access, including enrollment at the Indian Valley campus.

**Student Access 5.** Develop, implement, and assess a plan to expand outreach activities that involve all segments of the college community and that target high school students, under-represented groups, and growing segments of the county's population.

### Student Success

The Challenge: Many students are not completing their educational plans in a timely manner.

There is wide variation of retention and success rates across programs (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Many students have trouble completing their mathematics and English sequences. The college has yet to develop processes for systematically tracking student progress and success and using that information to intervene at key points in students' matriculation.

## Recommendations

**Student Success 1.** Develop, implement, and evaluate a college-wide plan for student retention and success, including mechanisms to connect SLO assessment to program review.

**Student Success 2.** (Note: This recommendation has been eliminated.) Review and revise the designation of courses into the five student pathways.

**Student Success 3.** Develop, implement, and evaluate a plan for systematically tracking the progress and success of students, with particular attention to students in the general-education, career-technical-education, and basic-skills pathways. Then develop, implement, and evaluate strategies for the use of that information to support effective instruction and improve student success. Ensure that evaluation results feed into the program review cycle.

**Student Success 4.** Improve the coordination of basic skills programs and services by implementing needed changes as identified in the college's Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) self-assessment, such as adjustments in curricular alignment, including curriculum alignment with K-12, assessment procedures, scheduling practices, and support services.

## College Systems

The Challenge: Some college systems are underdeveloped and have not been fully adapted to changing times and current practices.

Several systemic issues have been identified in previous planning efforts. Facilities is one such issue. Although major renovations of facilities are funded through the Measure C bond modernization program, all facilities in need of updating are not currently funded. The Indian Valley campus is underutilized and needs extensive physical rehabilitation and recent increases in enrollment have strained this campus' existing staffing and internal systems. The college also lacks the technological infrastructure and professional development needed to increase distance education and hybrid class offerings. Instructional technology in support of student learning has not kept pace with the level of service and student access to technology available in many local high schools. A research agenda that focuses on student learning is needed in order to fully comply with accreditation standards. Finally, the college has not yet implemented an integrated process for effective educational and strategic planning which is needed to face the challenges over the next decade.

## Recommendations

**College Systems 1.** (Note: This recommendation has been eliminated as a separate recommendation; has been

combined with College Systems 2.) Develop, implement, and evaluate a plan that addresses the physical plant, educational use, and district support of the Indian Valley campus.

**College Systems 2.** Update facilities and develop processes for accountability, including adherence to timelines, and accuracy of deliverables. Develop, complete and implement the COM Facilities Master Plan 2012 that addresses the physical plant, educational use, and District support of both campuses. (Includes College Systems 1)

**College Systems 3.** Prepare, implement, and evaluate a college technology plan that identifies the policies, hardware, software, and training needed to improve student, staff and faculty access to the effective use of technology in instruction, as well as the effective use of technology in general.

**College Systems 4.** Using the college's collaborative processes, develop a research agenda that addresses student learning.

**College Systems 5.** Fully implement the integrated planning process, with special attention to the development of three 3-year strategic plans in support of this educational master plan. Assure that results from SLO assessment and program review data are linked to resource allocation.

**(College Systems 6).** Develop and implement a long-term sustainable financial plan for the District. *(Note: This unlabeled recommendation first appeared in the Strategic Plan 2012-2015 and relates to a superintendent/president's goal.)*

## Community Responsiveness

The Challenge: Rapidly changing community needs require the college to continually assess and respond appropriately.

Individuals within the college participate in advisory committees and local boards and partner strategically with various community agencies and workforce initiatives. However, because there is not a shared, systematic process for this community feedback to become widely known on campus, the college's ability to fully respond is impeded. In addition, many Marin County residents need offerings that fit their work schedules. The College of Marin does not currently provide an array of course offerings during times, days, and methods of delivering instruction that match the needs of commuters or working adults.

## Recommendations

**Community Responsiveness 1.** Develop and enhance communication strategies to solicit business and community feedback. Ensure that this feedback and

business/community assessments are shared and understood campus-wide.

**Community Responsiveness 2.** Strengthen internal processes to respond quickly and appropriately to business and community needs.

**Community Responsiveness 3.** Include the assessment of local business/industry needs in the annual research agenda.

**Community Responsiveness 4.** Conduct ongoing, community-based evaluation of career-technical education programs. Provide information on career-technical-education programs and future opportunities to the College community. Distribute all survey results district-wide via e-mails/the web.

**Community Responsiveness 5.** (Note: This recommendation has been combined with Student Access 2.) Assess and make changes as needed in the class scheduling patterns and practices so that the times, days, and methods of delivering instruction match the needs of commuters and working adults.