

ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEARNING COLLEGE JOURNEY SPRING 2007 – CURRENT

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. Below is an outline to provide an overview of Estrella Mountain's journey. Although outlined chronologically, events are interdependent, interconnected and ongoing.

- a. In spring 2007, early attempts at organizational change began around conversations and development of a Title V - Strengthening Hispanic Institutions Grant. Campus-wide discussions were held on learning college models, learning theory and design, learning strategies, becoming a learning-centered institution, and strengthening the preparedness of at-risk students.
- b. In fall 2007, the college launched its first annual "Day of Learning". The Day of Learning provides opportunities for all employees to create and/or renew friendships and professional relationships, revitalize the mind, body, and spirit through new learning experiences, embrace organizational change, and have fun. Held once a year, the Day of Learning begins with an All-Employee breakfast, followed by an All-Employee meeting. Day of Learning sessions are held throughout the day in the form of presentations, workshops, and forums developed and facilitated by Estrella Mountain faculty and staff. Employees are encouraged to join the activities throughout the day as their schedule permits. All supervisors are encouraged to work with staff so they can attend sessions of interest.
- c. During spring 2008, 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. Dr. Wilson spent time interviewing employees and performed a general assessment survey of the institution. Findings were summarized into a college report and now serve to inform the planning of new and continuing Learning College initiatives. Plans are also being made to re-administer the assessment in a future semester to benchmark college progress toward becoming a learning-centered institution.
- d. In spring 2008, 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. The first meeting of this group was focused on Estrella Mountain's goal of becoming a Learning College. Through bi-annual meetings and the publication of an annual report, the College reports back to the Council on institutional directions and priorities, and progress towards a becoming a learning-centered institution.
- e. An effort to foster a collegial atmosphere surrounding the Learning College initiative was launched during summer 2008. 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, Kansas, and focused their research on five main areas: 1) *Academic Early Alert*, 2) *Addressing Incoming Students*, 3) *Campus-wide Student Engagement*, 4) *Developmental Education*, and 5) *Pedagogy*. Committee findings were shared with the entire campus community, and elements have been considered and incorporated through the following college planning efforts and programs:
 - 1) *Academic Early Alert*: Extensive planning for a redesign of the Estrella Mountain Early Alert Program occurred in the spring and summer of 2009. In spring 2010, the college will pilot an intensive, faculty-driven approach that utilizes the Starfish EARLY ALERT software system. This software integrates with Blackboard and links faculty with student services professionals. Faculty will refer students to the appropriate college staff based on academic performance, attendance, personal issues, and/or behavioral problems.

- 2) *Incoming Students*: Estrella Mountain piloted the iStart Smart (Student Success Pilot Project) program in 2008-2009 and fully participated in fall 2009. All students participate in a comprehensive new student orientation prior to starting classes. Students take placement assessments for reading, English, and mathematics and receive academic advising allowing for a qualitative analysis of their college readiness. Students then participate in a student success course (AAA or CPD), where they are provided extensive exposure to available support services as part of the student success curriculum.
 - 3) *Student Engagement*: Estrella Mountain is planning to begin the implementation of a Student Governance system in fall 2010. In addition, the college is examining the creation of a student success program through a college-wide collaborative venture called EMCC 101. The program will focus on enhancing a student's first year experience through proactive advisement, student success courses, peer and faculty mentoring and supplemental instruction.
 - 4) *Developmental Education*: The College is currently developing professional learning communities. The first pilot began in fall 2009 and focused on developmental education. In addition, the College continues to mandate placement based on assessment testing to the greatest extent possible, and is currently piloting a new mathematics assessment tool called ALEKS for spring 2010 placement.
 - 5) *Pedagogy*: Faculty continue to explore the development of modular and mini prep courses. The College implemented a modularized developmental math program that allows students to complete components of Introductory Algebra (MAT091), so that they do not have to retake the entire course if they fail a single module.
- f. In summer 2008, efforts were further bolstered by the awarding of the Title V - Strengthening Hispanic Institutions Grant. The \$2.8 million, five-year award supports grant activity goals focused on: 1) *Providing infrastructure to improve learner preparation and learner success*, 2) *Increase student engagement campus-wide*, 3) *Transform and cultivate a campus climate and culture that infuses students, improves student learning and includes all college constituencies*, and 4) *Build and strategically align the endowment support for student goal attainment*. To support success and participation, grant activities are assigned to Faculty Activity Coordinators and then appropriately aligned with a college Strategic Direction.
- g. During fall 2008, campus discussions were held regarding the class schedule, including a facilitated college-wide conversation about learning by a consultant, with professional experience in a Learning College environment. As a result, there will be two (and possibly three) spring 2010 guaranteed scheduling pilots:
- Guaranteed Scheduling Pilot #1: Three (3) Sessions of Five 5-Week Classes for 15 Weeks
 - Guaranteed Scheduling Pilot #2: Two (2) Sessions of Seven 8-Week Classes for 16 Weeks
- h. The College conducted an in-depth evaluation of college planning processes. A task force led by employee group presidents, in collaboration with senior administration, conducted research into both strategic planning and the Learning College initiative. Recommended results from this collaborative effort included modification and realignment of the College's six strategic directions with the five foundations of the Learning College. Itemized priorities were established during the fall 2008 Leadership Council Strategic Planning Retreat.

In spring 2009, there was additional review and assessment of our planning process. Conversations about planning and how to improve the planning process filtered down to every level of the organization. As a result, based on campus feedback, changes were implemented. In August 2009, Estrella Mountain held the largest Leadership Retreat where over 50 members of the college's faculty and staff met, analyzed data, and established new college priorities for the 2009-2012 planning cycle.

- i. Estrella Mountain faculty and administration continue to invest significant effort into the improvement of student learning outcomes. The college reviewed and launched a new program review process. Results of the review determined that the program review process needed a stronger emphasis on student learning outcomes, consistency across program areas, and flexibility to account for unique program components. In spring 2009, a new program review template and process was created. The new template

aligns with the Higher Learning Commission criteria, incorporates a Learning College philosophy, includes a focus on student learning outcomes, and contains common questions for academic affairs, occupational education and student services. The new program review process is being piloted this year by 4 academic programs, 3 student service programs, 9 occupational programs, and 8 programs from the Southwest Skill Center.

- j. During spring 2009, the college began preparation for an upcoming accreditation visit in 2012. This presented a unique opportunity to examine the College Vision, Mission, and Core Values statements to determine alignment with the goal of becoming a premier Learning College, while also aligning with the mission of the Maricopa Community College District. Led by the employee driven Organizational Culture Strategic Direction Team, all employees were encouraged to participate in a series of workshops that focused on evaluation of the Vision, Mission, and Core Values. In 2009, feedback was also collected from community members via the President's Community Advisory Council. A writing group was formed of college faculty and staff to evaluate campus and community feedback and draft new statements. Recommended changes to the statements were presented to college leadership for review.
- k. During summer 2009, the college sent another college team consisting of 32 college faculty and staff to the League for Innovation Learning College Summit in Phoenix, Arizona. The committee worked together and developed a working definition of a Learning College as it applies to Estrella Mountain and identified potential next steps and action items to move the campus community forward.

Definition of what "Learning College" means to Estrella Mountain: *Learning is at the core of everything we do, it is embedded in all our programs, policies, and procedures.*

Action Statement: *We are committed to fearlessly assessing our programs, policies, and practices and making changes wherever necessary to place learning at the core.*

During 2010 the College will:

- Prepare for accreditation in fall 2011.
- Present new Vision, Mission and Core Values statements to the Maricopa Community College Governing Board.
- Expand employee development and recognition programs to include a restructuring that identifies full-time leadership for employee development and recognition initiatives.
- Align resources to strategies that have the greatest impact on learning.
- Implement mandatory orientation, testing, and placement for students.
- Evaluate course prerequisites.
- Send a team to the League for Innovation Learning College Summit in summer 2010.
- Complete more than 25 program reviews with an increased emphasis on learning.
- Remain committed to continually asking "How does this impact learning and how do we know?"