

Summary Notes of the
Joint Retreat of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Cabinet
July 30 & 31, 2019

Facilitated by Nicki Harrington, Ph.D.; Senior Consultant, Collaborative Brain Trust

Day One

▪ Opening Remarks and Welcome, President Mabry

Retreat as a way to build an integrated planning model; the fabric of MCC with “warp” and “weft” joined for strength and durability

▪ Overview and Expectations, Nicki Harrington

Points to consider about the process – building consensus about priorities among participants at retreat (and therefore the ability to foster consensus throughout the strategic planning process);

Questions for conversation and reflection:

What is working well?

What could be enhanced?

- ✓ Commitment of staff
- ✓ Nimble, innovative
- ✓ Mission focused on students
- ✓ Entrepreneurial
- ✓ Open dialogue
- ✓ Community resource
- ✓ Innovative teaching strategies
- ✓ Integrative learning practices
- ✓ Continued alignment with University
- ✓ Student engagement
- ✓ Dynamic faculty, stretching beyond instruction to serve students

Expectations:

- ✓ That all MCC constituents are heard and valued - the human infrastructure in the process
- ✓ Maps & Pathways - Help students understand Strategic Plan so we can help them back
- ✓ Find ways to support students without fee increases; finding new revenue streams
- ✓ Use Strategic Plan as vehicle for working with Foundation
- ✓ How to have an informed dialogue and have a shared vision
- ✓ Consensus around priorities
- ✓ Use of data for decision-making
- ✓ Customer service and coordinating internally to show college values students and support them – to support persistence
- ✓ How to prioritize all the ideas so we’re all working in the same direction
- ✓ To learn how strategic planning works with shared language and methodology
- ✓ How to implement strategic planning at the department level
- ✓ Idea generation

- ✓ Resiliency for the college
- ✓ Change + opportunities
- ✓ Collaboration with colleagues
- ✓ Broad vision for the college
- ✓ New ideas for technology + enrollment planning
- ✓ Integration of initiatives/align varied efforts across the college
- ✓ Integrated planning methodology
- ✓ Everyone's ideas of direction for the college
- ✓ Alignment of internal and external demands
- ✓ Incorporation of student voices and their needs
- ✓ Connections with external partners
- ✓ Public relations
- ✓ Next "big thing" MCC will do based on changing student demographics
- ✓ Tools to better communicate the college's goals (internally & externally)
- ✓ Serving under-represented students better
- ✓ Better execution of plan; how to operationalize and align resources
- ✓ Celebration of 50th Anniversary with messaging
- ✓ Bringing many planning efforts together
- ✓ MCC identity and what we are known for
- ✓ Aligning academic programs with workforce needs
- ✓ Learn more about different departments' needs
- ✓ Support student continuum for whatever their goals are
- ✓ How to overcome image/stigma to increase enrollment

- The role of Strategic Planning:

Is it useful?

Do Strategic Plans move the needle?

Need guideposts - measureable outcomes and metrics *critical to show system change

Aligned with state accountability measures, are there gaps with MCC's strategic plan – need a crosswalk between state performance measures and MCC's outcomes

Different visions for different groups – President, administrators, faculty

- Best Practices

Clear process, timeline, and responsibilities

Transparency, inclusiveness, and well-communicated

Responsive to students and communities

Data and evidence informed; outcomes focused and results oriented

Future oriented

Modeled by college leadership

Used in all activities

- Pitfalls
 - Insufficient or narrow data
 - Too internally focused
 - Old assumptions
 - Not mindful of demographic or other trends; need to disaggregate data
 - Lack of engagement of all stakeholders
 - Lack of implementation with timelines, responsible parties, measurable outcomes, etc
 - Not monitoring progress
 - Not making adjustments raising questions about what do results mean?

- Review of planning
 - Master/institutional level plan, monitored quarterly and revised annually
 - Annual priorities for the master plan, identified and rolled out at Convocation
 - All activities focus on priorities for that year
 - Why doesn't progress occur? will have a mechanism to address

- The Need for Common Language
 - Clear and discrete language
 - Avoid confusing and duplicative labels and names for planning
 - Written handbook, glossary of terms
 - Multiple ways to access information; repeat in different style and modalities
 - Consistent use of college documents, available to all
 - Include strategic plan and its importance at on-boarding of employees, discuss at department meetings, etc.

SAMPLE Planning Language

President = Vision, purpose/Strategic Directions

Strategic Planning Steering Committee = Strategic Plan

- 1.) Goals (Breakthrough)
- 2.) Objectives (Institution-wide)
 - Implementation Plan (Operational)
- 3.) Priorities (Annual)
- 4.) Workplans (Division and Department)

- Clarifying Planning

Different types – Long range vs. short-range . . . or medium range
 Incremental improvements vs. transformative change

To some degree reflects where you are in the life cycle or organizational phase

MCC in the fifth decade, a mature institution with long time staff turn-over and demographic shifts, re-making itself –aligned with societal change in the workforce, technology, demographics . . . “who are we?”

Generally every 5 years, do a “deep dive” on the college and the environment/region – gathers much broader data and evidence

Keep in mind: Strategic vs. Operational Planning and Integration of Planning Efforts

- Information and Communications Pathways

Ways to disburse information (1 way) vs. communication (2 way)

Communication – dialogue, input & feedback

Respond to different communication and learning styles, and preferences
i.e. asynchronous (can access any time of day 24/7)

Keep things brief, with links for more information

How do we communicate?

- Talking to people (supervisors and co-workers/students),
- Email,
- Meetings – FSA, Union, staff and department, Deans, Chairs
- Newscaster,
- MCC website/App,
- All-college professional days
- Middlesex Connector,
- Profiles,
- Facebook/Social media,
- Newspaper,
- FSA and FSA website,
- Adjunct Junction,
- President’s Forum,
- Publications/reports,
- “Grapevine”,
- Colleagues – internal and external,
- Boards, committees, working groups,
- Professional organizations

- Science and Art of Strategic Planning

Science reflected in logical, sequential presentation:

- Parent plan w/ cascading plans
- Accountability and responsibility
- Implementation and roll-out

Art reflected in buy-in and trust:

- Inclusion
- Transparency
- Distribution

- Communication
- Engagement and modeling
- Character, advocacy

▪ Using Data and Evidence Effectively

Quantitative (measurement) vs. Qualitative (story, leads to further questions/queries)

Internal data/information:

Institutional Research

Students - listening sessions and focus groups, CCSSE, surveys related to programs (Early Childhood Ed, student participants on committees . . . importance of sharing lived experience of constituents

External data/information:

DHE performance measures (compare our performance in the context of the sector), workforce partners (Regional Blueprint), economic indicators, k-12 enrollments and district profiles, city data, non-profit planning (community action agency), industry scans, advisory committees, etc

How does college engage its constituents?

Data Synthesis

Inductive reasoning

Identify themes from stakeholders (surface repeatedly) and trends from data (patterns) generate planning assumptions (don't know but are assumed depending on what we are looking at) . . . emerge from data

i.e. what trends drive community colleges, how do we get ahead of these trends?

Planning assumptions impact decision-making (i.e. emphasis and budget)

Notable trends:

- Enrollment trend across the system,
- Unknown state funding,
- K-12 demographics in feeder communities,
- Cost increases and free community college conversation,
- Growth in high demand fields - health, IT, cybersecurity,
- Importance of vocational/technical high schools,
- Food and housing insecurity,
- Growth in cybersecurity, cloud computing, mobile technology
- Grad rates have risen but persistence and retention is flat – why, who, how?
- Continued demand for healthcare workforce,
- Unemployment rate below 3%,
- Changing trends in marketing,
- National economy,

- Career opportunities for students,
- How do we attract students, i.e. get them and keep them?
- Generational preferences of students - new, continuing, part-time, fulltime, etc

Assumptions:

- Less state funding more reliance on entrepreneurial (grants),
- Increased financial pressure on students,
- Financial wellness and helping students develop financial pathways,
- DHE Equity Framework,
- New funding opportunities in high demand programs,
- Find new and innovative markets,
- Accountability for competition,
- MassHire Regional Planning Blueprint,
- Future of work is changing, i.e. robotics, augmented reality,
- Future changes in the delivery of education, what is going to follow online – next iteration,
- Growth in new models of Dual Enrollment, Early College, Early Childhood Education,
- Adult population, how do we attract them?
- Influencing industries to accept AS degrees (i.e. acute care nursing),
- Stronger tech school collaborations (i.e. Advanced Manufacturing),
- Increase in students presenting mental health issues,
- Declining emphasis on Liberal Arts in favor of STEM and immediate job opportunities,
- Minority and immigrant students are the fastest growing populations
 - Would examining language barriers impact enrollment, retention and completion?
 - How do we align services to meet the needs of changing demographics?
- Career exploration an decision-making, “purpose first”
 - How do we get students who are undecided regarding a pathway, and in a timely manner?
- As we shrink, what do we offer – where/when/how?

Day Two

- Critical features of strategic planning
 - ✓ Data and evidence (avoidance of bias),
 - ✓ Use of trends,
 - ✓ Value process of developing the plan,
 - ✓ Acknowledge and use the plan as a living document – importance of this and clear process for how to use it in this way

Let evidence and data lead the way, rather than revert to the familiar

Use existing structures to gather information – FSA committees, front line staff input (Community of Practice for administrative assistants)

Confirm Strategic Directions, through Goal Teams and use of discovery process to lead to the development of objectives

- ✓ Good ideas are the result of a selective process

- ✓ Strategic Planning as a tool for productive dialogue at College
- ✓ Asking the right questions, strategic data gathering and development of facilitated questions
- ✓ Deliberate integration of Strategic Planning into all departments, individuals need to see their role in the plan

Current Planning Efforts

- Enrollment Management & Retention Plan
- Capital Plan, DCAMM
- Classroom and Student Space Planning
- Facilities
- Grant projects - Title III, AANAPISI
- 25 Live Rollout
- BUG, Banner system
- IT Master Projects
- Dental Lab Renovation
- Biotech Lab/building
- Aspire Campaign/IA Plan for Development
- Learning Management system (Blackboard) integration with Banner
- ADA/Accessibility
- Diversity and Equity Plan
- Procurement Process Review
- Testing Space Upgrades
- Program reviews for Academic and Student Affairs
- Business Process Review
- Student Affairs Plan
- Marketing and Communications Plan
- Corporate and Community Ed plan
- Fellowship Plan (International Travel)
- Guided Pathways/AAC&U Plan
- Library Plan
- Course Schedule
- Mass Transfer Plan
- NECHE projections
- Professional Development Plan
- Budgeting and Financial Plan
- UML Partnerships
- Program Accreditation Plan
- Various department plans
- 50th Anniversary
- Assessment Committee Plan
- DHE priorities
- Cabinet priorities

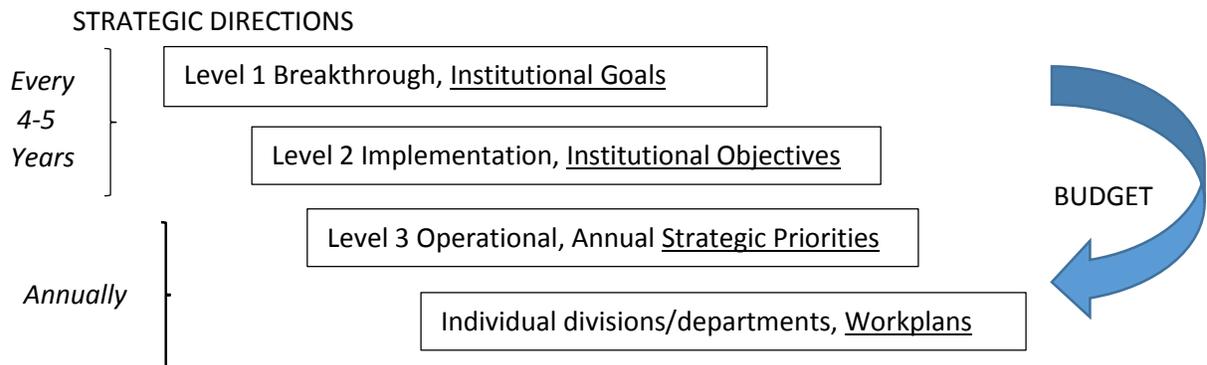
All need to work together for Integrated Planning; alignment both horizontally and vertically – annual budget reflects strategic priorities for that year by meeting strategic goals through the departments, or,

Can use a set aside of money to support strategic activities matched with departmental budgets – essentially aligning at Levels 1 and 3 of planning structure, working together to the same end.

- Critical to get engagement at department level (across the institution)

Integration also occurs through different areas working together, i.e. EM&RP that brings areas together to meet objectives as well as connections between plans, i.e. Technology and Facilities plans

- College needs to have a clear **conceptual model** of how the parts of the plan are related and work together



Monitoring of Goals – administration of Goals, monitoring of objectives by Steering Committee and Cabinet - who, how, time/how often?

Handbook – to define charge of Steering Committee and others, and monitoring responsibilities

Can use a Gantt chart for planning and implementation

External accountability -

DHE Performance Measures, need to have a crosswalk with MCC's plan

Internal accountability –

Need to measure outcomes, develop use dashboards/software

Cabinet member responsible for - Goals

Managers responsible for – Objectives

Individuals, groups responsible for – Priorities, implementation

Who is the College accountable to (others) and how MCC's plan will be affected by this and also impact those audiences?

State,

Community, local economy,

Students, residents of service area

Roles and responsibilities of those stakeholders – input, Advisory boards, civic committees

Public accountability, ideally accessible through webpage – chart, software, dashboard to measure outcomes; even employee evaluations can incorporate strategic priorities, committee assignments (for faculty) serve strategic plan

Rollout of Strategies – Communications, internal and external

- Insights for Goal Teams

Do current strategies embrace the future?

Identify 3 things to focus on – themes, such as:

- Community Partnerships – relationships with businesses, public/private partnerships?

- Organizational Learning – creating a culture for this

- Technology

3 broad areas implied in current plan, Equity plan

What Strategic Directions are high priorities for the new plan?

MCC's role in the vitality of the region, ambassador team

- What are important “stretch strategies for MCC over the next several years?”
 - Allow an “Equity mindset” to inform the great work we do, so that we can further move the needle on institutional effectiveness and student success;
 - MCC rebranding campaign that, 1.) highlights to stakeholders the good work we do, and 2.) informs people of strategic initiatives;
 - Use scholarship (aka, “data”) to inform and revolutionize teaching and learning, wherever it happens;
 - Develop community partnerships;
 - Create a culture of data-driven decision-making;
 - Assess and update digital IT infrastructure;
 - Measureable goals and infrastructure;
 - Develop “known” shared culture and aspiration;
 - Incorporate and encourage cross college communication and collaboration;
 - Workforce development: Re-imagine private/public sector;
 - Enrollment: Adult learners, grow this sector;
 - Early College infrastructure and alignment;
 - Rather than simply “celebrate diversity” pursue inclusive excellence/outcomes equity;
 - Make overt connections to measureable outcomes, such as “increase the # of African-American, Asian, & Latinx students graduating and gaining employment in high demand careers” or “increase 3 of students participating in internships”;
 - Align MCC programs to reflect needs (based on Regional Blueprints);
 - Execute the Equity Plan with HIPP;

- Communication and image;
- Culture of organizational learning and data-based decision-making

Use of SoTL as a “think tank” to encourage stretch strategies

Timeline for Fall with:

Conceptual model

Charge for goal teams

Visual

Ongoing dialogue between Steering Committee and Cabinet as process moves forward