ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE

STRATEGIC PLAN
2009 - 2012

DECEMBER 2009

INTRODUCTION

Commitment to Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a vision made real, the crystallization of the future intentions of an organization. It emanates from the mission (in ECC's case, mission and values) and sets forth goals and objectives that will help the College to realize its mission and values to the fullest.

A strategic plan is about the big picture, not the small details. Simply stated, it is a process by which a given organization assesses its current position (internally and vis-à-vis external changes) consistent with its values and mission, determines where it wants to be within a given frame of time, and decides how it wants to get there. Brief enough to be printed in booklet or pamphlet form (i.e., succinct enough to be readily referenced), it exists as a working document to provide continuing direction and guide institutional policies and practices. A properly conceived strategic plan informs all employees of institutional priorities and their own obligations during the life of the plan.

Strategic planning:

- First and foremost, links institutional mission and values to goals and objectives. In each instance, it should be clear that goals and objectives put forth should emanate from the mission and all explicit and implicit values or principles upon which the institution operates.
- Attempts to match institutional strengths with external opportunities (e.g., provide quality academic and continuing education programs to meet existing and nascent workplace needs of employers).
- Looks broadly at the organization's needs and obligations, rather than emphasizing merely one or two organizational units.
- Solicits input from widely varied constituencies on needs and priorities.
- Emphasizes major issues that can be addressed purposefully by unit heads.
- Requires leadership from the top, but assumes the active involvement of all employees.
- Is underpinned by strategic thinking, i.e., thinking that is forward-looking and both willing and able to adapt as new threats and opportunities arise.

Essex County College has been committed to carrying out these principles in the planning process, and remains committed to them as we utilize the plan as a working document for current and future endeavors (budgeting, area-wide operations, etc.). While we will remain committed to achieving all goals and objectives contained herein, at the same time we anticipate that new goals and objectives may arise that will need to be integrated into the plan.

This latter point is of signal importance as we, as a community of individuals, proceed: we must keep foremost in our awareness the ability to respond both institutionally and programmatically, based on changing external environments, research findings, and policy shifts at the County, State, and federal levels.

Readers will note that the largest number of goals and objectives relate the core function of teaching, student learning, and the assessment of learning. Other goals and objectives exist to support the central academic function, specifically relating to resource development, the implementation of improved retention initiatives, and the continuing implementation of key information technology initiatives.

From the outset, senior administrators stressed to members of the college community as a whole the advantages and strengths of strategic planning.   It will, we affirmed:

- Enable us to move beyond the status quo in determining the direction(s) in which we wish to move.
- Enable us to increase our responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- Foster team approaches to work and problem solving.
- Increase the understanding of all employees by succinctly setting forth our mission, values, goals, and objectives.

Background

Since opening its doors in 1968, Essex County College has been committed to determining new and better ways to provide academic and continuing education programs of the highest quality to area residents. Results of Middle States accreditation visits, program-based accreditation reviews, college assessment, and both alumni and employer feedback all attest to the fact that the college has done and is doing a good job in advancing the agenda for our students.

Nevertheless, ever more can be done, and this plan sets forth goals and objectives that will enable us to improve both individual programs and the overall performance of the institution.

In preparation for undertaking the development of the current plan, members of the College community referenced two main documents. These included:

- The ECC mission and values statements, which have been reaffirmed periodically by both the President's Cabinet and the institution's Board of Trustees.
- The 2005-09 *Essex County College Institutional Strategic Plan* and all goals and objectives contained therein. Crucial objectives that had not been fully attained (or are perennial in nature) were carried forward into this strategic plan.

Planning Assumptions

Strategic plan goals and objectives must be based in reality, consistent with institutional mission, values and resources.   All members of the College community agreed upon this.

Assumptions included the following:

- Forecasting inevitable changes (revenues, emerging employment areas, etc.) with absolute certainty over a three-year period is impossible, and that the current strategic plan must therefore be a working document, subject to amendments based on changing circumstances.
- Revenues from both State and County sources will remain severely constrained in coming years. Revenues from these sources will be unlikely to increase appreciably in the next three years; they may be stable; and they may even decrease. The College will therefore have to find savings elsewhere in the institution in order to fund increases in new institutional and programmatic initiatives. This may be doubly difficult, since the institution has substantially exhausted its reserve of non-personnel areas in which economies might be implemented.
- New sources of revenue will be sought to partially offset constrained funding from State and County sources. Grants income will need to be increased, as will private giving through the Essex County College Foundation.
- Despite financial constraints, new academic programs will need to be added and existing ones further developed in order to meet marketplace requirements. This effort will also support the institution's efforts to sustain enrollment and increase the number of graduates. Additionally, programs that are no longer responsive to student needs should be deactivated.
- Developmental education will continue to be one of the main focuses of the College, given that basic skills scores continue to indicate that approximately 90 percent of new students require at least one English or mathematics course at the pre-college level. The College will need to continue to identify and implement new and better ways of delivering developmental education to ECC students.
- Assessment will continue to be an important concern for faculty and staff as the institution seeks to further implement classroom and institutional assessment initiatives.
- Given the construction of the Health Sciences Building and the parking deck, no further major construction projects are envisioned in the next three years. However, selected projects of a more modest nature will be undertaken, especially those designed to provide additional classroom space.

Process

The 2009-12 Strategic Plan was developed in a fundamentally different way than all preceding plans. In contrast to previous instances where a carefully selected steering committee and subcommittees existed to develop both goals and objectives, in this

instance the Dean of Faculty suggested that all College employees be given an opportunity to provide input in terms of objectives.

To begin with, a large group of faculty and administrative leaders met several times in July and August 2009 to delineate institutional goals. The goals that were set forth were the following and are used in this plan:

Goal 1: Develop new credit and non-credit programs, courses and community offerings that meet emerging needs while ensuring that all current programs and offerings are of superior quality and responsive to academic and labor market demands and community interests.

Goal 2: Implement and upgrade academic and student support programs and services to improve students' access, recruitment, retention, and success.

Goal 3: Recruit, retain, develop and promote high quality faculty and staff.

Goal 4: Develop resources to support effective programs and align the College's budget with the strategic plan.

Goal 5: Advance all areas of the College by applying emerging technologies and upgrading the physical environment.

Goal 6: Promote a culture of assessment throughout the College.

Next, instead of having the same group or other select groups develop objectives, employee groupings throughout the institution gave a morning and part of an afternoon during Convocation Day (August 31, 2009) activities to developing relevant objectives relating to the six goals. Thus, all faculty, administrators and professionals were able to contribute the process, rather than the same individuals who are usually recruited for such tasks.

The outcome of this novel approach appears below. It is not certain whether this was a superior approach to the one previously used, but it is certain that it was far more inclusive than ever before.

Proposed Implementation Strategy

In early December 2009, the draft plan (incorporating suggestions from throughout the College) was disseminated to the College community for review. Feedback was again incorporated in the draft and was forwarded to the Deans' Council and the President's Cabinet for review and approval.

Subsequent to the approval of the plan, area heads responsible for given goals and objectives will add appropriate performance indicators, timelines, and costs, to be compiled and updated in separate documents. Updates on all objectives will be provided at Deans' Council annually. Shortfalls will be addressed by members of the Deans' Council and Cabinet, as needed.

This plan will be used in conjunction with other plans for planning, budgeting and other purposes. The other plans include: the Academic Master Plan; the Assessment Plan; The Facilities Master Plan; and the Information Technology Master Plan.

[Note: To reiterate, this plan is a working document developed by a large number of committed faculty and staff. The strategies that are listed are not deemed to be all-inclusive. Area heads may wish to add additional strategies, as circumstances change and as the need otherwise arises.]

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1.0 Develop new credit and non-credit programs, courses and community offerings that meet emerging needs while ensuring that all current programs and offerings are of superior quality and responsive to academic and labor market demands and community interests.

Objective 1.1 Enhance the on-going process to review labor market trends and propose the development of new programs and courses. This process also includes a review of existing and deactivated courses and programs for potential restructuring and/or revitalization.

Suggested Strategies

1.1.1 Track and follow labor market trends.

1.1.2 Utilize labor market trend analysis to implement new programs and courses.

1.1.3 Develop new certificates that students can earn independent of associate degree programs, or during their associate degree programs.

Objective 1.2 Develop, for all credit and non-credit offerings, formative and summative assessment tools.

Suggested Strategies

1.2.1 Program faculty within divisions will explore and implement appropriate assessment tools.

1.2.2 Develop/refine support structure to produce competent graduates.

1.2.3 When feasible, commission and utilize outside evaluators for grant-funded projects and utilize the findings to strengthen and improve ECC program offerings.

Objective 1.3 Create linkages between credit, certificate and non-credit offerings for the purpose of creating learner-centered pathways to each succeeding level of achievement.

Suggested Strategies

1.3.1 Intra-college divisional and departmental cooperation.

1.3.2 Review course offerings.

Objective 1.4 Strengthen and expand partnerships with local high schools, four-year institutions, and the private sector.

Suggested Strategies

1.4.1 Expand and renew existing partnerships.

1.4.2 Expand high school outreach initiatives to include all parts of the county.

Goal 2.0 Implement and upgrade academic and student support programs and services to improve students' access, recruitment, retention, and success.

Objective 2.1 Enhance counseling, guidance, and support

Suggested Strategies

2.1.1 Enhance orientation programs.

2.1.2   Continue to develop and enhance student programs that foster peer support and networking.

2.1.3   Better educate students about the availability and use of the College's online advisement and registration system.

Objective 2.2 Develop additional approaches to enhance and better support academic instruction.

Suggested Strategies

2.2.1   Continue to develop a pre-freshman summer bridge program.

2.2.2   Continue to develop Honors Program

2.2.3   Promote and enhance the use of technology and information literacy.

Objective 2.3 Develop a comprehensive assessment plan for developmental education

Suggested Strategies

2.3.1   Examine current course descriptions and course outcomes.

2.3.2   Maintain, modify, or develop assessment instruments and activities that will best provide appropriate evaluation of developmental courses.

2.3.3   Present the developed instruments to the appropriate programs and divisions with an eye toward program improvement.

Objective 2.4 Continue to develop and implement integrated marketing strategies.

Suggested Strategies

2.4.1   Better coordinate academic and marketing goals.

2.4.2   Extend marketing into relevant areas beyond recruitment.

2.4.3   Unify internal and external college messages and presentations.

2.4.4   Continue to employ innovative methods of delivery.

2.4.5   Aggressively market our image to internal and external constituencies.

GOAL 3.0 <u>Recruit, retain, develop and promote high quality faculty and staff.</u>

<u>Objective 3.1</u> Recruit a diverse faculty and staff at various stages of their academic careers.

<u>Suggested Strategies</u>

3.1.1   Advertise in multiple media for open faculty positions. Prefer terminal degree, if appropriate to field of study.

3.1.2   Seek out individuals at various stages of their academic and professional careers.

3.1.3   Promote ECC as an exemplary work environment.

Objective 3.2 Provide appropriate professional support and development opportunities for adjuncts, full-time faculty and staff to enable them to create and employ innovative and current instructional strategies.

<u>Suggested Strategies:</u>

3.5.1   Orient and mentor new full-time and adjunct faculty.

3.5.2   Encourage faculty to upgrade their subject area expertise through formal and informal education.

3.5.3   Offer institutional staff development opportunities for non-teaching personnel.

Goal 4.0 <u>Develop resources to support effective programs and align the College's budget with the strategic plan.</u>

<u>Objective</u> **4.1** Increase involvement of alumni for advocacy and fundraising.

<u>Suggested Strategies:</u>

4.1.1   Investigate use of Classmates.com and other websites for contacting alumni.

4.1.2   Upgrade Banner to use the Alumni Module or seek alternate software for serving the alumni community.

4.1.3   Apprise alumni of critical issues facing the College in order to increase advocacy.

4.1.4   Identify and recognize high achieving alumni.

Objective 4.2 Increase private giving to the institution

   Suggested Strategies:

   4.2.1   Increase endowment funding to the College.

   4.2.2   Involve Foundation Board members in College activities.

   4.2.3   Adopt relevant software for data management purposes, especially relating to private giving.

   4.2.4   Establish a historical database with private giving information.

   4.2.5   Accelerate prospect research.

Objective 4.3 Increase grant funding to the institution from federal, State and County sources.

   Suggested Strategies:

   4.3.1   Identify institutional needs for governmental and foundation resources.

   4.3.2   Research and identify governmental (incl. federal stimulus funding) and foundation resources that address institutional needs.

   4.3.3   Prepare and submit proposals for governmental and foundation funding sources.

   4.3.4   Increase outreach to faculty to encourage greater participation in grants activities.

   4.3.5   Link the grant seeking process with the College's efforts to create credit and non-credit programs to meet the needs of business and other employers.

Objective 4.4 Reinvigorate the library liaison system to upgrade the library's collections.

 Suggested Strategies:

 4.4.1 Librarians to work with identified faculty to upgrade and update collections by discipline.

GOAL 5.0 Advance all areas of the College by applying emerging technologies and upgrading the physical environment.

Objective 5.1 Maintain, renovate and sustain the physical infrastructure essential to supporting effective programs and expanding IT capabilities.

 Suggested Strategies:

 5.1.1 Identify the infrastructure requirements of the academic programs.

 5.1.2 Develop a new IT replacement plan, allowing for the upgrading of institutional computing capacity, as per software requirements.

 5.1.3 Develop a new Facilities Master Plan that responds to institutional needs.

Objective 5.2 Improve the skills of all constituents within the college community by providing training to assist students, faculty, and staff in utilizing information resources.

 Suggested Strategies:

 5.2.1 Enhance technology training for students, faculty and staff.

 5.2.2 Enhance the level of computer and information literacy for students.

Objective 5.3 Policies and guidelines for distance learning courses and web supported activities must be established including the development of assessment procedures.

 Suggested Strategies:

 5.3.1 Provide the technology infrastructure for distance learning.

5.3.2   Develop a model training program that can be disseminated throughout the college.

5.3.3   Coordinate development of policies and standards for distance learning.

5.3.4   Assess distance education initiatives.

Objective 5.4 Renovate science laboratories.

5.4.1   Renovate all outdated science labs according to specifications of the faculty and chairperson.

GOAL 6.0 <u>Promote a culture of assessment.</u>

Objective 6.1 Develop new institutional assessment plan.

Suggested Strategies

6.1.1   Work with relevant bodies to establish guidelines for the assessment plan.

6.1.2   Relate outcomes assessment to the college's budgeting process.

6.1.3   Inform the college community of the existence and importance of the institutional assessment plan.

Objective 6.2 Improve the college's methodology to assess <u>institutional</u> effectiveness.

Suggested Strategies

6.2.1   Provide evidence that the college is accomplishing its mission, goals and objectives.

6.2.2   Provide evidence that the college uses outcomes measures for institutional improvement and renewal.

Objective 6.3 Improve the college's methodology to assess <u>program</u> effectiveness.

Suggested Strategies

6.3.1   Review the assessment process of the Standards and Assessment Advisory Council.

6.3.2   Review programmatic changes that were made based on program evaluations.

Objective 6.4 Improve the college's methodology to assess <u>general education</u> effectiveness.

Suggested Strategies

6.4.1   Review the progress made to date regarding the evaluation of the college's general education core.

6.4.2   Review the content of the college's general education core to assure that it meets the Middle States Standard on general education.

6.4.3   Provide evidence that the general education core is effective and that the college's assessment efforts are used for curricular improvement.

Objective 6.5 Improve the college's methodology to assess <u>student learning.</u>

Suggested Strategies

6.5.1   Review the outcomes measures currently used.

6.5.2   Assure that the systematic assessment of student learning is occurring and that information from such assessment leads to improvement.

6.5.3   Revisit outcome assessment strategies and conduct workshops to help faculty learn new strategies.