



2011 AUGUST COLLEGEWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE

Common Themes as identified by the Planning Conference Attendees

Highly regarded by the community and well-respected by business and academic partners, Montgomery College has a tremendous opportunity to play an important role in meeting today's changing workforce needs. While the discouraging economic situation, including the slow recovery of job market and high cost of living in Montgomery County, remains a serious threat to our revenue and the student's affordability of higher education, as Chancellor Kirwan stated, "The economic deficit we face today should not be used as an excuse to not hunker down and not meet our responsibility to provide quality education."

At the conclusion of the 2011 August Planning Conference, attendees were asked to identify the common recurring themes from the keynote speaker, panelists, material presented and small group discussion. These themes are grouped into the following eight focus areas to be discussed further by the Collegewide Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

1. Stay Current, Relevant, and Be Responsive to our student needs

It is critical to recognize, anticipate, and response promptly to workforce needs. The College should remain agile and be flexible to the academic offerings – what, how, where, when, and to whom. There should be ongoing needs assessment of students to meet their demands, including student services, delivery modes, and transferability. Our academic offerings and services need to be better, more affordable, and more accessible.

2. Stay Current, Relevant, and Be Responsive to the changes in the community

Things are moving fast and there are rapid changes regarding the demographics in the county and what students/employees might be like in the future. It is important to keep current as well as to forecast the changes in the demographic and economic environment.

3. Leverage Technology

Technology helps students learn better and allows faculty to teach more efficiently. Technology can lower the cost of course delivery and ease the affordability of higher education. Technology can be a motivation for more innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. The College needs to recognize the necessity to keep the technology current for workforce education as well as the millennial student generation. Strategic funding, resource allocation, and administrative support are critical elements to engage faculty, staff, and students to keep up with the ever-changing technology environment.

4. Globalization and Workforce Skill sets

Globalization calls for a tremendous change in landscape in both the workforce demand and higher education. Changes in jobs and skill sets as a result of global economy bring a huge opportunity to higher education. By 2018, 70% of the jobs will require some post-secondary education. The change in skill sets demands for greater alignment and articulation in academic programs, intercultural competency, and flexibility in course scheduling and delivery modes. Employers are seeking workforce-ready employees who are equipped with both the content specific knowledge and the qualitative skills, such as teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills. It is important to embed general education competencies in all aspects of curriculum. Strong student advising, knowledge and skill gap assessment, and early intervention system will keep students moving towards completion of degrees and attainment of workforce skill sets.

5. Curricula Alignment and Teaching Competencies

With the rising cost of higher education, it is ever more important for the students to see that their investment pay off. Programs need to be more aligned with the needs of the workforce and constant collaboration to re-evaluate curriculum to stay current and relevant. In addition, industries need our students ready for work equipped with job specific knowledge as well as the fundamental business and organization skills, such as communication, verbal and written skills, problem solving, teamwork, etc. Outcomes of the programs and curricula should be constantly and clearly communicated, articulated, and assessed to ensure their relevancy.

6. Operational Prioritization and Resource Alignment

The College must learn how to finance the College needs by leveraging our existing resources and prioritizing the competing needs. We must communicate externally and internally regarding what we do and how we all fit together. EVERYBODY at MC, at all levels, has to be involved in coming changes: the entire community has to be involved in discussion, has to have access to key information, and to see themselves as a stakeholder.

7. Professional Development

The College should recognize the need to provide the administrative support for faculty and staff to engage in ongoing professional development and continuous learning opportunities. The College should cultivate an environment that values the employees who accomplish the College's mission to empower student's success, to enrich the community, and to keep ourselves accountable.

8. Partnerships

Nobody can do it by themselves. The importance of partnerships and articulation cannot be emphasized enough – the college needs to collaborate and partner both externally and internally! MC needs greater ongoing partnerships between academia, businesses, and industries to focus and fine-tune our curriculum and processes, to work more closely with employers to create internship and learning experiences, and to collaborate and coordinate both backwards and forwards between educational entities MCPS, community colleges, four-year universities.

Individual responses

Question 4: What are the common themes you've heard from today's program (including keynote speaker, panel discussion, and small group discussion)?

I. Stay Current, Relevant, and Be Responsive to Student Needs

1. College's need to be more responsive to workforce needs
2. Flexibility in what we offer and how it is offered
3. The need for ongoing needs assessment of students
4. Everyone spoke about changing demographics in the county and what students/ employees might be like in the future
5. Communication
6. Communication – external & internal re what we do – how we all fit together
7. The demands of the 24/7 student – student services, delivery modes, transferability
8. Maintain quality or even increase quality
9. Need to more affordable, more accessible, more successful!

II. Stay Current, Relevant, and Be Responsive to the changes in the Community

- a. Things are changing fast.
- b. Keeping current
- c. Embrace change
- d. Change is necessary for a bright future
- e. Flexibility in what we offer and how it is offered
- f. Economic environment and forecasts
- g. Everyone spoke about changing demographics in the county and what students/ employees might be like in the future
- h. Communication

III. Leverage Technology

1. the importance of technology in all professions;
2. IT infrastructure and implementation to support all efforts of improvement
3. The need for up to date, relevant technology – and keeping it up to date regularly
4. Technology—in teaching and in professions—need for currency.
5. Technology, technology, technology adaptation

IV. Globalization and Workforce Skill sets

1. Increased globalization demands for greater alignment and articulation in programs, intercultural competency, flexibility in course scheduling and delivery modes.
2. Importance of global awareness, understanding, partnerships – the rise of middle class, particularly in China and India
3. Global economy

4. Global economics affect us. Economics (the market place) drives education.
5. Global workforce and very diverse demands of work make learning communication skills very difficult.

V. Curricula Alignment and Teaching Competencies

1. Curricula isn't a matter of what we think students need, but what our community, employers, and 4 yr schools think as well;
2. Realigning programs with job deficits
3. Industries need our students ready for work (fundamental business and organization skills, such as communication, verbal and written skills, problem solving, teamwork, etc.
4. Connect the college programs to the needs of the community.
5. There is not a shortage of jobs. There is a mismatch of available of jobs and skills people have.
6. Uncertain times and the longevity of them. Constant collaboration to re-evaluate curriculum to stay current and relevant.
7. Need for integrated curriculum – workplace competencies in content based courses.
8. Critical thinking skills.
9. Importance of transferable skills – traditional and soft skills.
10. certain skills aren't being developed (e.g. communication, conflict resolution, problem solving);
11. Soft Skills should be emphasized like communications and work ethics.
12. Course Development – emphasis on reading, speaking, writing skills
13. Need for skill development on all levels.
14. Stress critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, writing, communication, and math skills.
15. New qualitative skills: technology – writing – communication.
16. Realism needed about skill and job experience levels in recruiting.
17. Need to identify both basic skills and the specific skills for a job.
18. Need for students to have effective communication and thinking skills for workforce and further education.
19. Developmental skills
20. Creative problem solving
21. Differing perspectives presented in first and second panels. Stress in the first panel on learning discrete skills through technology (which can save money and revolutionize time) that the morning panel voiced and the emphasis on “qualitative” skills that people in the workforce stressed – communication skills (“someone who can talk to anyone”), critical thinking, writing – which, so far, are not taught through technology but in sequences in classrooms.
22. Expand Business Speech course SP118 (?) in partnership with employers to help prepare students for workplace speech. Or teach these skills more informally. Or a Con Ed course that could go to workplaces and work with employees to teach communication skills. Do needs analysis to determine what specific jobs need. Podcasts.
23. Online AN classes – podcasts received positive feedback; this delivery may address particular learning style(s).

24. Soft skills
25. Skills gap
26. Need for basic math, writing, and communication skills
27. Programs need to more aligned with the needs of the workforce
28. Work specific language
29. Education and skills deficits
30. New strategies for interactive learning.
31. Cradle to career pathways
32. The transfer program as key—both for the A.A. and the need for students to mature and progress through the B.A.
33. Student engagement infrastructure development needed: Life skills training & education
34. Clarification of job readiness
35. Technology, industry specific technology, current, needing to understand the context of the community outside of the College, look outward! Need sufficient funding and resources for faculty and staff to innovate.

VI. Operational Prioritization and Resource Alignment

1. The new reality is the weak economy. We must deal with it and learn how to finance the College needs.
2. Leverage our existing resources & prioritize
3. Diversity: need to prioritize which of competing groups is the right place to focus
4. Are we in tune with what the needs are? Do we assume too much?
5. Pollard's "less with less:" need to identify core responses to perceived deficiencies in young workforce. Is there a core mission at MC that can address multiple constituencies? Is there a way to identify that core—now MC approach too fragmented.
6. EVERYBODY at MC, at all levels, has to be involved in coming changes: the entire community has to be involved in discussion, has to have access to key information, has to be at the table and to see themselves as a stakeholder.

VII. Professional Development

1. Need to provide ongoing training and continuous learning opportunities for faculty and staff
2. Need to provide resources, time, and support for our faculty and staff to engage in training and professional development (technology, discipline/content, organizational skills, professional growth, etc.)
3. Older workers skills are out-dated and it is impossible for them to catch up.
4. Internal culture matters (Montgomery College) – professional development, understanding how our work helps accomplish the mission from our students' perspectives
5. Need for different teaching pedagogies and methodologies.
6. Teaching methods (modalities) need to change for today's student

VIII. Partnerships

1. The need for greater ongoing partnerships between academia, businesses, and industries
2. Partnership
3. Partnerships
4. Partnerships with industry
5. Partnerships with K-12 and 4-year institutions
6. Improved articulation
7. Importance of partnerships
8. Importance of partnerships and articulation.
9. Partnerships, partnerships, partnerships, change, change, change, MC needs to focus and fine-tune our curriculum and processes, MC need to work more closely with employers to create internship and learning experiences.
10. Partnerships with K-12 AND with four-year colleges: 6+2+2
11. The need for tighter articulation agreements between our programs and 4 year schools
12. Need for multi-way communication among K12, community colleges, four-year colleges, and industry.
13. Collaboration with PK-12, businesses, other higher education institutions.
14. Closer working relationships/partnerships with all---k-12, 4 year, industry
15. Transferring back credits to increase AA degree completion rates
16. Internships
17. Nobody can do it by themselves – **Collaborate and Partner!**
18. The need for collaboration and coordination both backwards and forwards between educational entities 6-12, community colleges, 4 year schools
19. Slow economic recovery – there won't be a big boost from MCPS, which will require us to create more partnerships with business to maintain growth

IX. Others

1. High regard for MC
2. Community Colleges have a tremendous opportunity to play a larger role in meeting the changing workforce needs, given the resources and support necessary.
3. We noted a fairly solid understanding of and respect for the community college.
4. REVENUE
5. We've never experienced an economy like this before – globalized, slow recovery, new variables, world currency. US dividing into 2 separated classes, with different opportunities, skills gaps.
6. "The economic deficit we face today should not be used as an excuse to not hunker down and not meet our responsibility to provide quality education." Kirwin
7. The US no longer tops educationally.
8. Students need to have realistic job/life expectations: re salary, mobility, employment chances, living conditions.
9. Students need more self awareness, understanding of their preferences, career outlooks and support to make this happen.

X. Conference specific comments

1. There wasn't a government representative present to talk about what happens to employees who are no longer needed – what skills do they have and what retraining makes sense?
2. There really wasn't much discussion of impact current economy on government employees
3. Jobs are being created today in the small businesses. We didn't hear from small businesses on the panel.