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Santa Monica Community College District	March 5, 2013

MAJOR ITEMS OF BUSINESS

INFORMATION ITEM 5

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON STRATEGIC INITIATIVE – GRIT (Growth/Resilience/Integrity/Tenacity)

SUBMITTED BY: Executive Vice-President

SUMMARY:

The GRIT (Growth, Resilience, Integrity, Tenacity) Initiative was developed during the College's 2011-2012 Strategic Planning process, and launched on the Fall 2012 Opening Day. A case for GRIT can be found [here](#). Its goal for 2012-2013 is to develop a plan to infuse GRIT into the work of the College and a plan to assess the impact of the initiative.

The GRIT Initiative facilitates student achievement. By fostering students' perseverance, sense of purpose, connection and engagement, the GRIT Initiative enhances a student's capacity to flourish academically and personally. The initiative focuses students on their non-cognitive skills like help-seeking, their metacognitive skills like the ability to think about their own thinking, and their sense of place and purpose. The initiative recognizes and develops students' strengths and competencies rather than their deficits.

Currently, the initiative has been organized into two strands: 1) resiliency and 2) purpose.

Resiliency

We seek to foster resiliency among our students as a way to enhance their completion of courses, programs and degrees. This strand will be supported by two efforts: a) Coaching Corps and b) valuing process over product. The first would be a new program at SMC. The latter would involve alterations to some of our existing college processes.

Coaching Corps is a program currently being piloted at Cerritos College. The program is made up of student-identified volunteers who are trained to support students through the challenges of college. Cerritos created a manual that serves to train and guide coaches in how best to help students, providing an overview of the college experience, ways to help keep students motivated, techniques for helping students over key hurdles, and some useful activities coaches can use. For some of us, our parents or a sibling may have served in this role. However, many of our students may not have anyone in their lives who would know how to do this. This highly scalable program will provide that training. We are seeking to develop and adapt the [attached manual](#) for use at Santa Monica College.

Currently educational research indicates that rewarding students for their efforts (process), not just their grades (products) will enhance their capacities to achieve their goals. For instance, if students are assured that, even very late into the semester, they can still get an A or a B if they keep doing the work and applying themselves, they are more likely to persevere. On the other hand, if students find that a bad grade on the first test dooms them to a C or worse, they are very likely to drop the class. We are seeking to encourage all faculty members to embrace pedagogical values consistent with the first scenario rather than the second. We are using flex day presentations to provide models for best practices. For instance,

during flex day in March 2012 we will offer a breakout called "GRIT in the Curriculum". This breakout will feature some of SMC's best teachers, Terry Green, Janet Robinson, Christine Schultz and Muriel Walker Waugh, discussing how they integrate principles of resiliency and perseverance into the curriculum and classroom to enhance their students' academic and personal achievement. Second, we are seeking to integrate the values of resiliency and perseverance into the curriculum by including related questions in forms used for the Curriculum and Program Review processes. For example, we may include a new "check-off" for new and revised courses that addresses whether course structure and methods of assessment teach and reward resiliency and perseverance.

Purpose

We recognize that when students know why they are in college or a particular course, they are better able to overcome challenges and take on the long-term process that is college. Like resiliency, a personal vision or purpose will enhance a student's completion of courses, programs and degrees. This strand will be supported by the effort to incorporate a new competency under ILO #1. In support of this goal, faculty may, for instance, run a brief pre- and post-class survey, asking students why they are taking a class or what it is for. For example, Christine Schultz and Eric Oifer piloted a potential question in the Winter 2013 classes. Students were asked to respond to the following question: "Some students know exactly why they are taking a particular class while other students may have little or no idea why they are taking it. What about you? In terms of your bigger life picture, what is this class for? Because an honest statement is what is being sought here, please feel free to answer in any way you want and saying that you do not know how this class fits into your larger life picture is an option." Dr. Schultz and Dr. Oifer will bring this idea to the Department Chairs for a discussion of a larger pilot.

Additionally, as with the resiliency strand, the purpose strand may be supported with a new Curriculum "check-off" for new and revised courses that addresses whether course objectives include helping students identify the purpose for studying the course material.

Related Instrument

Coincident with the launching of SMC's GRIT Initiative, the Educational Testing Service piloted a new tool it developed to measure non-cognitive skills. In fall of 2012, this instrument, called SuccessNavigator, was administered to students enrolled in COUNS 20 classes. Participating faculty and administrators met prior to the beginning of the Spring 2013 semester to discuss the results. A summary of the report is linked [here](#). Thirteen Counseling 20 faculty members are continuing to use SuccessNavigator this spring. This data on non-cognitive skills will be used to shape future course content. Also, broader discussions of this instrument will continue with the goal of determining whether and how it can be useful to SMC as we seek to infuse GRIT and enhance student success.