



## Town Hall Meetings Overall Summary

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The Pasadena Area Community College District (PACCD) Educational Master Plan (EMP) is an important part of PACCD's long-range planning, designed to align the Community College District's efforts with the needs of its students and the greater community that it serves. The Educational Master Plan (EMP) will help outline a strategy for how PCC can best leverage the resources at its disposal to meet high standards and accommodate its projected enrollment by the year 2020.

As part of the PACCD Educational Master Plan (EMP) development process, PACCD hosted 12 Town Hall Meetings and three Presidents Advisory Council meetings. Over 200 community members and 21 City Council and Board of Education members participated in this round of outreach. Meetings were held over the course of September and October at multiple locations throughout the District, as follows:

- Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> (*Pasadena, CA*)
- Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> (*Arvadia, CA*)
- Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup> (*Sierra Madre, CA*)
- Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> (*South Pasadena, CA*)
- Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> (*Altadena, CA*)
- Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup> (*Temple City, CA*)
- Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup> (*Pasadena, CA*)
- Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> (*Pasadena, CA*)
- Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> (*Pasadena, CA*)

Outreach meetings served to educate participants about the EMP and identify desired process outcomes. Additionally, these meetings helped facilitate important discussion about participants' visions and values related to PACCD's programs; facilities; faculty and staff; outreach and communications; and other resources. The following key themes emerged over the course of the EMP community outreach process. Readers are also encouraged to read the full-array of comments and thoughts provided by the Town Hall Meeting participants. The individual meeting notes are extensive and indicative of the impressions, concerns, and hopes expressed in support of the college's future.

## Strengths and Assets

- **A beautiful and well-located campus.** Many Town Hall meeting participants noted the beauty and cleanliness of PCC's campus. PCC's geographic location and resulting accessibility to students throughout the Los Angeles region helps to position the college as an important local resource.
- **A high transfer rate.** PCC enjoys a high transfer rate to the University of California and California State University systems, consistently ranking among the State's community colleges with the highest transfer rates to four-year colleges and universities. PCC's Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) is a very strong existing alliance with UCLA.
- **Highly qualified faculty.** Meeting participants praised college faculty for the experience and expertise they bring to PCC, and consider the quality of faculty central to the quality of PCC's academic and career and technical education programs.
- **Diverse student body.** PCC's student body is incredibly diverse in terms of ethnicity, age and student ability. Town Hall meeting participants encouraged PCC to continue to nurture difference and diversity and to take advantage of opportunities created by this diversity.
- **Strong academic and extra-curricular programs.** PCC boasts excellent and innovative programs and activities that bring strong disciplinary focus to the campus and help provide students an identity within the college. Biotechnology and stem cell research and communications media are just two examples of exceptional academic and career and technical education programs. PCC's excellent extra-curricular programs include award-winning debate and math competition teams, and the Puente and Ujima programs.
- **Cost-effective educational opportunity.** PCC and community colleges throughout California provide students the opportunity to pursue their academic and professional goals at a low cost relative to the cost of attending four-year institutions and private vocational schools. The importance of this role in the education system cannot be understated, particularly given the current economic recession.

## Issues and Challenges

- **Limited campus accessibility.** Campus accessibility remains a concern with respect to transportation and parking access to the main campus. Some meeting participants noted an improvement to the parking situation with the new parking areas now available.
- **Limited access to core courses.** Meeting participants pointed to the clear need to improve access to classes, especially core, required classes and basic skills classes such as English and math. Completing associate level coursework is contingent upon the ability of students to access core courses when needed. Many individuals described a frustrating and onerous registration process as one barrier to entry. Others recommend creating more course sections in the disciplines needed to progress to help resolve this problem.

- **Low basic skills performance.** Many PCC students enter the college lacking basic English and math skills and are unprepared to excel or be successful in their classes. Among other serious repercussions, this results in the disproportionate use of college resources to teach basic skills.
- **Gaps in student achievement and representation.** Overall, PCC's Latino students do not perform as well as other groups in terms of basic skills. Town Hall meeting participants also noted the steady decline in the size of PCC's African American student body and its disproportionate size relative to that of the District's African American population. In addition, a relatively small number of District residents choose to study at PCC.
- **Lack of a consistent professional development program.** Participants commented on the need to provide faculty, staff, and managers with on-going professional development opportunities to support the needs of the diverse student population and to assist with economic, cultural, and organizational challenges going forward.
- **Lack of classroom space and laboratory facilities.** Meeting participants noted the lack of classroom space and science laboratory facilities available at PCC during peak class times and the need to optimize the use of existing space during all established hours of instruction, including non-peak hours and weekends, to increase eligibility for state funds.
- **Antiquated and inefficient database management system.** The college's current, antiquated online systems are often duplicative and individual systems such as registration, accounting, human resources and student accounts are managed separately, and often at the expense of efficiency and ease of use for faculty and staff as well as students.
- **Limited resources and inadequate State funding model.** The current State funding model does not provide sufficient resources for PCC.

## Opportunities

- **Strengthen and target community outreach.** Town Hall Meeting participants called on PCC to improve communications and outreach to local communities within the District and to reach out to students early in their education. Future outreach should target middle-school aged students and the PACCD's African American community. Involving PCC student ambassadors and greater faculty participation in PACCD communities are two strategies proposed by the community.
- **Build a culturally and linguistically representative faculty and staff.** Town Hall Meeting participants noted how important it will be to build a more diverse faculty and staff that better represent PCC's student body population both culturally and linguistically.
- **Streamline the registration process.** Many participants called on PCC to improve the registration process so that students can complete their degree and certificate programs,

and/or transfer to a four-year school, in a timely manner. The topic of priority registration for in-district students was also raised by many Town Hall Meeting participants.

- **Offer programs that align with the changing economy and are tailored to meet student needs.** As PCC student demographics continue to change and evolve, PCC must design and implement appropriate responses to meet student needs. In other words, PCC must provide specialized services rather than a “one size fits all” approach in order to meet the diverse needs of its students. Meeting participants frequently noted the importance of adapting and developing programs and facilities to meet the many needs of the changing economy.
- **Pursue contract education opportunities.** To provide the community with the support it needs, PCC must provide greater workplace-oriented and vocational training. Meeting participants encouraged PCC to pursue contract education opportunities.
- **Focus on student development of “soft skills.”** Many called for a more strategic focus on the development of the soft skills that all employers seek, including communications, time management and analytic problem-solving skills. Currently, many students demonstrate a lack of soft skills. By encouraging all faculty and programs to emphasize the development soft skills, PCC can help prepare students for success in the work force, irrespective of their career goals.
- **Develop sustainability curriculum.** Participants called on PCC to develop sustainability curriculum to prepare students to compete in the growing green collar economy. Community members also expressed interest in courses that will support individuals in their efforts to become more active and adept stewards of the region’s limited resources.
- **Update technology to keep pace with 21<sup>st</sup> century demands.** Town Hall meeting participants expressed the need for PCC to conduct a complete “information technology overhaul.” Suggested needs include an integrated database management system and a consistently reliable internet service with adequate capacity to meet campus needs. Meeting participants also called for additional science and laboratory facilities to accommodate science-based programs critical to developing skills in industries with anticipated future demand.
- **Explore the possibility of establishing a satellite campus and/or offering additional course sections at other locations in the District.** Some argued that establishing a satellite campus in one of the lesser served, more remote areas of the District would help alleviate problems with access to programs and services, and would also help resolve transportation-related sustainability concerns. Others cautioned that a satellite campus would need to provide the full range of student services in order to adequately serve students and meet State standards. All seemed to agree that it was important to find ways to provide course opportunities at locales other than the main and Community Education Center campuses to satisfy the needs of District students.

- **Build strategic partnerships and tap underutilized resources.** PCC can bolster student achievement and strengthen its academic and community-based programs by cultivating relationships with Pasadena’s and the surrounding communities’ rich array of resources and facilities. Participants frequently noted the need to build strategic partnerships with the K-8 and K-12 systems, California Institute of Technology (Caltech), the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) and the Art Center College of Design. Currently, PCC does not have an official alumni organization, indicating that existing PCC alumni remain an untapped resource for the college. In addition, the Pasadena City College Foundation could do more to secure resources for PCC and its students.
  
- **Advocate for changes to the current State funding model.** Town Hall participants called on PACCD to advocate for changes to the current State funding model in order to improve the availability of resources for community colleges.