

Executive Summary

Key Findings from the Environmental Scan

The San Diego Mesa College campus is situated between the Linda Vista and Kearny Mesa areas in the City of San Diego. The College enrolls approximately 25,000 students each semester, the majority of which are residents of the City of San Diego. As part of the San Diego Community College District, Mesa College serves students in its neighboring communities as well as students from the larger SDCCD service area, City of San Diego, and San Diego County.

► *Mesa College Service Area*

The SDCCD service area includes most major areas within the City of San Diego (excluding Rancho Bernardo and Otay Mesa). The Mesa College service area is comprised of the following San Diego communities:

- Linda Vista
- Clairemont
- La Jolla
- Mission Bay
- Mission Valley
- Pacific Beach
- Old Town
- Navajo
- Grantville
- Serra Mesa
- Tierrasanta

Historically, the participation rate for the Mesa College service area has been higher than that of the larger city. In 2008, about 5% of residents in the Mesa College service area enrolled at the college, compared to about 3% of all San Diego city residents. By 2010, the percentage of service area residents enrolling at the College decreased to 3%, while the percentage of San Diego city residents remained stable (3%). Over the past five years, an increasing percentage of Mesa College's students have come from outside of the Mesa College service area. By Fall 2012, while roughly two thirds of the college's students came from the SDCCD service area, just 30% came from Mesa's service area, and about one in three students came from outside of the SDCCD service area.

Over the next ten years, the City of San Diego city population is expected to increase at a higher than average rate (compared to San Diego County, California, or the nation). The San Diego city population is also projected to change markedly between 2010 and 2050, with significant demographic shifts occurring in terms of age and ethnicity. Specifically, the population of older adults (age 50 and over) is expected to increase substantially, as are the Latino and Asian populations.

In Fall 2012, 11% of Mesa College students were first-time students, and this percentage has remained relatively steady over the past five years. Another 7% were high school students concurrently enrolled at the college. One in five graduates from SDCCD feeder high schools enrolls at Mesa College within a year of graduation. Given that 12th grade enrollment is expected to remain flat in San Diego County for the foreseeable future, the number of high school graduates entering the college is not expected to change dramatically over the next several years.

Additionally, from Fall 2008 to Fall 2012, some significant demographic shifts occurred among Mesa College students. The number of students enrolling at the College increased overall but decreased for some areas within the Mesa service area (most notably Mission Bay) but increased for areas in the City Heights, Golden Hill, Sherman Heights, Chollas View, Logan Heights, and Encanto communities. In addition, the College experienced significant growth in the number of students enrolling from South Bay (Chula Vista, National City, San Ysidro, and Otay Mesa) communities.

The San Diego economy has shown gradual improvement in the years following the Great Recession. The San Diego County unemployment rate decreased from 10.9% in 2010 and 2011 to 7.8% in 2013, reflecting national and statewide trends. San Diego County's major employers include organizations in the defense sector, hospitality and tourism, gaming, and healthcare industry employers. Jobs in the county are expected to grow at an average of 19% by the end of the decade. Between 2010 and 2020, significant job growth is projected in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; Professional, Technical and Scientific Services; and Accommodation and Food Services industry areas. In addition, among the fastest growing occupations in San Diego County are Veterinary Technicians, Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners, Market Research Analysts and Specialists, Fitness Instructors, and Database Administrators. Mesa College offers academic programs leading to degrees and/or transfer to four-year programs in each of these areas.

In light of the demand for highly technical skills and a bachelor's degree in many of these occupations, the college may consider the possibility of offering bachelor's degrees in specialized, technical fields. At the time of publication, there was a bill circulating in the California state legislature (SB 850) to move forward with pilot community colleges offering specific bachelor's degree programs in technical fields, including allied health and technology programs. Given the labor market data for San Diego County, combined with the heavily impacted programs at the largest four-year institution, San Diego State University, Mesa College is poised to participate in this pilot program should it receive approval from the state legislature.

Key Findings from the Internal Scan

► Enrollment and Full-Time Equivalent Students

From Fall 2008 to Fall 2012, an era marked by the Great Recession of 2008, Mesa College saw a 9% increase in unduplicated student headcount and an equivalent increase in course enrollment. During the same time period the number of White students enrolled at the College decreased while the number of Latino students increased dramatically. At the same time, the College's online course enrollment increased by 18% from Fall 2008 to Fall 2012, and in Fall 2012, online courses accounted for over one in ten enrollments college-wide. Contrastingly, the College's annual Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES) total decreased between Fall 2008 and Fall 2012, largely due to the near elimination of summer term courses in 2011 and 2012.

► Mesa College Student Characteristics

In some respects, Mesa College students resemble the "traditional college student," which largely characterizes college students as young adults (typically 18 to 24 years of age), focused on bachelor's degree programs, enrolled full-time, unemployed, and enrolled primarily in daytime classes. In terms of age, educational objective and daytime student status, the majority of Mesa students fall into the traditional college student category. Although relatively few Mesa College students enrolled in the college on a full-time basis, the majority of the college's students in Fall 2012 were between 18 and 24, and most Mesa College students identified transfer (with or without an associate degree) as their educational objective. In addition, as of Fall 2012, over one in ten Mesa students was concurrently enrolled in a four-year university, and nearly half of the College's students were enrolled exclusively in daytime classes.

However, in other aspects, Mesa College student characteristics more closely resemble those of a diverse cross-section of learners, or "non-traditional" college students. Firstly, Mesa College students have become an increasingly diverse group in recent years and now largely reflect the ethnic diversity of the greater San Diego region. For example, Latino students comprised 30% of the entire Mesa student population, a sharp increase over the 20% figure in Fall 2008. In addition, as of Fall 2012, over one in four Mesa students indicated they were the first in their family to attend college, and the vast majority of Mesa students enrolled part-time. Moreover, the percentage of first-time Mesa College students placing into developmental, or "basic skills," writing and mathematics courses remains over 60%, on average.

This information highlights the need for the College to consider the diverse cultural backgrounds, levels of academic preparation, and learning styles of its students in designing educational and support services and programs to support student success.

► *College Progress on Core Institutional Effectiveness Indicators*

The College's 2010-2011 Strategic Plan tied specific key performance indicators to the college-wide goals identified in the 2007 Educational Master Plan. These indicators included course success rates, first-time student persistence, number of degrees and certificates conferred, and other measures of student progress and achievement. Since the 2007 Educational Master Plan was published, the College has focused a variety of initiatives aimed at improving success and achievement among students from underrepresented groups, ranging from accelerated developmental English and mathematics courses to integrated instructional and student support programs aimed at improving educational outcomes for underrepresented students.

Over the past five years, the College has made notable progress in key areas of student achievement and progress. For example, the college-wide course success rates have increased by 3% over 2008-2009 figures, and fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring first-time student persistence rates have increased by roughly 10%. Each percentage increase in these core indicators translates into progress and success for a number of the college's students. Moving the needle in each of these areas is a significant achievement for the College, one that the College aims to build upon as it moves forward.

► *The Vision for Mesa: Perspectives from College Stakeholders*

In order to obtain input on the college's current status and future from college faculty, staff, students, and administrators, members of each department, program, and service area across the college were asked to participate in focus groups and interviews. During the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked to analyze their program or service area, as well as the college as a whole, and discuss the strengths, challenges, external influences, and vision at both levels.

On the whole, employees and students described the college as a comprehensive institution, comprised of a diverse campus community and boasting a rigorous curriculum. Students greatly valued the special programs and services the college offers to support student success, but recommended expanding these services to the larger student population. Employees noted the budget constraints linked to the Great Recession, as well as the accompanying hiring freezes for faculty and staff, among other things, as significant challenges. In terms of vision for the future, employee and student recommendations centered on the following points:

- Maintain a comprehensive community college mission
- Foster innovation across the college
- Enhance partnerships with community and industry
- Cultivate an inclusive, learning centered environment
- Strengthen communication strategies
- Provide a collaborative learning environment for students
- Build a stronger internal sense of community
- Advance the college's reputation for excellence
- Streamline the ways in which we do our work

Implications for the Mesa College Educational Master Plan

The results of the external scan revealed potential for growth in specific college programs, as well as a general pattern of growth and economic recovery for the San Diego region. In addition, population projections for San Diego County point toward significant growth in the region's Latino, Asian, and older adult populations, and stagnant high school senior enrollment. At the same time, the Mesa student population is becoming increasingly diverse, and the college is drawing a larger portion of its enrollment from communities in the central and southern portions of San Diego County.

The college has made significant progress in key college-wide goal areas related to student progress and achievement over the past five years. Mesa College students and employees shared a variety of insightful thoughts and suggestions for the college's future, both operationally and in terms of outcomes for Mesa students. New strategic directions, goals, and objectives were developed and informed by the results of the external scan, internal scan, and student and employee interviews and focus groups.