

VENTURACOLLEGE

SET YOUR COURSE

Board of Trustees
Ventura County Community College District
255 W. Stanley Avenue, Suite 150
Ventura, CA 93001

September 23, 2013

Dear VCCCD Board of Trustees,

Thank you for soliciting feedback on the VCCCD Master Plan from various constituents. I recently began working at Ventura College (VC) as a Research Analyst for the Title V *Velocidad* grant, which aims to improve Latino student course completion and university transfer. Previously, I was a research associate for UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute. I am unable to attend your meeting this evening; my intention here is to contribute to the creation of a Master Plan that is truly effective for helping students achieve their goals and in helping the local communities remain strong and vibrant. My concerns and recommendations regarding the latest draft of the Master Plan pertain to 1) College's statuses as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and 2) Strategic Goal #1 "Increase access and student success" as it pertains to the District and College's roles, as well as the inferred use of the CCC Success Scorecard for institutional evaluation and its' method for calculating success rates. Thank you in advance for considering my perspectives.

Topic One: Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

Approximately 50 percent of all VCCCD students indicate a Hispanic ethnicity, at least two of the three colleges are designated Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) receiving federal grants to improve Hispanic student success, and all three colleges enroll over 25 percent Hispanic students.

Concern: The VCCCD Master Plan does not specifically identify college's HSI designation, or this student population, despite the demographics of the district. However, it is not surprising that a focus on this population may not have risen out of the VCCCD Master Plan development process given that recent research shows HSI's often do not adopt an organizational identity as "Hispanic-serving."

Recommendation: I would encourage the incorporation an HSI identity and/or acknowledgment of this population in the broader language of the Master Plan so that it might intentionally and explicitly guide how the goals are pursued.

Topic Two: Strategic Goal #1 "Increase Access and Student Success"

Concern: In Goal #1, there is no explicit mention of increasing the effectiveness of each College and/or the District in supporting students' success as they access educational opportunities. This gives an unintentional appearance of an assumption that increasing students' access to opportunity will automatically lead to increased success, without the District or Colleges making changes to improve student's likelihood of succeeding. Although specific objectives under Goal 2 in the appendix address this (e.g. professional development to increase faculty, staff, and administration's effectiveness in helping students succeed), it seems critical to make this clear at the macro-goal level.

Recommendation: I would encourage the re-incorporation of language that references the role of the District and Colleges in increasing student access and success into Goal #1.

Concern: Strategic Goal #1 references the CCC Student Success Scorecard as a performance evaluation system to track student success; while the intention of this tool is meritorious (to look at disaggregated student success measures), it appears that the way cohorts are methodologically constructed may not ideally be suited for college evaluation purposes. The definitions used to determine which students are included in various cohorts require retrospective establishment of those cohorts, based upon student enrollment behaviors. For example, for the completion rates, persistence rates, and 30 units rates, students are only included if they were “first-time students with a minimum of 6 units earned who attempted any Math or English in the first three years and achieved [the respective] outcomes within six years of entry” (CCCCO, Methodology for College Profile Metrics, pp. 3-5). That is, the CCCCCO Scorecard only includes students who meet various milestones within a given time period, who are by definition more likely to meet subsequent success milestones. Peter Riley Bahr’s original research appears to underlie the CCCCCO Scorecard; Bahr identified six clusters of students based upon similar enrollment patterns, only two of which were likely to complete. It seems that the CCCCCO Scorecard methodology may only account for these students who are more likely to complete, rather than also incorporating students who may have intentions to complete but who do not make significant progress towards their goals. This means that the CCC Scorecard figures may severely under or over-represent how well a college is doing in a given area for a given racial or ethnic group.

Recommendation: If the CCC Scorecard is to be used as an evaluative tool, it should be considered alongside longitudinal institutional data that is more comprehensive. A more useful analysis for institutional evaluation might be longitudinally examining student success in a disaggregated fashion for *entering* cohorts to “catch” students who intend to complete but do not make significant progress toward completion. However, the institutional research capacity (technological and human resources) at the local colleges is not adequate to sustainably generate longitudinal reports for entering cohorts, which has become apparent through my work on VC’s Title V *Velocidad* grant. We are partnering with USC’s Center for Urban Education (CUE) in their EquityScorecard™ process to construct and track *entering* cohorts of students to examine disaggregated longitudinal data on student success. A methodology suggested by The RP Group might also be considered (see “Helping Students Identify Pathways” -<http://www.rpgroup.org/rpsearch/results/taxonomy%3A128>). I would therefore recommend an evaluation of technological and human resources should the district desire to look at longitudinal data for entering cohorts as part of an evaluation process for each college. This deficiency in institutional research capacity relates in content to issues that may be addressed under Strategic Goal #3.

Again, my hope and intentions are that the District and Colleges increase in our effectiveness in meeting the needs of our students and communities. Thank you again for providing the opportunity for various constituents to partake in this iterative planning process. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to converse further.

Respectfully,

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