



California Community Colleges

Institutional Effectiveness

Partnership Resource Team
Summary of Initial Visit
 Date of Visit: October 2, 2024

Name of Institution: San Mateo Community College District

Partnership Resource Team Members: Mojdeh Mehdizadeh (Lead), Randy Beach, Karen Chow, Aziza De La Torre, , Kate Mueller, Robert (Bobby) Nakamoto, Sara Parker

Area of Focus	Institution's Point Person or Group, If Known	Heard during the Visit: Institutional Activities Underway (Positive Steps Taken or in Progress)	Heard during the Visit: Ideas Expressed by the Institution (Issues, Challenges, Desired Solutions)
<p>A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes</p> <p>B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process</p>	<p>Chancellor Moreno and Vice Chancellor McVean</p>	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Auditor, who started in July, began publishing reports in October. While these reports contain some uncomfortable information, they are important for transparency and Progress. The Board, in collaboration with a consultant (Cindi Reiss) has clarified the distinctions between the Board's responsibilities and those of the chancellor. This has made a difference on the operational side. SMCCD has been transforming the way business is conducted at Board meetings, fostering more collegiality and efficiency. For example, Board meetings that previously ran until close to midnight are now concluding by 9:00 p.m. The is developing a webpage for Board members to receive live feedback, supported by a research firm that is capturing this data. The District went through a comprehensive process to adopt the CCLC policy and procedure numbering system and process to ensure Board Policies and Administrative Procedures are up to date, clear, and meaningful. SMCCD has improved the Participatory District Academic Senate which was not meaningful, by funding release time and supporting meaningful engagement. 	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A challenge expressed is the need to build trust with the SMCCD community to build honest, open, radical transparency. To date, operations and governance was very decentralized, compounded by turnover in executive leadership, which has affected engagement. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Another challenge expressed is the need to build trust within the strategic planning process. The goal is to ensure that all voices are heard, it is collaborative, and people feel genuinely invited to the process. SMCCD desires to have a strategic plan that is meaningful to the community and outcomes-focused with clear and measurable outcomes. It should be integrated and connected with college planning documents, although each college is at a different stage with its education master plans. The People's Plan at Skyline, modeled after the People's College Initiative Model (Dismantling Structures) was cited as an example It was expressed that a new strategic plan needs to be reflective of the 2024-25 board goals, which might serve as a framework. There is a desire to set a new direction with the new Board toward a unified approach while sustaining the individuality and autonomy of each college.

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		<p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee has been formed which also includes two Board members. 2. Senior Leadership encourages amendments to the Strategic Plan from each campus. 3. Roadshow presentations related to the district strategic planning process and regular town halls at Flex Days have provided deeper insights and broader engagement using data. 4. The three PRIE deans have established a bi-weekly meeting cadence to maintain coordination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. There is a desire for all colleges to be on the same planning cycle. 6. There is an intention to post all dates and timelines for strategic planning on the website to ensure transparency and accessibility.
<p>A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes</p> <p>B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process</p>	Classified Leadership	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One positive step noted is that classified professionals at Cañada are equally compensated for professional development work, similar to faculty compensation. It was noted that classified professionals feel valued and respected as active partners in the institution's engagement efforts. 2. There has been a notable cross-district collaborative effort to simplify class registration for students who attend multiple colleges within the district. It was expressed that there are lessons to learn from that participatory governance example. Other policy changes that benefit students agreed through participatory engagement were recognized as positive developments. 3. It was expressed that the tri-chair model for governance is positive. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a desire to continue building a sense of trust, community, and collaboration through open and transparent communication while shying away from difficult conversations. 2. There was a concern expressed that Board members occasionally drift from their policy-making role into operational. 3. An issue was brought up that the classified professionals' voices in participatory governance feel diluted at times, especially in large committees. There is interest in a more equitable model where classified professionals have the same opportunities to engage as faculty, without facing challenges such as an unsupportive supervisor, uncompensated extra work, or lack of representation due to their non-bargaining unit status. 4. The high turnover in leadership was noted as an issue. 5. There is a need for more comprehensive professional development opportunities for classified professionals. 6. Classified professionals are hopeful that there is an opportunity to push the "reset" button and rebuild trust and support. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important that the development of the Strategic Plan reflect respect for the culture and representation of each college within the district. 2. Strategic Plan should be broad enough for all colleges and constituency groups to see themselves in it, while also being forward-looking and measurable.

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			<p>3. A desire was expressed that strategic planning be conducted through an equity lens that supports all students such as part-time students, evening students, nontraditional students, rather than focusing on small cohorts of students like EOPS.</p> <p>4. A concern was raised that a district strategic plan could potentially allocate resources to expensive initiatives before addressing the current student needs and college staffing priorities.</p>
<p>A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes</p> <p>B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process</p>	<p>District Strategic Plan Advisory Group</p>	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The District Participatory Governance Council (DPGC) has had a successful year, with strong districtwide representation, including student voices. Members expressed a feeling their input is heard and has a meaningful impact. 2. The DPGC led a massive review of Board Policies this year, successfully converting policies and procedures to align with the Community College League of California (CCLC) standards. 3. The District's Equal Employment Opportunity Community Diversity Grant Project was noted as a model for inclusive discussions where all voices are invited and heard. 4. The District noted some important decisions, such as the District's anti-racism initiatives and its COVID response, as examples of strong participatory engagement from stakeholders. 5. It was expressed that the Board has been visionary evolving over the last decade to create a foundation for successful participatory engagement. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The DPGC has a practice of requiring three reads for decision-making which has proven successful and recommended as a model to be retained for the strategic planning process. 	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a desire to ensure the community remains actively engaged in discussions with the colleges throughout the strategic planning process. 2. A clear analogy defined the roles of the Board, college leadership, and those implementing plans on the ground, with an interest and agreement to follow this process throughout the strategic planning effort. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many expressed their enthusiasm for a collaborative strategic planning process that uses qualitative and quantitative metrics, with measurable outcomes and timelines. 2. It was stated that a successful Strategic Plan leads to student success, improves morale (employees), and enhances retention, access, and completion rates (especially for Disproportionately Impacted students). 3. The desire for an inclusive strategic planning process with many opportunities and mechanisms for community and student voices to be heard was emphasized. 4. It was noted that a strategic plan should be a dynamic living document with built-in check-ins, measurable progress, and clear strategies to measuring goals and empirical outcomes. 5. Voices emphasized the importance of a clear articulation of available resources to support the implementation of the District Strategic Plan, both during the planning process and within the plan itself.

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			<p>6. Concerns were raised about the relationship between college educational master plans and the district's strategic plan. Some were concerned that the educational planning work conducted at the colleges may not be fully integrated into the district strategic planning process.</p> <p>7. Several stakeholders expressed over the need for improved communication of strategic planning goals and activities. It was expressed that regular communication and intentionally disseminating updates to stakeholders regularly, with intentionality, and repeatedly.</p>
<p>A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes</p> <p>B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process</p>	<p>Student Government</p>	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student leadership is included in conversations in the participatory governance process. 2. To encourage engagement, student leadership organizes numerous events aimed at raising awareness of the student voice in the decision-making process and promoting student well-being. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students expressed pride in their ability to plan and organize inclusive, successful campus events. 	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student leadership expressed a desire for more onboarding and training related to their roles, rights, and expectations within the participatory governance process. They appreciated the opportunity to participate, but they noted the temporary nature of student leadership, which changes annually, often results in inadequate training and onboarding. The importance of mentorship was emphasized several times. 2. There is a need to adjust existing communication practices to ensure students receive information in time to make timely and informed decisions. Currently, meetings between student leadership and the Chancellor are scheduled at times that create bottlenecks, delaying the flow of information, and limiting student engagement. There is a desire to revisit the timing and frequency of meetings between the Student Trustee and the Chancellor. 3. There is an interest in improving communication channels through mentorship from college leadership. The District Student Council often has questions where the support and presence of a senior district staff member during their meetings would be beneficial.

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			<p>4. It was expressed that regular communication to students needs to be intentional, consistent, and frequent to ensure effective engagement.</p> <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student leadership expressed a desire for training on the fundamentals of strategic planning and educational master planning, citing confusion about the plan's scope and purpose. 2. There was a desire for strategic planning to include communication between student leadership and college presidents to establish realistic achievable goals that align with each college's mission.
<p>A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes</p> <p>B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process</p>	<p>PRT Drafting Group</p>	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The District Planning and Budgeting Council has been holding regular town halls at Flex Days and subsequent meetings to share data and encourage broader engagement in participatory governance, including involvement in the strategic plan. 2. Promising practices between District and colleges are regularly shared to facilitate engagement. 3. The Board recently held a meeting in Palo Alto to increase community participation and access to its meetings. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The three PRIE Deans meet weekly and every other week with the District team to coordinate efforts. 2. Roadshow presentations related to District Strategic Plan have taken place with all senates. 3. Cañada College shared promising practices, including listening sessions and partnerships with community organizations. 	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus groups came up as a good vehicle to ensure deep, broad engagement. 2. Recommendation to have clear timelines and communication around the governance process. 3. Asking constituency groups to start with an inquiry-based model and review relevant data for each constituency group can gain buy-in and has been successful. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was commented that the plan should be informed by resources like the Silicon Valley Index and the Environmental Scan as well as by Advisory Committees. 2. There is interest in ensuring that the process takes into account the colleges' Educational Master Plans, and for people to understand the purpose and the context. It's unclear whether the District Strategic Plan supersedes or takes into account a review of the college Educational Master Plans and examines alignment. 3. There is interest in a shared operational public understanding of Board Goals, District Strategic Plan, and Educational Master Plan, possibly informed by SCUP guidelines.

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			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. An idea was expressed that the District create a strategic planning framework that incentivizes participation college-wide, incentivizes student feedback, addresses tensions between district and college practices, dives deeply into data, uses shared vocabulary, and tracks progress using annual metrics for strategic goals. 5. It was communicated that the facilities master planning process had some benefit but lacked the focus on educational master planning. The desire is to avoid repeating this oversight.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Creating a strategic plan for the District reflective of the Board goals and desires for measurable outcomes B. Achieve deep engagement in the participatory governance process 	District Academic Senate	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The college successfully implemented districtwide distance education (DE) training using a grassroots approach that can inform overall participatory governance practices. 2. College senate leaders and district senate leaders have developed effective communication mechanisms that support participatory governance and foster a shared vision across senates. 3. Faculty members have developed teaching and learning messaging that is standard across three colleges. 4. Faculty leadership actively identifies key stakeholders when addressing initiatives and issues, ensuring their voices are included in decision-making processes. An example provided is the involvement in the Teaching and Learning Center. 5. Each senate includes representation from part-time faculty, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. 6. Faculty have engaged with student focus groups, using incentives like food to encourage student participation and successful engagement. <p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social media has been an effective tool for gathering input from students. 2. A "nested" practice--aligning ILOs-PLOs-SLOs -- was applied to educational planning at the Board and District levels 	<p>Engagement in Participatory Governance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faculty expressed the importance of inclusive engagement, ensuring all voices are heard, without tokenizing any constituent group, and creating safe spaces to share ideas. Faculty leaders expressed guarded optimism and a desire to maintain the current momentum and goodwill by fostering inclusive practices that yield results. 2. There was an interest in the Board proactively building relationships with college stakeholders. 3. There is a desire to balance the individuality of the colleges with district-wide collaboration to provide autonomy for each college to pursue its unique mission while providing consistent support and a standardized student experience across colleges. 4. Faculty expressed the desire that the Board uphold Title V respecting the faculty's primarily role in academic and professional matters under the 10+1 regulation. 5. Faculty articulated concerns over the impact of the frequent turnover of district and administrative leadership on engagement and participatory governance. 6. Faculty expressed "cautious optimism" regarding changes in governance practices; but also voiced concerns about being "let down again" if these changes fail to deliver lasting improvements.

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			<p>Strategic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was communicated that college Educational Master Plans should be respected and integrated into the district strategic planning process. The district strategic plan should reflect the goals of the colleges and not the reverse. 2. Concerns were raised about the potential exclusion of marginalized student and faculty populations (i.e. evening students/faculty, weekend students/faculty, online students/faculty) in the strategic planning process. 3. There was a suggestion to ensure that the Facilities Master Plan is aligned with educational master planning, institutional technology planning, and human resources planning. 4. Faculty expressed concern about their minimal involvement in the development of the Board's goals and are concerned that the strategic planning process will not be inclusive as well. 5. There is concern that a district strategic plan might divert resources from ongoing work at the colleges, hindering their ability to fulfill their Educational Master Plans and unique mission. 6. Faculty emphasized the importance of engaging a diverse student body, including non-student government members and evening students, in the strategic planning process. They offered solutions such as providing food and financial incentives and utilizing Canvas push notifications to increase participation. There is a desire to have a demographic breakdown of student surveys to better understand varied student experiences. 7. The faculty expressed feeling overwhelmed by the many legislated initiatives that have curtailed their bandwidth for engagement in a strategic planning process. There is a sense of indifference due to the fatigue they are feeling. 8. Faculty noted that the strategic planning process should delineate the responsibilities of the district versus those of the colleges in achieving the plan's goals.