

Learn.

Defining us
The Learning College Yearbook
2010-2011



ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



ERNEST A. LARA, PH.D.
EMCC President

Welcome to the Estrella Mountain Community College 2010–2011 Learning College Yearbook.

As you explore our progress throughout the following pages, you should be proud of all that has been accomplished. The activities outlined in this yearbook reflect those of a vibrant Learning College, alive with growth, opportunity and achievement.

For Estrella Mountain, the Learning College Journey began by going back to the basics and rethinking our daily activities. It called upon us all to ask ourselves two key questions: how does this improve learning, and how do we know? Through the process of incorporating these two questions into our daily college discussions, we have been able to make significant progress in the assessment of our programs, policies and practices to ensure that learning is at the core of everything we do.

As you will also discover throughout these pages, everyone at Estrella Mountain plays a key role in the success of both our students and employees. I encourage you to please take the time to read this yearbook to learn more about the Estrella Mountain commitment to learning. I am sure that it will help reinforce to you what I already believe... *Estrella Mountain is an outstanding community of learners who deeply value teaching, learning and caring.*

Thank you again for your continued support as we continue to move forward toward our shared vision of becoming a comprehensive Learning College.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ernest A. Lara".

Ernest A. Lara, Ph.D. | PRESIDENT

Early attempts at organizational change began around conversations and development of a **Title V – Strengthening Hispanic Institutions Grant**.



In August 2007, the college launched its first annual **Day of Learning** for college faculty and staff. Day of Learning sessions were held throughout the day in the form of presentations, workshops and forums developed and facilitated by Estrella Mountain employees.

The college held several campus discussions about what it means to be a **Learning College** and sponsored a visit from Dr. Cynthia Wilson, vice president for Learning at the League for Innovation in the Community College. The college also conducted its initial Learning College inventory.



The first **President's Community Advisory Council** was formed with West Valley community members to gain insight and counsel regarding trends, educational opportunities, strategic directions, and collaborative program efforts.



A RICH HISTORY

In January 2011, the college's new **Vision, Mission and Core Values** statements were adopted to reflect a more learning-centered environment.

Continue the Learning College Journey...

In October 2010, the **"Defining Us: The Learning First Tour"** was initiated. The interactive sessions were designed to increase employee understanding of the Learning College, and help employees discover how they have a positive impact on learning through their own unique contributions.

Representatives from all employee groups attended the **Learning College Summit** in the summers of 2009 and 2010.

During spring 2009, the college began preparation for an upcoming **accreditation visit in fall 2011**.

Estrella Mountain faculty and administration continued to invest significant effort into the improvement of student learning outcomes. The college reviewed and launched a new **program review process**.

The college adopted new **Strategic Directions**, implementing the Learning College philosophy.

During summer 2008, an initiative to foster a collegial atmosphere surrounding the Learning College was launched. A committee of faculty representatives from each division, along with several administrators, worked together on how Estrella Mountain could increase student retention. Team members attended the **League for Innovation Learning College Summit** in Overland Park, Kan.

A **faculty white paper** was written, leading to the initiation of Starfish, professional learning communities, scheduling changes, elimination of late registration, etc.

Estrella Mountain conducted an in-depth **evaluation of college planning processes**.

Estrella Mountain's Learning College journey continues...

LEARNING COLLEGE BACKGROUND

The Learning College movement began in the early 1990s, when community colleges decided to enrich their student- and teaching-centered values with learning-centered values. According to Terry O'Banion, the Learning College concept places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, any place, any time. In January 2000, the League for Innovation in the Community College was awarded a grant to fund the The Learning College Project. The League invited community colleges from across the nation to participate. Eventually, 12 colleges were selected as Vanguard Learning Colleges. The project enabled these colleges to collaborate and help fulfill their commitment to learning-centered education.¹

ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN EMBARKS ON THE JOURNEY

During the spring of 2007, Estrella Mountain began a transition from a culture driven by full-time student equivalent (FTSE) growth; to one based more on learning as the core driver in decision-making processes. Labeled a Learning College Journey, emphasis was placed on changing the campus culture to place learning at the core of all programs, procedures and processes. Goals included the strengthening of college planning efforts, increasing collaboration among divisions and departments, increasing participation in college initiatives and planning processes, and increasing employee awareness about their role in student learning. The timeline at left highlights Estrella Mountain's Learning College Journey.

¹ Source: <http://www.league.org/league/projects/lcp/index.htm>



OUR LEARNING COLLEGE JOURNEY

Estrella Mountain puts learning first – any way, any place, any time.

Estrella Mountain has drawn upon the following Learning College Principles to guide our journey to put learning first – any way, any place, any time.

Estrella Mountain's "Defining Us: The Learning First Tour" provided a highly interactive opportunity for learning facilitators to discuss how they contribute to the Learning College Principles. Highlighted here are the Learning College Principles and examples of how participants indicated the principles are applied in everyday life at Estrella Mountain.



1 Creating substantive change in individual learners.

I teach students to express themselves effectively in writing.

- I make learning fun.
- We stay ahead of the technology curve by utilizing new software programs, and keeping students informed of resources.
- I create a clinical nursing experience by providing hands-on training.
- I demonstrate techniques to show students that they can do math.
- We provide career exploration and exposure to opportunities.
- I dispel myths about college for new students, listen to their stories and then explain the process.
- We developed the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) revision project to gather information from all employees to create a space for employee development.

I inspire students to believe in themselves.

- I help raise money for scholarships so learners can continue to fund their education.
- We implement strategies to hold students more accountable for their own learning and behavior.
- I try to learn one new thing every day to share.
- We support eliminating late registration in order to have learning begin on the first day of class.
- I am socially aware and share that with others.
- We create change through programs like New Employee Orientation, PAWS and our One-Stop area for student services.

EMCC provides training opportunities for employees.

I teach students that failure is a valuable learning tool and not to be afraid of it.

I teach students to advocate for themselves.

2 Engaging learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own learning.

- Throughout the hiring process, we sit with division chairs or managers to discuss their needs, assess the process, create timelines, and get the new hire that will complement the Learning College philosophy.
- EMCC provides professional growth opportunities.
- The library makes it a point to provide a variety of materials to reflect different opinions and varied information to inform the decisions of our learners.
- I teach students how to study.
- We provide feedback to team members about training needs and help them to design a plan to increase their knowledge.
- I connect students to resources.
- I apply lessons to class activities and life experiences, so the students become engaged with the information.



3 Creating and offering as many options for learning as possible.

We formed the peer mentoring group

- We provide campus training for employees on policies and procedures.
- As we adopted the college mascot, students took part in the process and voted for their choice of the new logo. They learned about the mountain lion and they created videos to pass on what they discovered.
- Faculty projects, art shows, social awareness projects, the Student Conference, and the Day of Learning all provide opportunities for learning.
- I model different activities in the classroom for individuals, paired teams, groups, and activities for different learning styles.



I give campus tours

OPEN LEARNING SPACES
ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT

4 Assisting learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.

I volunteer for tasks in new areas & I recruit volunteers to participate in new activities.

- We have diverse participation in student groups, clubs, events, and monthly campus celebration programs.
- We work with different colleges to develop better processes and creative solutions to increase student success.
- The self-study allows all employees to participate in the accreditation process by joining criterion teams.
- I use the EMCC Facebook page.
- E-Learning and the CTL help facilitate collaborative learning activities with faculty and staff.
- We cultivate a healthy honors program and have students engage with each other.

Social and cultural awareness activities like Humannequins, heritage month activities, Clothesline Project, etc. are designed with collaborative learning in mind.

5 Defining the role of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.

- I organize materials so they are user-friendly.
- Facilitators are the resource for learners: they provide guidance, anticipate needs, engage the learner, provide assessment and feedback, and recognize the fluidity of learning.
- I listen to my students.
- We adjust services, tailoring support based on the needs of the learner by considering their personal background, etc.
- I establish a sense of community and make connections.
- We provide library research materials based on the students' needs.
- We prepare the parents and high school counselors too.
- I determine staffing based on student use, tutoring.
- I balance delivery methods in the classroom by adapting to different learning styles, so no one is bored or alienated.

I adjust teaching styles to classroom needs, different energies and mix of students.

*Communication:
I listen to ensure we are providing the services needed.*

I recognize different learning styles and adapt to them.



6 Continually assessing college programs, policies and practices to improve learning environments.

We streamlined the enrollment process in the SWSC to improve efficiency and reduce frustration by the students.

Program reviews, classroom assessments, self-study, placement exams, learning outcomes vs. competencies, retention and persistence data, are all part of the process.

- I ask students for feedback as I work with them.
- I do a daily self-assessment.
- The New Employee Orientation uses surveys and feedback mechanisms.
- We ask ourselves if we are doing what is the easier thing to do, or what is in the best interest of the students.
- We look at what classes are not being taken and why.
- We use evaluation tools, such as Noel Levitz, CCSE, HESI, CAT, and more.
- In the hiring process, we emphasize the Learning College right from the start.
- I am involved with other departments and peer groups in order to understand what is going on in their respective areas, and how we can improve practices based on their needs and concerns.

We utilize graduation surveys, exit interviews, student surveys, self-study and student data.

COLLEGE PLANNING

During the past two years, the college has aligned our strategic plan with the learning college objectives identified by the League for Innovation, while remaining aligned with the Maricopa County Community College District. Employees across the college have been working in teams dedicated to the planning and implementation of the newly aligned strategic directions.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Direction I: Maximizing Student Success

Learning College Objective: under-prepared students

Estrella Mountain will create and expand learning-centered programs and strategies that support the success of students.

Direction II: Creating a Culture of Assessment

Learning College Objective: learning outcomes

Estrella Mountain will commit to assessing and documenting learning outcomes across divisions that result in strategies to improve learning.

Direction III: Creating an Organizational Culture that Supports Learning

Learning College Objective: organizational culture and staff recruitment and development

Estrella Mountain will cultivate an organizational culture where policies, programs, practices, and employees support learning as the major priority. This includes professional development programs and diversity initiatives that prepare all employees to become more effective facilitators of learning.

Direction IV: Creating Dynamic Environments that Support Student Learning

Learning College Objective: technology

Estrella Mountain will promote and support the expansion of dynamic learning environments that improves student learning through the effective use of information technology and teaching pedagogies.

Direction V: Maximizing Partnerships and Resources to Support Learning

Learning College Objective: supports all

Estrella Mountain will maximize existing partnerships and resources (capital and human), while continuing to pursue new opportunities to support learning.

VISION | MISSION | VALUES

VISION

We provide exceptional and creative learning experiences that prepare all learners to achieve their dreams and transform their lives.

MISSION

Estrella Mountain is an innovative higher learning organization responding to the diverse needs of West Valley communities. Learners have an opportunity to successfully accomplish their educational and personal goals through the following college purposes:

- Developmental Education
- Transfer Education
- Workforce Development
- Civic Responsibility
- General Education
- Learner Support Services
- Community Education
- Global Engagement

CORE VALUES

We value learning and engagement through:

Integrity

- Being accountable to fulfill goals, objectives and responsibilities
- Being truthful, respectful, sincere, and responsible in interactions with others

Diversity

- Considering the contributions and worldviews of others
- Promoting an inclusive campus culture that supports social awareness
- Committing to comprehensive inter-cultural learning and awareness

Collaboration

- Growing partnerships and building relationships that enhance the learning environment
- Practicing communication methods that engage all learners

Innovation

- Committing to the continued exploration and development of successful learning practices
- Encouraging creativity and professional exploration within our community of learners

Sustainability

- Understanding how our actions impact the local and global community
- Reducing negative effects on the environment through proactive and sustainable practices
- Applying practices that encourage environmental, economic and social responsibility



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