



System
Office

California
Community
Colleges

Education and
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Shaping California's
Future Today

Strategic Plan Update

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The First Two Years: Priorities and Progress

January 2008 marked the two year anniversary of the Board of Governors' adoption of the first-ever [California Community Colleges System Strategic Plan](#). This edition of the Strategic Plan Update provides an opportunity to look back at what has been accomplished in two very busy years and to look forward to future progress.

Origins of the Strategic Plan

For those of you who don't recall, the Strategic Plan process began in March 2005 when the Board of Governors directed staff to develop a System Strategic Plan with a completion date of January 2006. This imposed a very ambitious schedule, and we were immediately off to the races with a series of ten town hall meetings throughout the state and many more meetings with various constituent groups and other interested parties. The [Strategic Plan Steering Committee](#) held six full-day facilitated meetings. With a lot of hard work and cooperation from college faculty and staff members, administrators, students, local trustees and others, we completed the Strategic Plan on time and on budget. The Board of Governors approved [the Strategic Plan](#) on January 16, 2006. An [Executive Summary](#) of the Strategic Plan was completed later in 2006. The Strategic Plan has been widely distributed to colleges, governmental leaders and other partners in business, labor and industry.

Implementation Process

In hindsight, development of the Strategic Plan was the easy part. Implementation of a Strategic Plan encompassing the great breadth and variety of 109 community colleges is a huge challenge. We were fortunate that Tod Burnett joined the System Office as Vice Chancellor for Strategic Planning just as the implementation process was taking shape. Working with our consultant, Dr. Burnett developed a strategic plan implementation process in which the five broad strategy areas are managed through [Goal Area Implementation Teams](#) (GAITs) and the 34 focused strategies are carried out by [Action Planning Groups](#) (APGs). All of this is overseen by the [Strategic Plan Implementation Oversight Committee](#) (IOC). [The Strategic Plan Website](#) has tracked the progress of these activities. This seemingly burdensome infrastructure was needed to get the implementation process started. It's important to remember that a strategic planning effort of this scale has never before been tried in California.

Accomplishments to Date

In 2006 the IOC identified approximately one-third of the strategies in the Strategic Plan as "priority strategies." For each of these strategies, an APG was established and APG members developed workplans. Each of these workplans was developed through the collaboration of APG participants from the System Office, the colleges and our external partners, and then presented to the IOC for consideration. Naturally, due to variations in complexity, each workplan has a different timetable for completion. However, we have endeavored to develop outcomes that are specific both in substance and duration. Progress on those workplans can be reviewed in the [October 24, 2007 System Strategic Plan Implementation Status Update](#).

The priority strategies were identified out of necessity; the System Office could not manage all 34 strategies simultaneously. Many of the priority strategies are focused on the System's most critical issues. However, some the priority strategies were identified for other reasons; in some cases, they were selected simply because the timing was right and the Strategic Plan took advantage of opportunities. For example, Strategy D6 directed us to achieve greater equity in district funding, and we recognized the work that was already being done as part of SB 361. Similarly, a few system leaders discussing improvements in basic skills instruction planted the seed that became an APG for Strategy B1, more

commonly known as the Basic Skills Task Force. And Strategy A1, Early Awareness of College as a Viable Option, fits perfectly into the System Office's ongoing effort to enhance the colleges' ability to reach out to middle school and high school students.

Future Implementation Plans

Two years into the Strategic Plan, it is time to go back and address the remaining strategies. Fortunately, we have learned some valuable lessons during these two years of implementation, and one lesson is that there are different ways of implementing the strategies. While some of the strategies require a level of collaboration and discussion offered by the ASPG process, others do not. Also, in some cases, we determined that we are well on the way to implementing some of the strategies right now, and progress can be shown through a written report. For other situations, working groups or committees have been developed outside the Strategic Plan process and there is no need to duplicate that work.

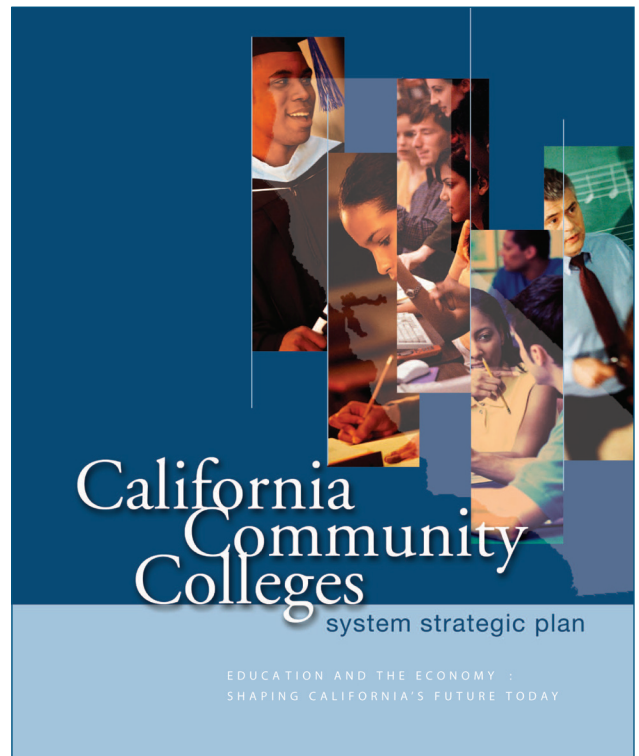
With this experience in hand, we have gone through the Strategic Plan, and every strategy that was not previously addressed as a priority strategy is included in the [2008 Strategic Plan Implementation Program](#). This program was developed in recent weeks by System Office leadership and will be presented to the IOC for consideration at the May 2008 IOC meeting. According to this Program, by the end of this calendar year, we will have achieved progress on every strategy in the Strategic Plan. As with the priority strategies, each strategy will proceed at a different pace depending on the complexity of the issue and the sorts of resources required.

The Road Forward

While we are not pretending that three years is sufficient to truly implement the Strategic Plan, we do feel there has been some substantial progress. Some strategies will be fully achieved by the end of 2008, and others will need more time. However, the Strategic Plan is serving its primary purpose of providing direction and coherence to the System and serving as a clearinghouse for collaboration and transfer of best practices to the colleges. In addition, a significant number of districts and colleges are using the System Strategic Plan in their own local planning efforts. Dr. Burnett has been particularly instrumental in working closely with the colleges on local planning.

The success of the Strategic Plan is a major achievement in which we can all take pride as a System. Of course it is just a start; we have much more to do. The State of California is increasingly

relying on the community colleges to tackle formidable challenges facing the state in the areas of student success and workforce development. The community colleges have met these needs locally for decades; the Strategic Plan proves that the System Office can provide statewide leadership. To quote Winston Churchill following one of Britain's first victories in World War II: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning." The Strategic Plan is a roadmap for success; our collective challenge is to maintain the great effort of the first two years.



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