

## Chapter 4

### Results of the Student and Community Forums

A student Educational Master Plan forum was conducted at Grossmont College on September 21, 2011 and a second Student Forum was conducted at Cuyamaca College on September 22, 2011. A total of 40 students attended the forums. The students discussed two questions:

- ♦ What is going well, that we should keep?
- ♦ What could we do better? What should we focus on for improvement?

A community forum was conducted on September 22, 2011. Approximately 40 representatives of local businesses and communities attended the session. They responded to three questions:

- ♦ What is the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District known for doing well that we want to preserve?
- ♦ What will our community's educational and training needs be 10, 15, 20 years from now?
- ♦ What else do you want to tell us to inform our Educational Master Plan?

The students and community members agreed that both Grossmont College and Cuyamaca College offer strong academic programs and high quality instruction, and that student engagement and a sense of community are characteristic of both campuses. Students indicated that both colleges offer caring student support services. Community members also noted that the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District has strong relationships with and knowledge of the community.

Students identified several areas that could be a focus of improvement, including class scheduling, transfer agreements, more timely access to counseling, and online programs and services.

*The students and community members agreed that both Grossmont College and Cuyamaca College offer strong academic programs and high quality instruction, and that student engagement and a sense of community are characteristic of both campuses.*

They also expressed concern about the increasing costs of postsecondary education.

In their discussion of the future educational and training needs of district residents, participants in the community forum stressed that students need workplace and higher-order thinking skills, and that the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District needs to be flexible and agile to respond quickly to employers' needs for staff training. Community forum participants also called for more ubiquitous technology and expanded access to college courses across the district. They also noted that the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District is the gateway to the middle class for many district residents, and that the district is a major employer in the region.

Detailed summaries of the results of the student and community forums are presented on the following pages.

### Results of the Student Forums

Students participating in the forums addressed two key questions:

#### *Question 1: What is going well, that we should keep?*

1. ***High quality teaching and academic programs.*** Faculty members, including adjunct faculty, care about and enjoy their subject. They value education, care about their students, and are good mentors. Students appreciated flexible scheduling, open lab hours (including computer labs), faculty office hours, and library services including books on reserve.
2. ***Student support services and resources.*** Counselors care about the students. Students appreciated both academic and career counseling and the transfer and career centers.

Students value having tutoring available, adult re-entry programs, Disabled Student Services and Programs, and scholarships such as Dreamkeeper and Board of Governors fee waivers.

*Community forum participants also called for more ubiquitous technology and expanded access to college courses across the district.*



3. *Campus activities and club involvement*, including the Associated Students.
4. *A sense of community*. Students reported that it is easy to get involved, and that the colleges have a nonjudgmental, welcoming environment.



*Question 2: What could we do better? What should we focus on for improvement?*

1. *Classes and class scheduling*. Students would like to keep class sizes relatively small (although they recognize that this is a funding issue). They noted that the same classes tend to be offered on the same days and at the same times each semester. They would like classes to be offered at different times, on different days, and at night. They would like to have summer school and intersession back. About half of the students said they would be willing to take classes on Fridays or weekends. They would like required classes to be offered at least once a year. They would like the same courses at the two Colleges to have the same names and course numbers.

Students would like more certificate programs and for the district to offer a baccalaureate (BA) degree so they don't have to transfer to a more expensive 4-year school.

2. *Academic programs*. Students would like more certificate programs and for the district to offer a baccalaureate (BA) degree so they don't have to transfer to a more expensive 4-year school. Students would like to have study abroad programs and more department-based tutoring.

3. *Transfer*. Students reported that the colleges do not offer all of the options that are

in the catalog. They would like to see transfer agreements with other community colleges so that students have more options to prepare for their desired baccalaureate program. They would like to see more four-year institutions represented on campus, and for transfer workshops to be available year-round. They indicated that it takes too long to get a meeting with a counselor, and may be scheduled too late to be able to prepare in time for some transfer program opportunities. They were

concerned that they would be unable to transfer their classes to a university, even when the course has the same name and content.

4. *Completing a degree or certificate.* Relatively few of the students attending said they planned to get an associate's degree or a certificate. They indicated that they want the colleges to reduce the number of courses required to get a degree. They would be willing to complete a 60-unit associate's degree as long as they could transfer all of the units and most were in their major. Students indicated that they do not want to use time and money to take extra classes that will not transfer and are not required for a baccalaureate degree. Students also noted that a lot of transfer institutions, particularly those out of state, won't accept 60 units or have limited time frames when students can transfer (such as after the

*Students would like easier and more timely access to counselors.*

first year). Students did not understand that they could earn both a certificate and the associate's degree, and did not see the value of the associate degree if they intended to get a baccalaureate degree.

5. *Counseling.* Students would like easier and more timely access to counselors. They would like the information from counseling to be more consistent. They want online counseling, so that accurate advising on educational planning and course scheduling is more readily available. They thought mandatory orientation for all students would be helpful.

6. *Online programs and services.* Online class scheduling should be more intuitive, and students would like to be able to see their degree plan when they go online to register. All instructors should use a Blackboard online course shell. Students should have more involvement with the professor and other students in online courses.
7. *More co-curricular enrichment opportunities.* Students would like group study rooms and student centers to be expanded so they have more places to meet. They want more places to gather together for recreation (ping-pong, pool, etc.) and to start more clubs.
8. *Communication.* Students would like more interaction with faculty and clearer direction from them. Students would like more opportunities to communicate with the administration, and more opportunities to give this kind of feedback.

9. *Control over cost increases.* Increases in tuition and other costs need to be limited. Students need more information about scholarships, and would like to see more on-campus jobs for students who don't have their own transportation. They would like to have faculty create the materials for classes (rather than require textbooks) so the

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costs are lower. Students who do not have the physical ability to take a full load of classes may not have access to some of the financial aid available.

10. *Other resources.* Classes should be more evenly distributed around campus so that more are closer to the parking lots. Disabled parking is very limited; these students need more access to



short-term visitor parking that people can use to pick them up.

Students would like more public transportation access to campus, particularly via a trolley line. They would like to have an aquatic center, more community access to the gym, and community learning opportunities to use these facilities for a fee, so they can be self-funded.

## Results of the Community Forum

The community forum participants responded to three questions:

*Question 1: What is the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District known for doing well that we want to preserve?*

1. *Strong relationships with and knowledge of the community.* The district's relationships with the community are very strong. The colleges listen to local needs and are well known in the community. The district has strong collaborations and effective partnerships with businesses and the community.
2. *Transfer programs and alignment with K-12.* The pathways between educational segments (K-12 and universities) are seamless. The colleges are the gateway to a four-year college, and do a good job with transfer counseling and the transfer process. The colleges also work well with high school districts, high school outreach, and offer good dual enrollment opportunities for high school seniors.

- 3. *Strong academic programs develop skills to meet community needs.*** The colleges offer unique programs that give students the ability to earn a living. Programs cited as excellent include the police academy, automotive, nursing, horticulture and office professional training. Classes offer professional and personal development opportunities. Specialty programs are not duplicated across the two colleges, and the community knows which ones are at which college. The district offers excellent contract training for companies and classes to let students develop skills and become qualified for advancement in their jobs.
- 4. *High-quality instruction.*** Excellent well-qualified instructors care about the success of every student. A San Diego State University professor reported that GCCCD has the best-prepared transfer students from all the community colleges, particularly in geography and horticulture.
- 5. *Student engagement in college and the community.*** Students have a high level of engagement in their learning. The majority of those in the community who went to Grossmont or Cuyamaca colleges went on to get more education and came back to the community.
- 6. *Campus resources.*** Attractive campuses with new, very functional buildings provide excellent physical accessibility for students and an excellent environment for learning. A high-quality child care center is available, and both campuses have non-smoking policies and awareness of health issues. The district is fiscally responsible and a good steward of public funding.



*Programs cited as excellent include the police academy, automotive, nursing, horticulture, and office professional training.*

**Question 2: *What will our community's educational and training needs be 10, 15, 20 years from now?***

- 1. *Flexibility and agility to meet the training needs of the local community.*** The district must be flexible to respond quickly to training needs of employers. The colleges must offer training and education that addresses clear educational and career pathways and be agile enough to develop new types of career pathways as they evolve and change.

Students should be able to earn short-term certifications that meet employment needs and that require only one or two classes. The colleges should offer more programs in the trades and industrial arts to meet workforce needs. Growth should focus on contract education; GCCCD should be the first place employers look to for contract education. Contract education classes could be made available for multiple small companies rather than programs for just one company through more business partnerships for training, and could be offered in collaboration with other workforce development programs.

*GCCCD should be the first place employers look to for contract education.*

2. **Need for workplace and higher-order thinking skills.** Students need to develop work ethics. Logic and critical thinking skills are becoming more important. Students need to learn to write and speak effectively (not just texting) so that they are prepared to be able to deal with customers in a business setting.

3. **More technology.** The district must adapt to changes in technology. Students are more comfortable in the use of technology as a learning tool than are the instructors. Community members do not want students to have to "dumb it down" in



terms of technology in the classroom and access to learning materials via the Internet, especially if they had access to that technology in grades K-12. The district must develop its capacity in terms of online classes, technology infrastructure, devices, and new materials for publishing, and be ready to reallocate resources as needed to support a changeover to more cost-effective methods (such as iPads with online applications to help reduce the costs of textbooks). To ensure that all students gain computer literacy, the district will need to provide computer lab and library access for students who cannot afford to pay for technology

themselves (the digital divide). Technology-driven classrooms should be part of the vision/mission of the colleges.

4. *Addressing learning needs differently.* To provide better preparation for the global workplace and economy, the colleges need to take a careful look at the traditional majors and take a more cross-disciplinary approach. Teaching strategies need to address student differences in approach and ability to learn, and should include delivering instruction using a cohort-based model.

5. *More extensive assessment.* Community members suggested that the district implement a more

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extensive application process that includes interviews and submission of students' scores on standardized tests as part of their entrance requirements. This will let faculty know the preparation level of the new students.

6. *Student access from remote areas.* The more remote parts of the GCCCD boundary area need more online access through broadband infrastructure so that students from those communities do not have to travel so far for educational services. Basic skills courses should be offered in-person at more remote locations for the population that lives far away from the colleges.

7. *Restricted resources and increasing costs.* State and federal budget cuts are likely to continue and will provide less

public subsidy for higher education. This makes community colleges even more important, so it is critical to expand access.

8. The district needs to collaborate with other community-based organizations to help provide support services to students, help students plan how to cover costs, and to provide students with financial support.

*The more remote parts of the GCCCD boundary area need more online access through broadband infrastructure so that students from those communities do not have to travel so far for educational services.*



9. *Newcomers and English language learners.* An increasing number of people in the communities have low levels of work skills, academic skills, and English language skills. The large percentage of English language learners in K-12 (40% English Learners in K-8, 17% in high school) suggest that large numbers of adults related to them need the same kinds of English language skill development. Large numbers of refugees in East County need English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, respectful acculturation, transition support and career preparation, but receive only short-term (eight month) refugee funding.

Refugees make up about half of the individuals served by local workforce development agencies, which often must send them to expensive private colleges when district ESL courses are not available. Community members suggested that the district incorporate the cultural orientation model utilized for refugee populations into programs for the adult ESL population.

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*Preparation for jobs related to water and energy conservation will become more critical.*

10. *More demand for continuing education.* GCCCD should be the first place employers look to for the continuing education needs of their employees. The district should provide continuing education at the high school level to better prepare students for college; as lifelong learning opportunities for Baby Boomers (such as short-term courses for entrepreneurship for older people); and as short-term courses that support workforce adaptability.

11. *Environmental sustainability and green jobs.* Preparation for jobs related to water and energy conservation will become more critical. Colleges that prepare students for green jobs will have a strategic advantage.

12. *Health care.* More nurses will be needed as the population ages and has more need for palliative care. Nurses will have more autonomy in their jobs in the future, so students need to be able to perform at a higher level. Nursing students must be encouraged to seek advanced degrees.

*Question 3: What else do you want to tell us to inform our Educational Master Plan?*



- ◆ GCCCD is the gateway to the middle class. Don't dumb things down; keep a high quality of programs. Continue to inspire students to become leaders for the future.
- ◆ The district needs to operate with an awareness that GCCCD is a major employer in East County.
- ◆ Look carefully at entrenched programs that have a lot of internal support but that

are not really contributing to needs of the community, and find a way to change them.

*GCCCD is the gateway to the middle class. Don't dumb things down; keep a high quality of programs. Continue to inspire students to become leaders for the future.*