

OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THE COLLEGE ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

PHASE ONE CONTRACT *REPORT*

TO THE COLLEGE DECEMBER

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CONSULTANTS:

Ed Buckley, Mary Gershwin, Diane Troyer, & Julie Slark



College Brain Trust

1415 L Street, Suite 720
Sacramento, CA 95661

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REPORT TO THE COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

Oakland Community College is a proud institution with an excellent reputation. It serves approximately 74,000 students at five campuses, and offers a wide array of services and programs for student pursuing transfer, CET certificates, and job skills. However, Oakland is facing future budget shortfall of almost \$40 million, due to anticipated declines in millage income through 2025. Now, it must adapt to a period marked by volatile change if it is to continue to provide the distinctive, high quality educational services the community has come to expect.

Recognizing this, Chancellor Tim Meyer has called for the development and implementation of the *ReDesign Project*, and has asked CBT to assist in the development of a College Academic Master Plan. Fundamental to the goals of ReDesign is the improvement of the institutional planning process, a crucial component of which is the completion of the College Academic Master Plan. While a great deal of planning has taken place, it is not evident that the planning has been based on or been evaluated by data on student needs and success. This project is the first phase of a task that will be completed in the spring of 2012.

Deliverables

- 1) An analysis by CBT consultants of existing data capacity and systems and the development of a targeted set of priority recommendations to improve data usefulness for academic master planning and program review.
- 2) Through internal community focus groups, interviews, and review of documents, an assessment of OCC capacity and readiness to engage and build external stakeholder support for the college's mission, services, and institutional needs

and priorities. Based on this assessment, produce a set of concrete recommendations for the development of an integrated plan for external stakeholder support.

- 3) An assessment by CBT consultants of the college culture, strategic priorities, previous planning, relevant data needs, and expectations for the development of the College Academic Master Plan, based on a review of documents and a set of interviews with stakeholders and leaders.
- 4) Based on CBT's analysis and assessment, a set of concrete recommendations for the development of the College Academic Master Plan and its scope, programmatic and service goals, and institutional and operational service goals.
- 5) Development of internal stakeholder support: As a result of campus and college-wide dialogue with college leaders and CBT consultants, Oakland College stakeholders will understand the critical need for an Oakland College Educational Master Plan and understand its function in the institutional planning process.

Methodology

CBT consultants interacted with college personnel in a variety of ways throughout the course of this project.

- Three, two-day visits to the college were conducted. In the first visit (September), CBT met with Vice Chancellor Richard Holcomb and engaged in the "initial discovery process" to gather as much data and information about the college as possible. In subsequent visits (November and December), CBT met with the Chancellor's Cabinet, groups of deans and other middle managers, and a representative group of faculty. Individual meetings were held with members of the college leadership including each college president, Vice Chancellor Clarence Brantley, Vice Chancellor Sharon Miller, and Vice Chancellor Holcomb. Each visit included a meeting with the Chancellor to discuss findings, process and expectations.
- An additional meeting was held with the Director for Institutional Research, to examine ways in which the data resources could be applied toward the college-wide planning process going forward.

- On December 9, CBT facilitated a three-hour, interactive session for a diverse group of faculty and staff, which included an overview of the CBT approach to integrated planning and a focus on the alignment of the Strategic Plan to the College Academic Master Plan. This interactive session provided a means to determine awareness of planning principles and a sense of engagement and areas of commitment for those engaged in the planning process.
- In addition to these visits, the consultants held several phone conferences and communicated multiple times via email with key faculty and administrative staff.
- Finally, the team reviewed a number of college documents that directly or indirectly impact the planning process. These included institutional plans such as current and former strategic plans and college academic master plans; accreditation documents; various research projects and studies; governance documents such as organization charts and committee minutes; and various other sources of information available on the college's websites.

Organization of the Report

This report focuses on three areas of review: *the culture of evidence* needed as a precondition for effective planning; *external stakeholder engagement*, which is critical to achieving the college's goals; and *the college's capacity to plan*, as evidenced by its culture, its experience and understanding of planning, and its commitment to become an institution that values continuous quality improvement. Readers will note that there are many themes reiterated throughout the three sections, and that the recommendations in the final section encompass and summarize what has gone before.

CULTURE OF EVIDENCE: An analysis of existing data capacity and systems in support of institutional planning

OCC is moving ahead with its Academic Master Plan development, but the role of assessment, information, and outcomes evaluation has not yet been determined for this effort. Consequently, this data capacity analysis focuses primarily upon the overall college culture of inquiry and evidence at OCC, or “readiness” for planning sustainability, and not specifically on the College Academic Master Plan.

Strengths

- The existing offices of Institutional Research and Assessment & Effectiveness are of the highest quality in terms of the staff experience, talent, efficiency, and products.
- Examples of some of the many structured assessment and evaluation practices include:
 - The Dashboard, which includes approximately 100 program measures
 - Academic program performance review framework, a holistic approach to program review
 - Achieving the Dream
 - KPI's and Tracking Measures for the Strategic Plan
 - *Oakland Community newsIRthy*, a regular publication of the IR Office
 - Complete institutional research practices, e.g., enrollment monitoring, survey information, community demographics, public opinion polling, workforce needs
- Student learning outcomes assessment practices are very well developed, with all academic programs participating. OCC participates in HLC's Academy for Assessment of Student Learning.
- Institutional Research staff reportedly work with departments one-on-one in development of research efforts.
- Ample resources and staffing seem to be provided for research and assessment needs.
- Technology support does not seem to be a hurdle or challenge.

Challenges

- The current College AMP process was initiated with an overly brief environmental scanning component, as well as a lack of a roadmap for its components and integration within college assessment and planning processes.
- The most common refrain heard during interviews is variations of "we have too much data" and "we need to know how to use the data we have."

- Reportedly, program decisions are sometimes made without being informed of critical information.
- Of the many assessment-related processes and procedures, few have yet resulted in demonstrable program and college accountability and integrity.
- The program review model has changed multiple times recently, and no programs have yet completed a program review process. The current process is very highly developed, and more index measures are being developed.
- Responsibility for program review and departmental assessment and planning practices is not clear within college and campus organizational structure.
- Assigned responsibility for college planning activities is not clear.

Recommendations to improve data usefulness for academic planning and program review

To enhance the culture of inquiry and culture of evidence college-wide, a variety of strategies and examples of activities are recommended:

- Prior to initiating planning, as well as all decision-making, information gathering and review should be a comprehensive component of planning activity. While the existing college strategic plan was preceded by a thorough presentation by the Institutional Research department, and the College AMP activity was preceded with a review of literature, this step of planning needs to be more structured, integrated, and considered in planning.
- The college should intentionally prioritize the development of a **culture of inquiry and evidence** through the use of goals, objectives, and identified activities and routine practices.
- To start, the college could use existing, or develop new rubrics and/or check lists that measure and identify measurements of the components of a culture of inquiry and evidence. After such an initial assessment, steps could be taken to enhance the use of information, and benchmark achievements could be monitored and assessed regularly to determine progress.

- Consider working with a “coach” to evaluate and foster a culture of inquiry and culture of evidence. Often, perspectives from someone “outside” can move such an agenda.
- While responsibility for adopting a culture of evidence belongs to all faculty and staff, structured responsibility should be assigned to an existing or new planning, assessment, or research committee, as well as to key college leadership.
- An evaluation of data and assessment products needs to be conducted so that streamlining, coordination and effectiveness can be enhanced.
- An existing or new planning, assessment, or research committee, or a combination of such kind of groups, could work with the Institutional Research department to develop an annual “research agenda”, for which research efforts are driven structurally by the [coached] needs of faculty and staff. This practice can enhance structured and regular conversations around the usefulness of data, and also serves to institutionalize this component of an assessment culture. Research findings could also be routinely reported to this group.
- Program review, unit planning (for academic and all departments), and assessment of student learning outcomes need to be integrated into the strategic planning and College AMP processes, with identification of coordinated timelines and activities.
- While academic program review has been enhanced recently, it may need to be simplified if the majority of faculty are not aware of and participating in its benefits.
- “How to use data” workshops and training, while not the end-all and not always resulting in sustainable culture change, are effective as one of several culture change tools.
- The offices of Institutional Research and Assessment and Effectiveness could examine how they can more closely work together and coordinate their practices.

- The Institutional Research Department can consider developing annual or regular reports that summarize highlights of research conducted and identify important conclusions and issues for college-wide consideration.
- Non-academic departments may need to develop more structured, consistent, and integrated program review processes.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: Analysis of existing capacity and systems in support of stakeholder engagement

Strengths

- Oakland Community College has developed a very positive relationship within the communities that it serves, as dramatically evidenced by the millage renewal election in August 2010, a measure that passed with a 62 percent favorable vote despite difficult economic conditions. The college has a history of involving these external stakeholders.
- Each of the college's campuses are rooted in their local communities, and the campus presidents maintain strong relationships with external constituencies such as the high schools, local businesses, chambers of commerce, and government entities. The college's Economic and Workforce Development Division partners with external constituencies to develop and implement a range of programs, including customized training, internship/co-op services, placement services, short term training, and dislocated worker services. The college's Foundation conducts special events and outreach to promote the college and raise funds for student scholarships and other college needs. Some programs, such as Nursing and CREST, are noted for their focused program-specific external engagement, and the Office of Institutional Research has a collaborative relationship with the county office of economic development that has allowed the college to analyze critical employment data and projections as it plans its C.T.E. programs.
- In support of its transfer mission, the college has transfer arrangements and articulation agreements with several four-year institutions. As an example, the partnership with Oakland University offers students admission through a single application form, coordinated financial aid, expanded course selection, coordinated advisement and course planning and access to the campus

resources of both institutions, including OU housing. Students are able to take courses at both schools at the same time.

Challenges

- Notwithstanding these impressive efforts, the focus of community engagement is unclear, with little apparent coordination of activities. OCC has not yet established a *college-wide* core set of priorities that create a common, overarching agenda for reaching out to its own communities. Nor is there an existing institutional process to establish such an agenda and develop priorities, and strategies for action.
- As a consequence, critical information may be shared within individual campuses, or units within a campus, but almost no one can see the big picture. Few of the people we contacted could answer any of the following questions:
 - What groups are being actively engaged in the development of partnerships?
 - Who within the college is providing leadership to reach out to these groups?
 - What are priorities are others within the college seeking to advance?
- Part of the problem may be that with reference to community engagement, the roles and accountabilities of the governing board, the Chancellor, the presidents, the Vice Chancellors, and the staff and board of the Foundation are vague. Without clear definition at these leadership levels, the roles of faculty, staff, students, and other college groups will also remain undefined. This fragmentation can also be seen in resource development planning, which is segmented into plans for marketing, government relations, the foundation, business/industry relations, and grant development. With no clear integration, there is little chance for leveraging these functions.
- In sum, there are a lot of fine efforts being made to develop and enhance the college's relationship with its communities, but with better coordination and planning, the payoff for those activities will be dramatically improved.

Recommendations

- OCC has an impressive set of external relationships and broad-based community support. In order to build on these assets, the college should commit to a strategic approach to stakeholder development that:

- Unites the board, college leadership, faculty, staff, foundation, and other key internal groups around a focused set of priorities to be achieved through engagement of external support;
 - Systematically identifies and shares information about critical external stakeholder groups that must be developed in order to achieve the goals;
 - Builds on existing relationships and creates new relationships;
 - Recognizes the diverse roles that external stakeholders can and must play in support of the college (i.e.; expanding revenues, influencing policy, and reducing costs);
 - Clearly assigns accountability, deliverables, and timelines;
 - Communicates the process and goals for external stakeholder development to the internal college community, including a process for engagement and feedback.
- It is further recommended that that the college adopt an implementation plan for such a strategic approach. Consider the following model:
 - Months 1-4: Develop essential systems and tools for strategic engagement of external stakeholders.
 - The Chancellor should charge a task-force, consisting of the campus presidents and staffed by the Vice Chancellor for External Affairs, to produce the following deliverables required for strategic engagement of external stakeholders:
 1. A College-Wide Case for Support. This set of clear, elevating, and cross-cutting goals for external resource and stakeholder development should come from the college strategic plan, the CAMP process, and the perspectives of local campus needs. The goals should be focused on serving the external community (rather than on meeting internal institutional needs). Each goal should be stated in clear, measurable terms. A preliminary gap analysis should identify what the college requires from external constituencies to achieve the goal (financial resources, advocacy support, etc.).
 2. A list of the top 100-200 key individuals (and their organizations) who could assist the college in achieving its

mission and should be asked to advise the college on priorities.

3. An assessment of the college stakeholder engagement and fundraising capacity (including an audit of the capacity of the foundation, government relations, grant development) and recommendations for specific changes or improvements. (Produced with assistance from an external expert.)
 4. A plan to communicate results of this work to key internal constituencies.
- Month 4: Present results and recommendations for action to the Chancellor.
 - Months 5-8: Implement feasibility study to plan an integrated campaign of support:
 1. Identify key external leadership that will work to support college priorities
 2. Assess the financial/ political support available for college priorities and the intensity of the support
 3. Develop a campaign framework and timeline
 4. Based on assessment of college resource development capacity and recommendations, take action to strengthen capacity.
 - Month 9: Share results of the feasibility study with key internal and external constituencies. Results will include:
 1. Fundraising Campaign Plan
 - A target goal of funds to be raised
 - Recommended timeline for a campaign
 - Campaign projects with high community appeal
 2. Strategies for building awareness in the community
 3. A preliminary list of key leaders who have potential to contribute and potential to lead
 4. Advocacy/other resource development plan
 5. Identification of key leaders and projects with high levels of appeal
 6. Action plan to engage leadership in support of college goals

CAPACITY FOR PLANNING: An analysis of the college culture, previous planning efforts, and current institutional plans in the context of the development of the College Academic Master Plan

The recommendations in the *Culture of Evidence* and the *External Stakeholder Engagement* sections (above) can help the college develop a holistic approach to data-informed decision-making and set the context for effective planning going forward. The analysis and recommendations in this section focus on the immediate goal of completing the College Academic Master Plan.

Strengths

- Oakland Community College is known for its comprehensive offerings and outstanding faculty and support staff locally, regionally, and nationally.
- The college has developed significant community partnerships, especially in such critical fields as health and medicine and public safety. The college also works closely with the four-year institutions.
- While revenue predictions for the near future are bleak, OCC's strong fiscal history places the college in a relatively healthy situation compared to other colleges around the country. As already noted, focused community engagement efforts can lead to greater community support of the college's programs.
- There is a high level of commitment to the college by employees from every employee group.
- Historically the college has demonstrated the capacity and willingness to engage in institutional planning. That legacy can be tapped on behalf of academic master planning and effective institutional transformation through the ReDesign Project.
- Planning appears to be appropriately focused on student success, and the college community generally understands the importance of data based decision-making. As noted earlier, institutional research capabilities are outstanding and there is great appreciation for the amount, quality, and usefulness of the reports and services provided by the Office of Institutional Research as well as the Office of Assessment & Effectiveness.

- "Bottom-up" planning appears to be functioning well at the campus level, resulting in high levels of engagement. Both faculty and staff take great pride in their respective campuses, and campus presidents and other personnel are actively engaged in their local communities.
- In spite of conflicting opinions and reservations, a strong consensus is developing across the college that OCC must systematically address its planning and organizational issues and make changes as necessary.

Challenges

- Due to less than successful attempts to develop effective planning in the past, some individuals are skeptical that developing an institutional planning culture is worth the effort. This skepticism has led to a lack of trust in the ability of college leaders (faculty as well as management) to collaborate effectively.
- Skepticism is fed also by an almost universal complaint that college communication is poor. It is difficult to pin down what this really means, but it appears to have to do with transparency (i.e., sharing rather than withholding needed information) and accountability (i.e. following through as promised).
- The college does not have a formal framework for institutional planning. As a result, there are no clear connections between different kinds of plans that should be connected. Hence the difficulty aligning the Strategic Plan with a College Academic Master Plan.
- Current strategic outcomes and directions are overly broad and may cause difficulty in the development of clearer strategies that could produce transformational change. Part of the problem is terminology. At various times the Strategic Plan has included objectives, directions, initiatives, values, and pillars. Where are they defined? How are they different?
- Classified staff have had little formal or informal role in the planning process.
- There appears to be no articulated strategy allocating resources or funds to support institutional plans, nor is there a clear framework for linking committees dealing with technology, staffing, facilities, staff development, and other resources into institutional planning.

- Campus plans have positively strengthened engagement, but since they are developed from the bottom up, they do not necessarily reflect a college-wide perspective. Nor are they consistent in format or approach across the campuses, or share a common vision, scope, or process.
- The autonomy of the campuses in the face of the need for effective system-wide leadership negatively impacts governance and operational efficiency.
- There is no consistent template for program review, nor is some kind of program review apparently required, except in occupational fields. There is no policy or protocol to address the downsizing, revising, or elimination of programs or disciplines.
- In spite of the good reputation of the college's research function, there are at least some individual who believe that research data is not adequately distributed or explained.

Recommendations

- As part of its planning agenda, the college should develop a clear vision of student success that includes improved completion of courses and programs as well as equity in outcomes.
- To address the critical problem of plans operating in silos without plan alignment, the college should give first priority to developing the *framework* of institutional planning, rather than the *contents* of the Campus Academic Master Plan. The integrated model should reinforce the importance of evidence-based planning and of a robust research support capacity. This task might be assigned to the committee responsible for developing the College AMP.
- The framework or model for integrated planning should include the following elements:
 - Clearly defined links between the College Academic Master Plan and other institutional plans, including program reviews
 - Clearly defined mechanisms for assuring that resource allocation functions are integrated into the planning processes
 - Annual assessment of the integrated planning process itself

- The college should develop templates for program review for all components of the college and require that all programs undergo program review on a regular basis.
- The College Academic Master Plan committee should develop and implement internal communication and training strategies to explain the importance of the planning project and mobilize the college community to support it.
- The process for appointing or selecting participants in the planning process should be clearly spelled out. Both advocates for change as well as leaders appointed to positions within the formal governance and communication systems should be included.
- The various campus academic master plans are a valuable resource. The College Academic Master Plan committee should build on these campus plans through a formal mapping process.

Concluding Remarks

Oakland Community College is characterized by many paradoxes. It has an outstanding institutional research function, but not a vibrant culture of evidence. It has strong ties to a community that has considerable resources, but its external stakeholder engagement activities are not well organized and focused. The "bottom up" planning that the campuses engage in works well for the campuses, but creates organizational issues for the college as a whole. It has devoted considerable efforts to developing institutional plans, and yet it has had difficulty developing an institutional planning framework that can make those plans come alive.

In other words, OCC is not unlike a great many public community colleges facing the challenges of increasingly needy students, declining resources, increased demands from government regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies, and generational turnover within the ranks of faculty and staff. But unlike many colleges, OCC has chosen to confront its problems. The CBT team has been impressed by the willingness of the college community to answer questions, accept suggestions, and otherwise engage in serious dialogue with us about these important issues. We sense a strong commitment to make changes where needed, and to preserve what has made the college prosper. CBT is excited about the prospect of working alongside you as you develop the College Academic Master Plan.