Merced Community College District
Strategic Planning Report
August 2013
Merced Community College District
3600 M Street
Merced, California 95348-2898
www.mccd.edu
T 209.384.6000

Ronald C. Taylor, Ph.D
Superintendent/President

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Dennis Jordan, Board President
Cindy Lashbrook, Vice President
Les McCabe, Clerk
Gary Arzamendi
Wayne Hicks
Jean Upton
Joe Gutierrez
VISION
Merced College will provide students with a transformative educational experience by embracing innovative techniques and practices to empower a diverse college community.

MISSION
In a rapidly changing and increasingly global society faced with great challenges, Merced College faculty, staff, and leadership are committed to continuously improving methods of providing an accessible, affordable, and relevant education that improves the quality of life for all students and their communities.

Recognizing that education is never a mistake, Merced College serves as a gateway to the future by welcoming all students from our richly diverse region. We prepare our students for the next stage of their lives by providing the following:

- A supportive environment
- Committed and caring faculty, staff, and leadership
- Mutually beneficial community partnerships
- State-of-the-art facilities
- The latest technology

CORE VALUES

Student Success
We focus on student access and success.

Supportive Atmosphere
We support an atmosphere of trust where communication and teamwork cultivate a rich environment for teaching and learning.

Proactive
We utilize agility, innovation, and responsible risk-taking to create our preferred future.

Partnering
We actively partner with the community to respond to cultural, educational, economic development, and technological needs.

Diversity
We embrace diversity as a strength of our community and celebrate it in our institution.
Beginning in spring 2010, the Merced Community College District embarked on a strategic planning process that would guide the District toward achieving several major goals over the next three years. The product of that wide-ranging and inclusive process, The Merced Community College Strategic Plan 2010-2013, has impelled the District to act on numerous strategic initiatives, and has resulted in positive contributions toward meeting the Objectives of the Plan’s five primary goals.

The Strategic Plan’s goals and objectives for 2010-2013 are:

1 Assure Student Access and Success

- **OBJECTIVE 1.1**
  Provide students with support systems, programs, and development opportunities that maximize success.

- **OBJECTIVE 1.2**
  Develop and improve student success strategies which are data-driven and research based.

- **OBJECTIVE 1.3**
  Increase equitable access for a diverse population of learners with varied interests and goals.

2 Improve Communication Throughout the District

- **OBJECTIVE 2.1**
  Establish operational systems based on collaboration, teamwork, and open communication.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.2**
  Strengthen intergroup understanding via regular communication, professional development, dialogue, and exchange.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.3**
  Increase student success by building mutually beneficial partnerships with all groups that educate and support students.

- **OBJECTIVE 2.4**
  Enhance public relations outreach and develop and implement a branding initiative.
3 Enhance Technology and Systems Integration

- **OBJECTIVE 3.1**
  Prepare a Technology Plan that includes hardware/software, policies and training.

- **OBJECTIVE 3.2**
  Provide on-going training and education on use of the systems.

- **OBJECTIVE 3.3**
  Improve access to information via website delivery, cloud computing, and social media opportunities.

- **OBJECTIVE 3.4**
  Evaluate the appropriate use of technology in the delivery of instruction and student services.

4 Partner with the Community

- **OBJECTIVE 4.1**
  Develop alternative funding sources through partnerships with businesses, community groups, and foundations, as well as federal and state agencies.

- **OBJECTIVE 4.2**
  Improve our articulation with University Systems and P-12 education.

- **OBJECTIVE 4.3**
  Enhance alumni relations and involvement.

- **OBJECTIVE 4.4**
  Pursue mutually beneficial relationships with the community-at-large.

5 Promote a Sustainable, Supportive, and Safe Learning Environment

- **OBJECTIVE 5.1**
  Promote environmental stewardship and recycling.

- **OBJECTIVE 5.2**
  Develop a campus environment that fosters a productive and motivated team.

- **OBJECTIVE 5.3**
  Implement safety initiatives, including safe travel, safe campus, and emergency preparedness.

- **OBJECTIVE 5.4**
  Improve campus life for students.
Achieving these goals and objectives ensures that the District’s Vision, Mission, and Statement of Core Values are not only guiding principles, but are manifested in actual practice across all areas of teaching, learning, and operations. The goals identify strategic objectives which Merced College’s talented and energetic staff use to employ innovative tactics to achieve success. This report presents evidence that the District has addressed its strategic goals. Reporting achievements on these goals does not mean “closing the book” on them, however. We will update our strategic plan, and it is likely that some or all of the goals will form part of the new plan.

Ultimately, our students are the beneficiaries of strategic planning. Our work is performed on their behalf, and they will judge our efforts by their abilities to use the skills and knowledge we provide to achieve their own personal and professional goals. We believe that our investment of resources, both human and technological, toward our strategic planning goals will assist us in developing an institutional culture supported by research and refinement that will nurture student success.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The District has made substantial progress on each of the five goals outlined the Strategic Plan. This section frames that progress sequentially with examples of the work that has been accomplished in the last three years.

1 Assure Student Access and Success

Merced College prepares students for academic, professional, and personal success by providing a stimulating learning environment and an approach to student success that relies upon assessment, evidence-based planning, and continuous improvement across all academic programs, student services, and administrative functions.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Provide students with support systems, programs, and development opportunities that maximize success.

Merced College’s focus on student success begins with programs and services that support success. The Student Success Committee responded to student need by extending library hours, and it continues to build upon innovative instructional practices such as Learning Communities and Supplemental Instruction (SI). The Student Success Program provides coordination, training and support to 12 SI courses per semester. Research suggests that the program is having a positive impact upon student success. Seventy-five percent of SI courses show that students who attended SI sessions receive a higher mean grade compared with the students in the same class who did not attend (spring 2013).

Students are further supported with Math Labs and Tutorial Services. Supported by a full-time director of Student Success and support staff, these programs have experienced extraordinary growth in recent years. Study Central serves approximately 1,500 students per semester and has over 11,000 visits per semester. Math Lab serves approximately 700 students per semester and has approximately 4,000 visits per semester. Tutorial serves approximately 600 students per semester and has approximately 3,000 visits per semester.

A full schedule of Student Success Workshops is held each semester, serving approximately 300-400 students per semester. The workshops are videotaped and are available to students online, averaging over 1,100 views, thereby significantly expanding the number of beneficiaries of this valuable instructional support program.

The College has also developed online registration and has provided access to CCC Apply. Merced College proactively modified its priority registration policy and trained staff on new policies and procedures. And as noted in recent national studies, the College’s learning communities continue to enhance student success.
OBJECTIVE 1.2

Develop and improve student success strategies which are data-driven and research based.

The College uses data and research to develop student success strategies. The goals of the College’s Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) grant are to increase rates of transfer and degree attainment in underserved student populations. Compelling data on disparate rates of success, transfer, and graduation in students traditionally underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines and professions helped our region secure this $2.5 million collaborative grant. To support institutional planning through the program review process, the College established the Instructional Program Review and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (IPRSLOAC). IPRSLOAC uses institutional research to assist instructional programs in the development of a continual process of assessment and improvement.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Increase equitable access for a diverse population of learners with varied interests and goals.

Through the College’s development of its online registration process, and through its support of the California Community Colleges statewide registration system “CCC Apply,” students now face fewer barriers to enrolling for classes. Due to system technology enhancements, student assessment and course placement results are available in record time, facilitating more timely and effective academic advising.

Merced College’s student body reflects the rich ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the Central Valley region. Approximately 65 percent of our students self-identify as ethnic/racial “minorities.” Merced College is consistently deemed a federally recognized minority-serving institution, an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and an Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander (AANAPI) serving institution. Merced College also received new federal certification as an Hispanic-Serving Agricultural College and University (HSACU) during 2012 and 2013.

The College meets the needs of diverse learners of all backgrounds and ages through a wide array of program and course offerings provided at various locations throughout Merced County and surrounding areas. Courses are offered in-person and on-line. Distance education (“on-line”) course enrollments and enrollments at the Los Banos Center Campus continue to grow, approaching or exceeding nearly 2,000 students per semester respectively.

Merced College’s new, innovative Mobile Training Unit brings the “classroom” directly to business and industry partners seeking short-term training for their employees. Funded by a California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office grant, this 40-foot mobile training unit is equipped with instructors, course materials and 11 computer/simulator workstations. Barriers of cost, location and competing job responsibilities are reduced or eliminated, allowing “non-traditional” working students to conveniently upgrade in-demand knowledge and skills in such areas as automated industrial process controls, allied health, social media, customer service, diversity training, and more.

2 Improve Communication Throughout the District

District communications operate top-down, bottom-up, and laterally with information and dialog that engages students, staff, administrators, campus leaders, and all those potentially served by the college. Enhancing and extending the positive exchange of ideas remains of primary importance.
OBJECTIVE 2.1
Establish operational systems based on collaboration, teamwork, and open communication.

The College has instituted a framework for improving communication that relies on consultative planning groups such as College Council and the Standing Accreditation Committee, and collegial practices including College Hour and mandatory Area meetings. A milestone achievement, the comprehensive Integrated Planning, Program Review and Shared Governance Handbook is the primary District resource for all aspects of planning and serves as the institutional guide to accepted college practices and procedures.

OBJECTIVE 2.2
Strengthen intergroup understanding via regular communication, professional development, dialogue, and exchange.

Several communication vehicles are used to facilitate dialogue across the District. Since his arrival in July 2012, Superintendent/President Ron Taylor has set the stage for regular, open and productive communications among and between all constituent groups—including students. Dr. Taylor routinely issues updates through email communiques that sum up and clarify a wide variety of institutional concerns. Dr. Taylor has facilitated eight forums to improve understanding, generate ideas, solve fiscal issues, and to address administrative reorganization, state and District policy changes and more. During Convocation, Dr. Taylor also delivers general remarks in a collegewide address. During 2013, Dr. Taylor delivered the College’s first “State of the College” address to a packed audience that included faculty, students, managers, volunteers, Merced College Trustees, and representatives from education, business, industry and government. These communications are widely distributed to internal Merced College audiences and the public when feasible.

The Office of Institutional Advancement produces the monthly Campus Digest, the District’s
primary source for news and information. Focused-topic news and information is also disseminated through some divisional or unit newsletters. For example, Administrative Services releases newsletters and bulletins that detail day-to-day operations, including construction updates and information on facilities improvement projects.

Dialogue is further exchanged and professional development promoted through faculty-led flex workshops for new and seasoned faculty on such topics as curriculum, instructional methods, instructional technology, facilities planning, and local cultural history. Members of each new class of professors (those hired each year) are required to attend cohort training in a series of Teaching and Learning Academy workshops. Over the course of the semester, through several hours of training, new faculty undergo professional development, exchange ideas, and participate in cross-discipline dialogue.

Faculty librarians communicate regularly with discipline faculty regarding their information, research, and curriculum needs. During the 2013 Fall and Spring semesters, faculty librarians worked with discipline faculty from all instructional areas to revise the library collection development procedure. Faculty librarians frequently offer training on research using the full text journals and college databases available through the library during Flex Professional Development Days. These workshops allow not only for professional development, they also provide opportunities for cross discipline communication about supporting the curriculum needs of the faculty.

The library director worked with faculty and staff from instruction, student services, administrative services, and technology services in fall 2013 to develop a 50th Anniversary display for the Merced County Courthouse Museum that reflected not only the history of the growth of the College but also the strengths of academic and career-technical programs.

During 2013, Merced College launched a new, customized Merced College Traditions program open to all employees. This program strives to increase understanding and appreciation of Merced College’s beginnings and its important role in the region’s community, economic and social development—past, present and future. As of August 2013, approximately 75 employees have participated in this lively program, which is slated to become a regular offering to all new employees during 2014 and beyond.

In addition, the District’s public information officer presented effective communication training during Student Personnel Executive Committee and Technology and Institutional Research retreats. The Office of Grants and Institutional Research, working in conjunction with the Faculty Program Review Data Facilitator, provided individual and group faculty trainings on the use of Institutional Effectiveness Metrics for instructional program review. Videos and other electronic and print resources were provided to augment these trainings.

**Objective 2.3**

*Increase student success by building mutually beneficial partnerships with all groups that educate and support students.*

The College has developed several local and regional partnerships that advance its mission to support student success. The Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant, in collaboration with California State University Stanislaus, promotes science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM) among underserved populations. The College also collaborates effectively through its membership on the P-16 Business-Education Alliance of Merced County, ensuring that college faculty and staff stay abreast of curricular developments that bridge educational segments in our region.

**Objective 2.4**

*Enhance public relations outreach and develop and implement a branding initiative.*
Various public information activities have contributed to enhancing the College’s reputation and image. The Office of Public Affairs had produced “MC Matters,” a weekly column in the Merced Sun-Star. The Superintendent/President has published several “Op Ed” columns for local daily newspapers. The public information officer and the print services director routinely consult and produce external marketing projects that promote a consistent and professional look. In addition, the District’s Public Information, Marketing and Style Guide was updated and expanded. The public information officer contributed a “low cost marketing” workshop during the College’s Manager and Supervisor Summit presented by the Workplace Learning Resource Center.

Across the District, an awareness of the importance of public relations, marketing, and branding is developing. Social media has taken on a central role in helping to create a “brand identity” for the College. Some 20 departments and programs manage their own Facebook pages, while the Office of Institutional Advancement continues to manage the District’s Facebook and Twitter sites. The Learning Resources Center also manages an active Twitter site.

The College’s public image also benefited from marketing campaigns that supported the 50th Anniversary celebrations. A 50th Anniversary logo was created to link together all communications and marketing efforts. The College was further “branded” through promotional products such as 50th Anniversary lapel pins and bookmarks, which were given to the community members who attended anniversary events. The Foundation presented major donors with limited edition anniversary clocks.

An on-going program of press releases, radio interviews, and radio and print advertisements all promoted the College during 2010-2013. A marketing campaign to boost enrollment was conducted ahead of the Fall 2013 Semester.
3 Enhance Technology & Systems Integration

The use of technology to support and deliver education has been one of the College’s most important goals. An ongoing program of maintenance, innovation, and education supports student learning, instructional effectiveness, and staff development.

**OBJECTIVE 3.1**

*Prepare a Technology Plan that includes hardware/software, policies and training.*

A necessary accomplishment of the Strategic Plan is the Technology and Research Master Planning Committee’s **draft technology plan**, which has been completed and approved by College Council. The plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees during its August 2013 meeting. Once approved, the Technology and Research Master Plan will be broadly disseminated to the College community.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2**

*Provide on-going training and education on use of the systems.*

**Districtwide technology training** has been robust, regular and on-going since 2011-2012. The **Audio-Visual Technology Resource Center** training is provided by appointment. This includes **SharePoint training**, and **online systems Blackboard training**. The library provides additional training resources, including learning videos on the Library’s web page. The videos include Access to the Portal, Find a Reserve Book, Use EBSCOhost online periodical database. An **online training video list** is available through the Portal. The District continues to provide training.

**OBJECTIVE 3.3**

*Improve access to information via website delivery, cloud computing, and social media opportunities.*

The Office of Institutional Advancement has managed the District’s **Facebook** and **Twitter** sites since March 2010. This effort has continued to attract “visitors” and allows the College to impart important news and information. Other areas of the College use social media to release information and promote programs. The District’s **public website** was improved in January 2012 and the **SharePoint portal** was upgraded. The **Cloud Computing Task Force** produced recommendations in May 2012. A **Social Media Policy** was developed in November 2012 and included as part of the District’s Acceptable Use Policy.

**OBJECTIVE 3.4**

*Evaluate the appropriate use of technology in the delivery of instruction and student services.*

The District conducted an **assessment and evaluation of technology** through districtwide surveys. The **software survey** was conducted in spring 2012 and the **hardware survey** was conducted in fall 2012. Each spring, **instructional technology evaluation surveys** are conducted through Audio Visual program review process. The **Course Management System Task Force** produced recommendations in 2011-2012.

4 Partner with the Community

Establishing sustainable partnerships within and throughout local communities remains an essential part of the College’s ability to fulfill its mission. These partnerships include all campus groups, and extend to interaction with, and outreach to, groups throughout the Merced area and beyond.
OBJECTIVE 4.1
Develop alternative funding sources through partnerships with businesses, community groups, and foundations, as well as federal and state agencies.

The Merced College Foundation continues to develop public and private support and has strengthened partnerships with local businesses, community groups, and foundations. The Foundation secured about $23,000 in 50th Anniversary sponsorships from vendors and area businesses. The Foundation continues to support various campus fundraising efforts, including the Periodic Table Project. The Foundation raised $386,328 to achieve 93 percent of its Osher Endowment Campaign fundraising goal. The Foundation has begun to work more closely with the President’s Office in the cultivation of new donors and providing stewardship of current donors. The Foundation has submitted grants to support a theatrical performance geared toward Hispanic college students and has partnered in numerous other grant-funded projects.

OBJECTIVE 4.2
Improve our articulation with University Systems and P-12 education.

The College is a partner in the HSI STEM grant. One of the major activities required by the grant was to develop articulation teams consisting of transfer advisors and faculty from Merced College and CSU Stanislaus. The articulation teams identified articulation issues or barriers and then worked to resolve them. College faculty also developed “Math Tune-Up,” a math bridge program in partnership with local high schools. Transfer Model Curriculum has been developed in several academic majors to facilitate student transfer to regional campuses of the California State University, pursuant to the provisions of Senate Bill 1440.
OBJECTIVE 4.3
Enhance alumni relations and involvement.

The College’s year-long 50th Anniversary Celebration provided a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with the local community and the College’s alumni. The fall 2012 Alumni Weekend events included a rock concert, and a Homecoming BBQ and Car Show. Merced College alumni were further recognized during the Merced County Historical Society’s exhibit of Merced College memorabilia and artifacts in fall 2012. Another major milestone was the Foundation’s support of the inaugural Sports Hall of Fame induction event in spring 2013. A special “memory book,” the Inferno Redux—Merced College 1962-2012, covering the first five decades of the College’s existence, was compiled, published and offered for sale to the public. The College also invited the community to witness the sealing-up of a time capsule that contained contemporary college artifacts.

OBJECTIVE 4.4
Pursue mutually beneficial relationships with the community-at-large.

The College continued to reach out to local communities with opportunities to build relationships, including activities surrounding the Los Banos Campus’ 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2011. With this and the District’s 50th Anniversary events, Merced College enjoyed positive relations with the public.

The Superintendent/President built relationships through his participation in UC Merced’s Urban Land Institute meetings. Advisory committees continued to meet, including the Agriculture, Mechanized Agriculture, Allied Health, Business, Administrative Office Management, and Radiologic Technology programs. The Foundation hosted an invitation-only reception for President and Mrs. Taylor in December 2012.

Merced College continued to be the social and cultural center of the local community through the “Book One” program, which included partners such as the Merced County Public Library, Merced County Historical Society and Courthouse Museum, League of Women Voters, Merced County Chamber of Commerce, and others. The Library hosted the Central Valley premier of Frosted Yellow Flowers, a film biography of actress Anna May Wong, in partnership with the Merced County Public Library and the Friends of the Merced County Library. The College also collaborated in activities with the Japanese-American Citizens League. The College’s athletic teams also reach out to the community regularly in their fundraising efforts, and the newly established Hall of Fame has strengthened community ties.

5 Promote a Sustainable, Supportive, and Safe Learning Environment

Mindful use, care, and sustainability of our physical environment, and conservation of resources benefits student success and improves the workplace, and campus, climate, and culture

OBJECTIVE 5.1
Promote environmental stewardship and recycling.

The District has placed recycling canisters at the main campus in Merced. With grant funding, the City of Los Banos provided the Los Banos Campus with recycling containers. The college chapter of the Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society sponsors an annual “E-Waste Collection Day” open to the public. The College’s “cost-savings and revenue generating” process identified a number of suggestions that will help the College continue to improve its environmental stewardship programs.
OBJECTIVE 5.2

*Develop a campus environment that fosters a productive and motivated team.*

The annual fall Convocation continues to include a *motivational speaker*. The campus environment has improved with observation of a “Part-Time Faculty Month,” and staff morale has improved through the celebration of CSEA Week. The Management Team has redesigned its meetings to include more *training and team-building activities*. Team building was also accomplished with an *accreditation contest* that provided the winner with a reserved parking spot for one year.

OBJECTIVE 5.3

*Implement safety initiatives, including safe travel, safe campus, and emergency preparedness.*

Pedestrian safety has improved through the installation of *stop lights at the intersection of Stadium and Yosemite avenues*. *Flashing crosswalk lights and speed warning signs* have been installed on internal roads. The College’s Safety Committee has also implemented further safety measures through the *Alert U system*, the *Emergency Broadcast System*, the *Blue Light Stations*, and through periodic *Fire Drills*.

OBJECTIVE 5.4

*Improve campus life for students.*

The District continues to provide support for *Associated Students of Merced College activities*. *Student clubs* continue to enhance campus life. The District’s physical environment has been improved with additional outdoor seating. *District buildings and grounds* continue to be maintained in an effort to promote campus life.