OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE®

Academic Policies and Procedures

Final Report

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College Brain Trust

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oakland Community College is undergoing a fundamental transformation, consciously moving away from a decentralized operation based at the campus level to a more centralized operation through which planning, budgeting, and policy development occur on a college-wide basis.

For Academic and Student Affairs, the largest administrative unit in the College and the one most responsible for addressing the mission, the transformation is particularly challenging. Work in Academic and Student Affairs is progressing on the development of an effective college-wide academic master plan and the creation of an effective program review process. However, to be effective, planning and program review must build upon a foundation of well-documented, authoritative policies and procedures.

CBT consultants Ed Buckley and Diane Troyer met with the Academic Leadership Team in October 2012 to discuss the current status of academic policies and procedures, and along with Cy Gulassa, conducted an analysis of them. They also reviewed a number of policy manuals from community colleges throughout the United States. Based on this work they were able to identify a number of problems with the current documentation of OCC policies and procedures and make a number of recommendations for the College. The team's analysis and recommendations are incorporated in this report.

In the spring of 2013, this CBT team will be working with the Academic Leadership Team (ALT) and others on Task 11:

> *Help the college to revise academic policies and procedures as appropriate and consistent with changes in organizational structure, reporting relationships, and governance structures. Review the college Academic ReDesign report and make appropriate recommendations for implementation to develop the policy and procedural documents needed to fill the identified gaps.*

TASK OVERVIEW

CBT consultants will work with the Academic Leadership Team and others identified by the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs to complete the following sub-tasks:

- Clarify the scope of policies and procedures defined as "academic."

- Review existing OCC academic policies, procedures, handbooks, and other college documents for currency and utility.

- Review policy and procedure models from other institutions in order to 1) identify potential gaps in OCC's policies and procedures, 2) identify good practices, and 3) develop effective organizational schemes and templates.

- Evaluate the quality and organization of all existing documents related to the administration of academic programs to determine the extent to which they reflect good practice and the college's official policies and procedures.

In addition, CBT consultants will provide the College a set of recommendations for organizing its academic policies and procedures, creating templates for revising old documents or creating new ones, and developing processes consistent with OCC's governance model for vetting and approving policies and procedures on a regular basis.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Status of Board Approved Policies and Procedures

While the focus of this task is to address issues regarding *academic* policies and procedures, it is necessary to do so in the broader context of all institutional policies. The Official OCC policies and procedures contained in the *Board Policy Manual* are grouped into six Divisions: (1) Board of Trustees, (2) Human Resources, (3) Business Services, (4) Student Development Services, (5) Community Service, and (6) Instructional Program. A description of the status of these documents follows.

Division 1 (Board of Trustees) contains 43 policies, six of which have been repealed, and 12 detailed procedures, all approved by the Board on February 16, 2009. This section is the only one that appears to have been updated and revised within the last five years.

Division 2 (Human Resources) contains 27 policies of which 15 are not dated, seven are dated 1977-80, four are dated 1993, and one is dated 1999. Of the five procedures, only one bears a date (1989). This division should be reviewed and revised for currency and the adequacy of procedures.

Division 3 (Business Services) contains 35 policies, of which 17 are not dated, 16 are dated 1990-96, and two are dated 2003. There are four procedures, of which one is dated 1975, two are dated 1993, and one is dated 2003. Portions of the policy on investments

(3.10) were revised in 2006-7. This division was extensively revised in the 1990s but is overdue for another revision for currency and adequacy of procedures.

Division 4 (Student Development Services) contains 35 policies, of which 16 are not dated, one is dated 1988, 12 are dated 7-26-90, two are dated 1993, and four are dated 1997. Division 4 contains no procedures, which is especially problematic because guiding students from enrollment to graduation requires well defined, uniformly applied procedures. Further, the title is not consistent with the current organizational structure of the college.

Division 5 (Community Based Education) is the shortest division, containing only six policies, of which one is not dated, two are dated 1974, one is dated 1988, and two are dated 1992. Included are two procedures governing use of facilities—one undated, and one dated 2001.

Division 6 (Instructional Program) contains 25 undated policies and only one procedure, dated 1992, which provides students, under certain conditions, the opportunity to retrain without paying tuition if their skill levels do not meet employer needs. The policies are loosely grouped into five generic areas, each consisting of little more than a sentence or two, most very vague and none bearing an adoption date. While there are problems with Board Policies in general, Division VI is the weakest division.

2. The Gap in Academically Related Policies & Procedures (Division 4 & Division 6)
Ad hoc policies and procedures appear in many OCC documents and manuals. Following are samples from four OCC publications, all of them dealing with academically related issues.

- Ad hoc policies and procedures appear in the *OCC Student Handbook*, a clear, detailed compendium of the rules and regulations that govern student rights, conduct, placement, scheduling, appeals, loads, transfer, grades, discipline, sexual harassment, counseling, child care, financial aid and employment placement, among others. With modification, many of these could serve to fill the gaps in existing Board policies and procedures reviewed above.

- Another example of OCC ad hoc policy/procedure is the *College Catalogue*, which contains an informal overview of the rules in the *OCC Student Handbook* but goes into greater detail about academic requirements and evaluation. It also adds a section labeled "Policies" that covers, among many other topics, right of review, use of technology, safety, and smoking.

- The *Deans' Manual* attempts to compensate for the lack of official procedures in Board Policy, listing 24 specific procedures for handling issues such as grade appeal, student and staff misconduct, base load verification, faculty evaluation, travel, and employee action forms (EAF) for obtaining extra pay and leaves. These detailed procedures,

printed on simple templates, pertain to many Board policy categories, including Human Resources (Division 3) and Student Services (Division 4).

- The procedures in the Deans' Manual appear to have been revised in 2010 but the revisions do not reflect the current organizational structure of centralized administration of academic matters. Furthermore, they are not organized into a cohesive numbering and labeling system clearly aligned to Board Policy, nor do they provide for clear responsibility for the implementation of procedure or an appeal processes. The role and responsibilities of the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs and his Academic Leadership Team are not addressed at all.

- The *OCC User Handbook for Curricular Development and Approval, January 2007*, provides a richly detailed description of the procedures for developing curriculum as well as a good statement of the philosophy of education. While the document does not engage program review directly, it does explore needs assessment as a tool for program evaluation. The scope of this handbook dwarfs the only policy in the Board Policy Manual that specifically addresses program evaluation: Policy 6.2.13 (Evaluation) states in its entirety, "OCC will regularly evaluate programs as well as all instructional, administrative and support activities in order to improve services to the community." Without procedures, it means little.

ANALYSIS
With the exception of Division 1 (Board of Trustees), the brevity of policy statements, the lack of approval dates, and the absence of procedures collectively constitute a serious gap in the documentation of college policy, a state of affairs that can create ambiguity, miscommunication, and a climate of mistrust. The Board Policy Manual simply does not reflect an institution committed to the development of, and reliance upon, clear policies and procedures.

Ironically, the policies and the procedures related to the central mission of the College, which is to address the instructional and support needs of students, are the most out-of-date and least developed. They are also not driven by a clear vision for student success, which is necessary to frame the academic and student affairs directional documents. To fill this vacuum, those responsible for managing OCC's academic program have developed a broad series of ad hoc policies and procedures that enable them to do their jobs effectively and run the institution efficiently. However, out-of-date Board policies and the near absence of defined procedures mean that the Board has ceded control of one of its most important functions—to develop policies and procedures that keep all segments of the institution aligned with strategic goals and the institutional mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. While the primary focus of this study is on academic policies, the CBT recommends that *all* Board Policies be reviewed for currency, consistency with recent organizational changes, and adequacy of policy statements and procedures.

2. The College needs to clarify the scope of policies and procedures it wishes to define as "academic." Many community colleges are combining academic and student affairs administrative components to emphasize the need for a close partnership of instructional programs and the student support services. Oakland has signaled its intention to go in this direction through its creation of an academic leadership team under the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs. The College may wish to reflect a closer bond between the two functions in its academic policies and procedures as well. The current titling organization of board policies (Student Development Services, Instructional Program, Community Based Education, etc.) does not reflect the organizational structure of the college and it would be helpful in applying Board policies if they were organized in the same framework as the major operational units of the College.

3. Given the inadequacy of the existing format of *OCC Board Policy Division 6, Instructional Program*, the College should carefully review model policies from other institutions and use them to revise and improve the general organization, subdivisions, range of policy topics, and language of Division 6. Student services policies should be reviewed as well if the intention is to designate some student-services-related policies as "academic." (Please see the appendix for recommendations about model policies.) These two sets of policies should be reviewed together as the comprehensive student experience from enrollment to graduation. Because student affairs provides much of the student support that impacts retention and student success, it is critical that its policies are integrated and aligned with those in academic affairs.

4. The many ad hoc procedures now to be found in various documents and web sites should be systematically collected and made available at a single site/location, rather than scattered across the college and intranet. Those procedures deemed current and effective should be extracted, organized, and assigned to appropriate places either within the Board's current policy format or a new policy format, provided that a decision is made to revise the existing format as part of this project. Using existing ad hoc procedures will minimize the work of revision and help make current practices align with Board Policies.

5. Once procedures have been aligned with the Board Policies through a numbering and titling system, the College should revise procedures as needed to reflect the new organizational structure and responsibilities. In addition, the College should review the policies and procedures of other colleges to help determine policies, procedures, and practices that should be instituted at OCC.

6. As an important component of Recommendation 5, above, the College should develop a uniform template to be followed when creating or revising academic and student services procedures. The template should include the following components:

- A consistent numbering system that aligns each procedure with its authorizing Board Policy
- A clear description of each procedure
- Provision for exceptions and appeals if appropriate
- Legal references if required
- Administrator or administrative office responsible for each procedure
- Cross-references to related policies and procedures as needed

APPENDIX

There are many excellent model policy manuals accessible on the Internet, and the ALT may wish to review ones with which they are familiar. The CBT team has reviewed several and has identified three that exemplify good practices and come from institutions that are similar to Oakland Community College in terms of mission, size, and scope of academic programs. We recommend that the ALT review these policies as they work on Recommendation 3, above. In addition, we suggest that the team review a fourth document, a template for board policies and procedures published by *The Community College League of California*. Below are brief descriptions of these models along with URL addresses.

Santa Rosa Junior College: The SRJC Academic Policies and Procedures serves well as a base model for comparison with OCC's existing Policies and Procedures. The SRJC model is ideal because it is comprehensive, logically organized, and detailed, and its well-developed procedures are aligned side-by-side with specific board policies. In effect this type of organization underscores the primacy of board-approved policies and illustrates precisely how all procedures flow from these directives. It uses a flexible template that can expand as necessary to accommodate complex procedures.

The SRJC model provides a complete, authoritative overview of college operations, from the macro function of Board policy to the micro details of day-to-day procedures. Also, Academic Policies once revised according to the SRJC model could serve as a template for later revisions of other OCC policy divisions. However, to completely convert all OCC Policies and Procedures to this model would require significant time and resources.

http://www.santarosa.edu/polman/

Palm Beach State College: The Palm Beach State College model, suggested by OCC management, is similar to the SRJC model in its comprehensiveness but uses a vastly different method of organization. The twelve Board policies on Academic Affairs, for example, are highly selective, simply stated and contain no procedures. These are amplified in Section G, "Academic Affairs Policies & Procedures," of a publication entitled the Academic Management Manual, which contains hundreds of pages. As the name implies, the primary emphasis of the manual is on all the step-by-step procedures, functions, rules, regulations, forms, definitions—in brief, all the detailed information a manager needs to run the academic aspects of the college.

The Palm Beach model has several advantages. All the general and technical information necessary to run the academic aspects of the college are located in one convenient, accessible place, a handy training and reference tool for new as well as seasoned managers. By keeping Board policy statements brief and broadly focused, management has more latitude to design ongoing efficient and timely procedures. While less tightly organized than the SRJC model, it is more flexible and allows for inclusion of supporting and explanatory materials.

There are some disadvantages. The Board policies are few and very general, and they are not aligned with procedures. The structure also invites excessive complexity, perhaps confusion. For example, the 11 Board-approved policies multiply into 31 additional policies, but it is not clear how these differ from official Board policies.

http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/boardoftrustees/district-board-of-trustees-policies.aspx

El Paso Community College: El Paso Community College has a well-developed policy and procedures manual, which is clearly organized and aligned and utilizes an effective, full-featured procedure template.   The EPCC policy manual is organized with policies and procedures aligned in a single organizational system, with policies noted in bold and the associated procedures organized under the board policy. This organizational framework facilitates the communication of both the Board Policy and the location for the procedures designed to carry them out. There are good examples in "6.0 Academic and Instructional Programs Policies," in which the policy is noted in a concise manner, providing the Board intent to the administration for the scope and direction of the procedures under each section.

http://www.epcc.edu/InstitutionalEffectiveness/Pages/Policies.aspx

The Community College League of California offers a professional policy service to trustees, which includes fill-in-the-blanks templates for all the board policies and procedures necessary for sound operation of a college or district in California. Chapter 4, Academic Affairs, in contrast with OCC policy Division 6, lists 22 very specific policies and 38 procedures, ranging from Academic Calendar to community services. A comparison immediately reveals the inadequacy of existing OCC instructional policies. It's important to note that the science of classification is not precise; some policies listed here as an academic

matter might just as well appear in a classification dealing with student services. Further, some policies may be a response to specific local or state legal requirements. Two sample templates from CCLC were provided to the ALT along with this report.

http://www.ccleague.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3312

Finally, we have listed the URLs for the policy documents from OCC's benchmark colleges:

Grand Rapids Community College   http://cms.grcc.edu/about-us/policies

Lansing Community College   http://www.lcc.edu/policy/policies_7.aspx

Lone Star College System   http://www.lonestar.edu/policy.htm

Macomb Community College   http://www.macomb.edu/About+Macomb/College+Policies/

Pima Community College   http://www.pima.edu/about-pima/policies/index.html

Tarrant County College   http://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/1097