

ACTION INITIATIVES AND PLANNING THEMES

Note: This material is taken from McIntyre's paper on *Planning Assistance: Findings and Conclusions*. (February 2008). Observations come from the author's work, as mostly contained in his *Internal Scan* (January 2008) and *External Scan* (February 2008). Implications of these *scans* are summarized in the *Findings* paper.

Specific references to the scans and other evidence are highlighted below in dark red for the convenience of the reader.

Classroom Technology

A preliminary review of college facilities, together with discussions at faculty focus groups, suggests a general lack of technology tools in PCCD classrooms – too few stationary or mobile projections systems, smartboards, computer stations/laptops in the classroom or even tables for group work – the equipment situation termed as “pathetic” by one faculty member. Faculty have long since shifted away from simply lecturing to students seated in chairs, it doesn't work well (probably never did), and students expect (well-working) media and prefer to learn proactively and interactively in a hands-on fashion, and (research shows) far more productively in groups than individually.

Specific comments about PCCD are presented in the *Internal Scan*, p.16 and more general comments on pp. 22-23, 37-39 of the *External Scan*. PCCD faculty focus group commentary is key to the analysis.

Moreover, the importance of information technology (IT) in all aspects of today's world suggests that all faculty (part-time as well as full-time) should have access to computers – a laptop or ready access to area(s) with stations. (Purchase of laptops for full-timers is underway.) Arguably also as a matter of PCCD policy, *all* students should have access to computers. Studies show that about six of every 10 community college students already have computers, either laptops, stations at home or their convenient library or cybercafé. Students at PCCD colleges are probably similarly equipped, and, if so, provision should be made for the other four students, possibly through partnerships with hardware vendors.

See again pp. 37-39 of *External Scan*.

Distance Learning

Use of broadcast and interactive TV in California community colleges is declining while online instruction is growing rapidly – up by 371% since 2000 while traditional face-to-face (FTF) instruction has increased by just 2%. The average California community college delivers 6% of its instruction online; PCCD delivers 26 FTES (<1%) this way and if it were to move just to the statewide average would need to enroll about 1,100 FTES online. Arguably, given their locations, PCCD colleges should deliver more by this medium.

The numbers here are discussed in the *Internal Scan*, pp. 12-16. Also see again, *External Scan*, pp. 22-23.

To reduce student transportation (high in the East Bay) and become more competitive (the East Bay has many PSE options, among them many virtual), PCCD should increase its online delivery – just under two dozen online courses in its Spring 2008 catalog – preferably using the *hybrid model* where online classes include an FTF component with the requisite TLC for struggling students and the opportunity to chat with faculty and join a community of student colleagues exists.

East Bay transportation problems, their importance in student costs, and how distance learning can address that are discussed in various places in both *External and Internal Scans*.

There are several options for the online platform, ranging from “outsourcing,” with, say, *Blackboard* to use of *eCollege* to use of an open source approach like *Sakai*, *Moodle* or other of those available “free of charge.” The latter option has the advantage of requiring PCCD colleges to develop in-house expertise, rather than relying on an outside agent.

See again, *Internal Scan*, pp. 13-16. Discussion is based on PCCD's experience, faculty comments, and author's experience with other community colleges.

And since PCCD would be “starting from scratch,” it has alternatives for organizing online instruction that range from the *centralized*, Open College, approach (like Riverside CCD) to the *decentralized* college by college approach. The latter could have college staff (faculty with released time) managing online courses under the auspices of local departments, all coordinated by some key and skilled district staff with facility (hardware, software, training, etc.) where economies-of-scale dictate. Many community colleges have restricted their online efforts to general education, to the exclusion of vocational or workforce skills, but the online method can be spread across the entire curriculum, even to fundamental or basic skills classes - a tricky, but not impossible task. As students gain language and computational literacy, they need to gain information technology literacy.

(Note on the above initiatives: Three out of every four Alameda County voters passed Peralta Colleges' \$390 million Measure A bond on June 6, 2006. Funds from the sale of these bonds are to help renovate aging classrooms,

build new science and technology labs and modernize facilities that are decades old. Priorities #1 and #2 are seemingly among the high-level candidates for allocation of Measure A monies.)

Fundamental Skills

PCCD students are more literate in technology than ever before, but not necessarily more literate in language and computational skills. Roughly four of every five enrolling are assessed with less-than college level skills in English and/or Math. Moreover, faculty observe that today's students seem to have fewer study skills and less time out-of-class for study, along with few time-management skills. Moreover, many faculty, especially in courses without prerequisites, spend a portion of class time not on the course's content, but in teaching students needed basic and study skills. Compounding this problem, one of every five PCCD students has a baccalaureate degree – twice the rate at a typical community college – so that many classes have students with both pre- and post-collegiate skill levels. In addition, PCCD students have diverse learning styles due to their diverse cultural backgrounds, further complicating teaching and learning.

The delivery of fundamental skills – and within that “basic skills” – at PCCD colleges is discussed on pp. 42-48 of the *Internal Scan*. Part of the “context” for basic skills – preparation of local high school graduates – is summarized on pp. 41-42 of the *Internal Scan* and detailed on pp. 13-18 of the *External Scan*. PCCD faculty focus groups provide further evidence.

The set of solutions that will solve the learning skills/styles problem isn't clear. Efforts shown to be successful include accurate assessment and placement, study skills classes, teaching fundamental skills in context (of every discipline), students working in groups, modular skills courses, self-pacing, and student responsibility, but close monitoring, among others. What is clear is that faculty professional development on how to address skill deficiencies and learning style differences can be helpful as can “classroom research” to assess the specific are varying needs and capabilities of students. Earlier intervention with students – in high, or even middle, schools appears essential in PCCD's situation; that is, relatively low feeder high school completion rates.

Retention and Success

This theme involves researching, selecting, implementing, and evaluating packages of strategies/best practices (known to work) in assessment (in and out of class), counseling, academic follow-up, placement, after-PCCD follow-up, etc. And, determining which students need these services. Recent study shows that statewide, in California community colleges, 1/3 of credit students are exempted from orientation, three of every 10 from assessment, and one of five from counseling. Less than half of those directed to counseling actually receive services. (Peralta figures probably exceed these statewide numbers because of its higher-than-average percentage of students already with degrees – 23% vs. 15%.) The difficulty of improving counseling, not surprisingly, derives largely from scarce staffing. Statewide, the ratio of counselors to students is 1:1,900 (at PCCD colleges, it's 1:.....); a Counseling Task Force recommends 1:900; and a recent Carnegie Report recommends 1:300.

Evidence for this theme comes from a variety of sources, including the State's Chancellor's Office, as well as PCCD focus groups and commentary in the *Scans*.

This work relates closely to the theme of “basic or fundamental skills” and might even be tied to that, recognizing that PCCD colleges are already working on the issue. As part of this, the notion of bona fide and common teaching/learning labs for English, Math and certain other disciplines with tutors and study aids – at each of the colleges – should be considered for funding from Measure A. (These facilities really work!)

English as a second language (ESL)

Current patterns in which PCCD area population growth is made up of roughly equal parts of natural (births less deaths) and foreign immigration – less losses to Contra Costa County and other domestic locations – are likely to continue short of a significant, but unlikely change in immigration law. Population projections over the next two decades show that area population growth will be made up of Asians and Hispanics, less declines in African Americans and Whites, along with modest growth in other groups. The consequence of these trends is a continuing significant demand for English as a second language (ESL) training by PCCD colleges.

Demographic trends pertinent to this discussion are detailed in the *External Scan*, pp. 6-13.

All four colleges offer robust and growing programs with large class section sizes (averaging 30) counterbalanced by lower-than-average 7.7 section per-year faculty loads for an average productivity of 29.8 FTES:FTEF ratio. All work is taught in the credit mode and there is concern that lack of mid-level non-credit ESL offerings at PCCD colleges may prevent the transition of many area individuals from K-12 (adult schools) to PCCD and postsecondary education. Other concerns have to do with integrating ESL contextually into all disciplines as appropriate (particularly workforce training or vocational ESL), and difficulties recruiting ESL faculty. In any case, the marketing and delivery of ESL should be allocated sufficient PCCD resources if the language needs of its community are to be adequately-served.

Most of the above information is described in the *Internal Scan* (pp. 47-48) with qualitative observations derived from PCCD staff meetings and focus groups.

Community and Neighborhood Centers

Preliminary analysis of PCCD's market penetration (enrollment/population cohort or MP) shows substantial differences in both level and recent change by neighborhood and community across the service area. The formerly high MP area around Merritt College has declined rapidly. Areas like Emeryville and Berkeley West with formerly average MP rates are increasing rapidly while others like Piedmont and Kensington report low and rapidly decreasing rates. Future population growth will shift from South Oakland to North Oakland and Berkeley. With continued growth, BCC will be fully occupied within several years. And community focus groups call for PCCD to do more outreach, more "Town and Gown" activities, and with accessible job-training partnerships.

This analysis draws broadly from the *External Scan*, market penetration or "PCCD-going" analysis (pp. 28-40 of the *Internal Scan*), tours of district facilities, and community/staff focus groups.

These arguments all suggest more PCCD community or neighborhood centers. Not only beyond BCC in the northern area, but in other areas as well. Other than Merritt College's Fruitvale Center, PCCD colleges have few outreach/off-campus centers or operations. Centers can focus on specific training like in Fruitvale, serve underserved niches in specific neighborhoods, and/or be located at worksites for specific job training partnerships (more on this elsewhere). Or, for those 55+, at Senior Centers. Churches and K-12 schools also can serve as accessible sites for instruction and other educational services.

Enrollment Management

Enrollment management (EM) at most community colleges is often limited and efforts at one component often neglect counteracting efforts or trends in other components, with surprising enrollment consequences that are surprising but entirely logical. For instance, efforts at better marketing, if in the face of student price (tuition and fee) increases and possibly even budget and section cutbacks may be successful, but will not appear so because enrollments are reduced by other factors. Overly limited EM strategies like just FTES or productivity goals, lack the necessary comprehensive analysis and deployment.

PCCD access and enrollment management are discussed in some detail in the *Internal Scan* on pp. 17-28.

EM strategic tools include: *marketing, pricing, enrolling, instructing, retaining, student life, and follow-up*. Obviously there is some overlap with other planning themes. However, an EM Plan – with its goals and strategies for their achievement – should incorporate policies and practices in all these areas and, if possible, provide enrollment simulations (in the best way PCCD staff can). With an appropriate model, actual enrollments can be analyzed, strategic consequences sorted, and strategies evaluated – to be continued or revised based on their success (failure) and changes to enrollment goals – not least to inform the budget process about areas for changed allocations. Also important for PCCD EM is an effective division of labor between the district office and the colleges, with appropriate branding and collaborative effort(s).

Intervening early with K-12 students

Poor persistence rates in PCCD's feeder high schools along with projections of a downturn in K-12 enrollments and graduates following 2008, suggest that for PCCD colleges to serve their communities, particularly the younger component that tends to enroll in general education for transfer, they (the colleges) must partner with high schools to inform and interest more students in preparing for post-secondary education (PSE), be it for transfer or for more immediate job training. While PCCD area high school graduates appear better prepared than most such students elsewhere in California, fewer graduate from PCCD feeder high schools – two of every five 9th graders in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) do not make it to graduation.

The preparation, con-current enrollment and transition of students from PCCD's local area high schools are examined on pp. 16-17 and 41-42 of the *Internal Scan* and pp. 13-18 of the *External Scan*.

Early intervention efforts may vary from counseling and engagement as early as in middle schools to counseling and courses taught at the high schools for college credit by college faculty to enrollment by high school students at PCCD colleges when they are capable of performing the academic work, sometimes by their junior or senior year. Of PCCD students in 2000, 6.3% were enrolled concurrently in K-12 high or adult schools (substantially higher than the statewide average of 4.6%). Like other California community colleges, PCCD colleges have since reacted to changed funding for these students and now enroll just 4.6% concurrently, but the proportion should grow as the colleges increase their intervention efforts. Some other states report much higher concurrent enrollments. In Iowa, for instance, concurrent high school students comprise about one-fifth of community college enrollments.

Campus Climate and Student Life

If PCCD colleges are to competitively enroll younger students – most of whom enroll to complete their lower division general education in preparation for transfer – they (the colleges) must, among other things, create an inviting environment that replicates as much as possible the lower division in- and out-of-class ambience of a four-year college or university. Obviously, without dorms, all students commuting, most working (four of every five), and many with dependents, this is difficult.

And, given PCCD's older student population, the effort should be to create a collegiate atmosphere for all students, not just the young, full-timers, but also those older with families, through activities – clubs, government, intramurals, forums, functions and the like – along with inviting “commons” areas where students can learn, study, gossip, lounge, eat, hang, “whatever” – areas that encourage students to “stick around” after class and engage with friends, colleagues and faculty. A number of four- and two-year colleges have recently constructed an effective *student learning commons* for this purpose. At present, Merritt, Laney and Berkeley City (even in its new building) appear to lack such areas. And as for Alameda, who knows? We'll have to wait until the construction “dust” settles to figure that out.

Another aspect of student life, student health, needs consideration. Few support services are available at PCCD colleges for the physical and/or mental health, not to mention personal, problems of students. Likewise, lack of adequate food and bookstore operations can be a factor in recruiting and retaining students.

Observations on campus life above are derived from visits to the four PCCD college campuses; discussions with PCCD staff, students, and community focus groups; and commentary in the *Internal Scan*.

Niche Marketing

Community colleges tend to market too broadly and generally; that is, typically-small marketing budgets are stretched across general efforts through radio, TV, newspapers, direct-mail brochures, course schedules, and the like that are directed to most, if not all in some cases, area residents. There is little research on how successful these efforts may be. In any case, PCCD should try efforts directed at specific niches: less-than 25 year-olds who require training for a first (real) job. 25-54 year-old workers who have recently become unemployed and need skills for a new job or who, if still employed, want skills for promotion. Entrepreneurs who own their own business, but need “back office” skills. 55+ year-olds, some of whom need workplace skills (often information technology), others who need survival or avocational skills.

This commentary draws from PCCD “Demographics” in the *External Scan* (pp. 6-18) and from “Access” and “College-Going” in the *Internal Scan* (pp. 17-40).

Working with employers or other partners, PCCD colleges can tie these clientele niches to likely jobs and devise appropriate marketing strategies to appraise the niche of the opportunities – in high schools, malls and fast food establishments and via, say, PDAs for the young; job sites and employment agencies for workers; TV, senior centers, volunteer organizations, churches and other like vehicles for those older. Faculty, counselors, and marketers are all generally involved, with results always evaluated for decisions about further or revised efforts. Data on market penetration for clientele niches by community or neighborhood area (ZIP Code areas) should inform marketing strategies as well.

Alternative Delivery: Non-credit, community and contract education

PCCD colleges rely almost entirely on regular credit instruction (generating FTES which, in turn, are supported from the State General Fund). Very little (less than 1%) of PCCD activity is generated through non-credit instruction, which also generates FTES, though at a lesser support rate. Non-credit classes, however, are a viable delivery mechanism for the many foreign immigrants and others PCCD should train in basic/fundamental skills, ESL (see above), citizenship, VESL, and other skills for job performance and for, say, seniors 55+, where credits are less important than knowledge and skills. While PCCD's non-credit instruction is far below the average statewide (8%), only San Francisco of Bay Area community colleges offers a substantial non-credit program at its Centers.

This material draws broadly from the *External Scan* and from “Delivery” in the *Internal Scan*, pp. 8-17.

PCCD's activity in community service and contract education – both delivered at the cost of education, the former from enrolled students fees and the latter from employers or other partners – is just one-fourth that of the typical community college and far below that of colleges at both Chabot-Las Positas and San Francisco in the Bay Area. PCCD community focus group participants call for more PCCD partnerships with local area agencies, NGOs, and private firms that could involve contracts, public and private grants, and in-kind sharing of scarce resources. At present, PCCD colleges do little of this and any expansion will require “entrepreneurial” staff, possibly at the district

level, to aid college faculty and staff in the time-consuming activity of identifying opportunities, making the appropriate contacts and applications, implementing the initiative(s), and generally monitoring the work.

More community service classes – less than 50 annual FTES are instructed this way now at PCCD colleges – would provide the opportunity to differentially-price PCCD students at or near the cost of education in those cases where most students enrolling can afford to and would pay the fee. This is often the case among older students and obviously among those with higher incomes..

Programming

Important to PCCD is the research, analysis, planning and implementation that goes into the identification of needed new programs, along with the expansion and reduction of existing programs. This is an on-going process and is informed by Unit Plans, Program Reviews, and data from the McKenzie Report, EDD, ABAG, local public agencies, and other such relevant sources.

These observations are discussed in detail under “Learning” in the *Internal Scan*, pp. 40-68.

To effectively program its curriculum, PCCD’s role appears to be three-part: (1) as a major “player” in area economic development, positioning itself for emerging industry sectors like logistics, green technologies, art and digital media – often via partnerships, (2) responding to the area labor market, giving priority to high demand area job sectors like health, education, and public service where most of the are from retirements (rather than sector growth), and (3) the enrollment “manager and marketer” to potential student niches, informing them about opportunities and matching them to and training them in appropriate job skill clusters for gainful employment. Besides its less-than-baccalaureate workforce training, this PCCD responsibility applies also to transfer and baccalaureate level jobs where the greatest local demand is for general managers, teachers, computer software engineers (both applications and systems software), accountants, auditors and civil engineers.

Scheduling

There is little question that PCCD colleges can be more competitive and provide greater service to area residents through more flexible and smarter scheduling. The ideas are to fit courses better with students’ working and family schedules and to reduce their cost of transportation. The fit with students’ schedules outside class depends upon the niche. Evening courses have always served working residents, but probably not non-residents commuting in for work from outside the district and who might prefer classes at noon or just after work. One of every four PCCD students resides outside the district’s “boundaries,” and market penetration to the south (San Leandro, San Lorenzo, and Hayward) is increasing, though (curiously given BCC’s new building) to the north in El Cerrito and Richmond it is decreasing. Even so, many students are enrolling in BCC’s Saturday curriculum (where most work is taken online) or in its weekend curriculum because of the convenient fit.

This discussion ties together several “threads” of evidence on East Bay transportation (*External Scan*, pp. 20-22), PCCD colleges’ “delivery” (*Internal Scan*, pp. 8-40), and PCCD colleges’ “learning” (*Internal Scan*, pp. 42-68).

Two ways of reducing student costs for transportation – the largest single cost of attending PCCD colleges – are available. One, the use of distance learning as well as face-to-face instruction in a (hybrid) class is discussed in a separate theme. The advantage of coming to campus once every week or two, rather than three times per week, and doing the balance of course work online is obvious. Another way to reduce student transportation costs is to schedule classes with fewer (longer) meetings, perhaps fewer days per week and even at times when the commute eases – mid morning, mid-afternoon, and after, say, 7pm.

To efficiently deliver its courses, PCCD generally offers its high demand general education curricula – Math, English, basic natural and social sciences and the like – at all four colleges, while offering moderate demand and high cost curricula – like health and many workforce training programs (labs and shops with low class sizes) – at just one college. The trade-off is to constrain PCCD’s costs of instruction, but at the expense of the students’ private costs of transportation. (This may be illustrated by the fact that one in every ten PCCD students attends two or more of district colleges at once. One in four eventually attend two or more colleges if they persist over more than three years.)

It may be appropriate to identify those programs and disciplines for which student demand is sufficient that their courses might be taught productively at more than one college – among the possible candidates: administration of justice, certain health professions, community and public service, culinary, environmental technologies, and media arts.

Differential pricing of students

This involves on-going efforts like securing more and more-timely distributions of financial aid to students. Preliminary evidence suggests that PCCD colleges secure relatively high amounts of student financial aid, but that staffing limitations may prevent packaging and timely delivery.

Estimates of the cost of student enrollment at PCCD college(s) – one in four students attends more than one college simultaneously – appear in the *Internal Scan*, p. 19-21.

Student tuition and fees represent just 7% of the cost for PCCD students and are routinely waived for low income students. The larger costs attributable to enrollment are for transportation, books and supplies, and child care – apart from the opportunity costs of students' time in class and study (which may prevent them from needed work) – not to mention the costs of housing and food.

A recent study by the Institute for College Access and Success found that only one of every three California community college students (compared to 45% nationally) applies for financial aid grants, work-study or loans, even though an estimated two of every three are eligible. Thus, the importance of informing students, made all the more difficult by the multi-lingual, multi-cultural character of PCCD students. In addition, help with applications processing and timely delivery of aid are crucial, but depend on staffing, which is limited.

For low income students, efforts described elsewhere in these planning themes to reduce the cost of transportation through scheduling, distance learning and other delivery techniques can be powerful tools in improving their access to PCCD colleges. And, at the other, higher end of the income spectrum are those student niches who because of their socio-economic status may be able to afford and/or are willing to pay the cost of their education or near to it or have their tuition subsidized by employers and/or other interested agencies. These students may be served in community or contract education as discussed elsewhere.

Partnering with area colleges and universities

PCCD colleges' close proximity to many four-year colleges and universities in the East Bay offers the opportunity for partnerships that should ease barriers to the transfer transition for PCCD students. The character of these partnership arrangements can vary substantially. Some community colleges, like Canyons in Santa Clarita, host several four-year schools – public and private – who offer popular BA and MA degree programs on its (Canyon's) main campus. Other community colleges, like Highline in the Puget Sound of Washington state host upper division work by one school – in this case, Central Washington University, with much of the work tied to CWU's main campus, over 100 miles to the east, to other CWU centers through an effective ITV operation. BCC currently offers courses on the UCB campus and is designing in-service training for UCB staff.

Discussion here is based on the review of “competitors and collaborators” in the *External Scan*, pp. 40-41.

Arrangements with East Bay four-year colleges and universities that encourage and ease transfer for potential PCCD students will make its colleges more competitive and further guarantee a viable transfer function in the face of the predicted decline in numbers of PCCD service area young students progressing through feeder high schools after 2008.