

District Strategic Planning Initiative

SWOT Summary

April 11, 2006

1. Organization, Finances, & Administrative Systems

Strengths

Weaknesses

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: Able to leverage resources via economies of scale • Multiple highly accessible locations • Rich network of shared resources • Stable and experienced District leadership • Active, engaged and effective Board of Trustees • Relative college autonomy (partial decentralization) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: “Dis-economies” of scale • Multi-layered, duplicative, & inefficient bureaucracy • Unclear understanding of decentralization & DO/college roles • “Command & Control” organization & culture • Anonymity and impersonality of District Office • Poor District understanding of college issues, cultures, calendars, identities etc. (the “DO Disconnect” or “District-centrism”) • Poor communication between District and colleges • Problems associated with implementing and integrating complex District administrative systems (SAP, Protocol, etc.) • Geographic dispersion: Weak ties between colleges • Inter-college competition • Continuing conflicts over budget allocation equity • High DO overhead costs • No focus on students and student success • Poor relations with Sheriff’s Department • Confusing, unhelpful District website
--	---

Opportunities

Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To exploit District size and economies of scale • To clarify the meaning of decentralization and District/college relationships and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From limited funding and financial resources • Continuing budgetary uncertainty • From colleges with deficits and declining enrollments
--	---

- To define and streamline DO functions
- To redesign District website to make it more user-friendly
- To develop a “service orientation” at DO and make DO more “college” and student centered
- To help students, faculty, administrators, and staff use technology more effectively at all levels (from student portals to paperless operations, etc.)
- To succeed in implementation of SAP and other District systems
- To encourage collaboration and sharing of “ best practices” between colleges
- To explore budget allocation models that encourage innovation, college independence and student success

- From increasing bureaucratic complexity
- From rising unemployment rates
- Legislative action beyond our control (fee increases, etc.)

2. Institutional Culture

Strengths

- Strong tradition of shared governance
- Collaborative relations between labor and management

Weaknesses

- Reactive & Crisis-driven
- Complacent: Unwilling to think beyond the status quo
- Uneven quality of shared governance across District
- Slow to change and adapt to new trends: Not a “learning institution”
- Threatened by change & defensive (due to constant downsizing)
- Cumbersomeness of shared governance processes
- “Silo Culture”: Isolation in roles, divisiveness, and territoriality
- Continuing “high school” orientation (morning classes, etc.)
- Not attuned to students and student input
- A “mono-lingual” world view

Opportunities

- To transform institutional culture into one that is positive, productive, and open to change
- To become more student-centered
- To re-focus all District activities in support of student learning outcomes
- To make shared governance processes more effective and responsive
- To encourage innovation and experimentation
- To research and welcome new ideas and best practices from outside the District
- To create a culture of accountability
- To foster a more positive institutional culture by celebrating what we do well

Threats

- From our inability to change and adapt to changing environments
- From increasing institutional passivity & negativity

3. Planning & Accountability

Strengths

Weaknesses

- College-level strategic planning efforts
- BOT support for planning
- Tradition of shared governance across District

- Weak, uninformed decision-making processes
- Lack of strategic vision
- Little effective strategic planning
- Too much emphasis on short-term (annual) planning
- Too much emphasis on enrollment in all decision making
- Little connection between District and college goals & objectives
- Little follow-through on planning goals and objectives
- Little personal or institutional accountability
- Little input and feedback from students
- Lack of institutional memory
- Limited access to information and data
- Little direct accountability to voters and public

Opportunities

Threats

- To do real strategic planning
- To align System, District, and college goals and objectives
- To make student success the measure of all planning efforts
- To make sure that all planning efforts lead to measurable institutional change & outcomes
- To improve quality and coordination of research district-wide
- To create a culture of accountability by setting benchmarks for all planning goals and engaging in regular cycles of assessment and improvement
- To do “realistic,” transparent, long-term college budget planning
- To explore different budget planning models (Zero-based budgeting, etc.)
- To provide all faculty and staff with an enhanced understanding of State and District funding and budgeting processes
- To create a District-wide technology plan

- From institutional drift
- From increasing ineffectiveness & inefficiencies
- From increasing external accountability mandates
- From failure to comply with current mandates (accreditation, etc.)

4. Instructional Programs & Student Success

Strengths

Weaknesses

- Dedicated and talented faculty and support staff
- Open access & relative affordability
- Large pool of potential students & enrollment
- Huge pool of faculty, admin., and staff expertise across district
- Highly motivated students
- Breadth of educational programs & offerings
- Strong academic, vocational & workforce programs
- Relatively small class size
- Variety of current student support services & programs

- Insufficient emphasis on student outcomes and student success
- Little emphasis on educational standards and quality
- Poor retention and persistence of students
- Relatively low transfer rates
- Little support for matriculating, first-year, and first-time students
- Little long-term enrollment planning (i.e., response to declining male participation rates)
- Stagnant student success rates
- Many under-prepared students
- Failure to address needs of “new majority” and first-generation students
- Failure to support evening students
- Little educational innovation & program development
- Few new approaches to basic skills development
- Out-of-date equipment and technology
- Poor use of educational technologies in classroom
- Uneven quality of student support services
- Weak support for libraries and learning resources
- Little extracurricular life for students
- Increasing student behavior problems

Opportunities

Threats

- To change District colleges from “teaching” to “learning” institutions
- To develop District-wide definitions of student success and educational excellence
- To place greater emphasis on student success and the achievement of student goals
- To increase student success outcomes for all students, including

- From declining levels of student preparation
- From falling enrollments and participation rates
- From rapid changes in the job market
- From competing private educational institutions
- From increasing external mandates that distract from primary missions

rates of transfer, degree & certificate completion, retention and persistence

- To diversify curriculum, pedagogies, and instructional delivery models for “new” students & students with differing learning styles
- To increase outreach and access to under-served communities and individuals, including “disconnected” youth
- To enrich campus extracurricular activities (newspaper, sports, clubs, etc.) to create a more inviting and engaging social environment for students
- To re-think the way we approach “remediation” & basic skills
- To encourage educational innovations across the District to enhance student success
- To coordinate educational programs and services between colleges more effectively
- To explore regionalization of high-cost programs
- To improve orientation and matriculation processes
- To strengthen and up-date fundamental academic & vocational programs
- To offer more new programs in response to student and market demand
- To track students, student learning, and post-institutional outcomes more effectively.
- To expand the transfer function
- To integrate technology in the classroom
- To use technology and the internet to increase student outreach and engagement (via student email, portal, etc.)
- To supply voc ed programs with up-to-date technology & equipment
- To standardize Distance Education & course management systems
- To improve on-line registration
- To enhance college libraries and increase library access
- To enhance counseling and create “mentor” opportunities for students in their first terms at college

5. Human Resources

Strengths

Weaknesses

- Intellectual capital: collective expertise of admin., faculty, & staff
- Committed and caring faculty and staff
- Diversity of students and staff
- Employee longevity
- Strong faculty and staff networks and organizations

- Transience of leadership at college level
- Aging faculty, administration, and staff
- Unprepared and ineffective administrators
- Little faculty turnover, replacement, & thus diversity
- Weak professional and staff development & training
- Currency of faculty in academic fields
- Ineffective HR support from District
- Uneven and ineffective evaluation procedures
- Cumbersome personnel processes and unresponsive personnel commission
- Weak work ethic

Opportunities

Threats

- To inspire employee pride, sense of mission, and a strong District-wide work ethic
- To foster hiring processes that maximize faculty, staff, and administrative excellence
- To support administrative and faculty leadership development
- To renew HR by hiring new faculty and staff
- To diversify faculty and staff
- To encourage inter-college sharing of expertise and a regional approach to issues that minimizes unproductive competition between colleges
- To create a coherent program of internal training and development that promotes student success & learning
- To re-examine and redefine the purpose and function of the District's central HR office in a decentralized context
- To streamline hiring processes

- From faculty & staff "burn out" due to increasing mandates
- From a "talent & knowledge vacuum" due to non-replacement
- From increasing pace of technological change and student expectations
- From faculty's inability to remain current in field
- From staff's inability to train in response to new demands

6. External Relations, Legislation, & PR

Strengths

- Importance of institutional mission
- Long and distinguished history
- Visibility and strong identification with the community
- Strong public support
- Positive impact on the LA economy
- Political clout & effective lobbying efforts

Weaknesses

- Continuing image problems: Lack of a clear “message” to community
- Weak District (not college) identity
- Lack of pride & sense of shared purpose or mission
- Lack of entrepreneurial spirit
- Failure to connect with alumni
- Lack of direct media connection (no District TV or radio resources)
- Weak partnerships with LAUSD & 4-year institutions
- District-wide culture of isolation and insularity
- Ineffective grants support
- Cumbersome SFP contract processes

Opportunities

- To strengthen our partnerships with K-12 & the university systems
- To use our size and clout to make advance “big” issues to improve student success (fee decreases, lower text costs, FTES & non-credit reimbursement, equalization, voc ed support, expanding access, etc.)
- To improve our marketing and outreach efforts
- To strengthen individual college identities via branding
- To strengthen our image as a leader in urban education
- To exploit strong public support for education and bond programs
- To establish future collaborations with the city government, downtown businesses, and community organizations

Threats

- From political attacks on public sector and public education
- From an unclear Statewide vision of higher education
- From increasing poverty rates in service areas
- From the difficulty of working with partners outside our control
- From changes of leadership within the LAUSD
- From increasing racial tensions in region
- From increasing calls for institutional accountability

- To explore partnerships with large public agencies like the MTA, the DWP, etc.
- To build on our strong relationships with organized labor to explore new collaborations (mentoring and apprentice programs, workplace education, etc.)
- To develop a “service industry” model for outreach to industrial and private partners that goes beyond current SFP practices
- To increase external funding
- To improve SFP and grants support to colleges
- To strengthen ties to alumni

7. Facilities

Strengths

Weaknesses

- Bond program resources & new buildings

- Weak central oversight of Bond programs
- Lack of student-centered facilities (food services, study areas, etc.)
- Older college facilities are run-down and out-of-date
- Poor campus security

Opportunities

Threats

- To renew colleges via bond programs
- To improve all Bond oversight processes
- To design campus physical environments in support of student learning and student success
- To create “student-friendly” spaces at colleges
- To improve basic maintenance of current facilities across the District
- To explore public/private collaborations
- To enhance campus security and emergency procedures

- From lack of funding for maintenance to support new buildings
- From a lack of available instructional space during construction
- From increasing world-wide costs of construction and materials