

# **Merritt College**

## **Partnership Resource Team (PRT) Summary Report, December 9, 2016**

### **Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative**

PRT Team Members: Cheryl Aschenbach, Kimberly Coutts, Buran Haidar, Kathy McLean, Theresa Rees, Jeff Spano, and Kathleen Burke, Lead

#### **Areas of Focus**

- A. Establish an integrated planning process with linkages to program review, assessment and resource allocation.
- B. Establish a culture of assessment for Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).
- C. Establish Institutional Standards for student achievement and systematic evaluation.
- D. Establish clear role delineation of responsibilities between District and College services. (This area will be addressed as part of the district-wide Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI)/Partnership Resource Team (PRT) efforts.)
- E. Establish clear lines of communication throughout the college to increase engagement by all constituencies.

The college made significant progress on Areas of Focus A, B and C. In the process of working on the five areas of focus, the college determined that Area of Focus D was best resolved as part of the Peralta District's Partnership Resource Team process since the goal involves the district and the other three colleges. At the time of the third PRT visit, progress on Area of Focus E was still in the early stages.

#### **Summary by Area of Focus**

##### **A. Establish an Integrated Planning Process with linkages to program review, assessment and resource allocation**

Merritt College had seven objectives in their Innovation and Effectiveness Plan for Focus Area A:

- 1. Establish an Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Task Force.
- 2. Create training modules for Annual Program Update (APU) and Program Review; coordinate these activities with the District Office.
- 3. Train deans and department chairs on the APU and Program Review processes.
- 4. Review, revise and reconcile all governance committee by-laws.
- 5. Align language in the governance by-laws with current institutional effectiveness planning process(es).
- 6. Develop a governance committee by-laws template.
- 7. Develop a systematic communication, evaluation and goal-setting process for all governance committees.

#### *Progress*

The College made significant progress on four of five objectives through:

- 1. Creating an Institutional Effectiveness Task Force (IETF) that engaged in bi-weekly meetings beginning in August 2016.
- 2. Creating an IETF sub-committee to review, update and customize the Annual Planning Update (APU) template.
  - a. APU training workshops were offered to instructional and student services staff in fall 2016.

- b. APU and Program Review training was provided to the deans and other administrators by the college researcher.
3. Planning and organizing training/workshops on participatory governance around the spring 2016 flex days. This is a coordinated project between the IETF and the Professional Development Committee (PDC).
4. Selecting a consultant to facilitate the revision of committee bylaws. The consultant selection process was the responsibility of the IETF.
5. Attending the Research and Planning Group's (RP Group) Integrated Planning Regional Convening on November 18, 2016 hosted by City College of San Francisco. Attendees included the members of the IETF.

The PRT noted that the creation of the IETF was critical to the progress that was made on the objectives in Area of Focus A. The IETF was responsible for ensuring the development of the Annual Planning Update (APU) template and, in coordination with the Professional Development Committee, providing training to various college constituencies on how to use the template as part of the integrated planning process.

#### **B. Establish a culture of assessment for Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Merritt College had four objectives regarding college learning outcomes:

1. 100 percent of courses will complete assessment of at least one student learning outcome by June 2017.
2. 100 percent of programs will complete assessment of at least one learning outcome by June 2017.
3. 100 percent of service areas will complete assessment of at least one learning outcome by June 2017.
4. Assessment of 67 percent of institutional learning outcomes will be completed by June 2017.

#### **Progress**

The College made significant progress on these objectives through:

1. Establishing an assessment calendar and requiring department chairs and program directors to submit annual assessment plans for their areas, and including charts on assessment progress on the college website.
2. Providing funding, through multiple sources, to support Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (SLOAC) activities, including specific learning outcomes-focused discussions at the Fall Planning Summit 2016 and APU Training Workshops.
3. Continuing discussion from the Fall Planning Summit 2016 and APU Training with specific departments and coordinators to provide targeted support by unit.
4. Establishing and distributing learning outcomes calendars for instructional and student services units.

At the time of the third PRT visit, processes for achieving the outcomes assessment goals were in place.

#### **C. Institutional Standards for Student Achievement**

Merritt College had three objectives for establishing Institutional Standards for Student Achievement:

1. Understand and develop institution-set standards for the college.

2. Institute a process for analyzing institutional and institution-set standards to ensure the college meets its goals.
3. Inform the college community about institutional standards.

#### *Progress*

The College made significant progress on these objectives through:

1. Sending the college researcher and the IEPI project manager to the RP Group regional Bay area meeting on November 3, 2016 at De Anza College to develop an understanding of how to set and integrate institution-set standards.
2. Participating in a panel discussion among Bay area colleges focusing on setting and evaluating institution-set standards.
3. Developing and approving Merritt College's institution-set standards.
4. Incorporating the institution-set standards into the Annual Program Update Template.
5. Presenting the institution-set standards for full discussion at the fall 2016 planning summit and the spring 2017 flex day activities.

The PRT observed that the college met the goals for setting institution-standards for student achievement and congratulates them for accomplishing this goal. The college approached this project by first gathering data, which was presented to the college, followed by engaging in dialogue and, finally, approving the institution-set standards.

#### **D. Establish clear role delineation of responsibilities between District and College and the Peralta District services**

Merritt College opted not to develop objectives for this Area of Focus in their Innovation and Effectiveness Plan because this area involved the other three colleges and the District. Responsibility for this area shifted to the District as part of their Partnership Resource Team visit. Progress related to this goal would be reported through the District PRT, with the district-wide results referred back to Merritt College.

#### **E. Clear Lines of Communication throughout the College to Increase Engagement by all Constituencies**

Merritt College had four objectives in their Innovation and Effectiveness Plan for Area E:

1. Make recommendations for improvement based on the results of the spring 2016 governance evaluation process.
2. Develop a library of governance best practices to establish effective institution-wide communication related to decision-making.
3. Clarify the roles and relationships of college governance committees.
4. Institutionalize a college-wide process for evaluating the effectiveness of the decision-making processes at the college.

#### *Progress*

The College made progress on these objectives through:

1. Reviewing the spring 2016 governance evaluation results by the IEPI Area E group on October 28, 2016.

2. Sending the IEPI Task Force members to the RP Group/IEPI Integrated Planning Regional Convening on November 18, 2016 at City College of San Francisco. Planning for college visits in mid-December and January was underway at the time of PRT Visit 3.
3. Developing a library of governance best practices, which is emerging and ongoing.
4. Clarifying, documenting and disseminating the roles and relationships among all major college governance committees, which are emerging and ongoing practices.
5. Coordinating with the Professional Development Committee (PDC) to hire a facilitator to provide training on Robert's Rules of Order (RRO) during the Spring Flex Day 2017.
6. Planning to present a Governance Orientation program during the Spring Flex Day 2017.
7. Creating an online self-paced course in Merritt College governance best practices, which is an emerging and ongoing practice.
8. Evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of Merritt College governance, which is an emerging and ongoing practice.

### *Suggestions for Sustaining Progress*

- The IETF should monitor progress on Area of Focus B to ensure the June 2017 goals are met.
- In Area of Focus C, the PRT encourages the college to continue the dialogue by agreeing on a process for reviewing these standards of achievement and determining what the college response will be if achievement drops below the set standards.
- With regard to Area of Focus E, while the PRT observed an esprit de corps within the faculty, staff and administrators during the third visit, the team noted that progress on this area has been slower than progress on Areas A, B and C. This is the case, in part, because the prior three Areas of Focus were more discrete. To ensure the entire college community participates in dialogue and recommendations for institutional improvement, and in turn to ensure the college continues to actively apply integrated planning and data-based decision-making, this Area of Focus related to active engagement of all constituencies needs ongoing development and attention.

### Conclusion

Merritt College should be congratulated for the institutional changes they are making to embrace a collaborative culture invested in making data-based decisions. Developing and approving institution-set standards and setting specific goals for assessing student learning outcomes from the course to the institutional level demonstrate the college's commitment to making improvements to student success and completion. The Annual Program Update template and the broad constituency-based training are tangible signs of their renewed commitment to integrate planning. Supporting all this planning activity are the improvements being made to the functioning of the college's major decision-making processes, as reflected in the roles of and communication regarding the participatory governance structure and functions. The PRT recommends the college continue its progress in all their Areas of Focus to ensure the college embraces well developed process that are regularly evaluated for their effectiveness in the continuous improvement of the institution.