



*Santa Monica Community College District*  
**Budget Planning Subcommittee of the District  
Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC)**  
**MEETING MINUTES – April 1, 2026**

A Meeting of the Budget Planning Subcommittee will be held Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 2:00 pm at Santa Monica College's Student Services Center (SSC 396), 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, California. The public may join the meeting via zoom with the following link: <https://smc-edu.zoom.us/j/85009325229>

**I. Call to Order 2:04 pm**

**Members:**

- Mitch Heskel, District Rep (Absent)
- Chris Bonvenuto, District Representative, Co-Chair
- Tania Acosta, District Representative
- Tracie Hunter, District Representative
- Vicenta Arrizon, Academic Senate Rep (Absent)
- Elisa Meyer, Academic Senate Representative
- Matt Hotsinpiller, FA Representative, Co-Chair
- Peter Morse, Faculty Association Representative
- Martha Romano, CSEA Rep (Absent)
- Kennisha Green, CSEA Representative
- Dagmar Gorman, CSEA Representative
- Cindy Ordaz, CSEA Representative
- Emilia Albegova, Associated Student Rep (Absent)
- Paula Hernandez, Associated Student Rep (Absent)
- Leila Kashani, Associated Student Representative
- Sheng Wen Loh, Associated Student Rep (Absent)

Interested Parties in attendance: JR Stevenson, Chante DeLoach, Scott Silverman, Rob Rudolph, Diana Askew  
Elaine Roque, Stacy Neal

**II. Public Comments**

**III. Approval of Minutes:** March 18, 2026 Motion: Dagmar Gorman Seconded: Elisa Meyer  
Minutes were approved unanimously.

**IV. Reports/Discussion**

**1. Marketing Focus Group Results**

Rebecca Agonafir, Director of Marketing and Communications, shared key findings from student focus groups on SMC's branding and marketing, conducted in partnership with Goodwin Simon Strategic Research.

**Key Findings**

- **Brand Strength** – SMC is widely recognized as the #1 transfer institution, with a strong reputation for high-quality education and successful transfer outcomes.
- **Opportunities for Messaging** – There is an opportunity to better communicate the full value of attending SMC beyond transfer, including career skill development, career exploration, and flexible learning pathways.
- **Program Variety** – Offering over 200 degrees and certificates is a significant strength and effectively attracts a diverse student population.
- **Affordability** – SMC remains a cost-effective alternative to four-year universities; financial aid and support services should be more prominently highlighted in marketing.
- **Flexibility** – Flexible course offerings, including online options, are essential for students balancing work, family, and other responsibilities.
- **Student Support Services** – Robust support services are critical, particularly for students unfamiliar with navigating college systems and processes.
- **Location & Access** – While the campus's proximity to the beach is appealing, commute distance and travel time can be barriers. Expanded and promoted online course offerings help mitigate this challenge.
- **Core Institutional Strength** – SMC's proven ability to transfer students to four-year institutions reinforces its reputation as a prestigious and high-performing community college.

### **Strategic Recommendations for Enhancing Marketing Efforts**

- Leverage student testimonials, which have a stronger impact than text-based messaging alone.
- Continue emphasizing “#1 in Transfers” as a primary message, while complementing it with themes of career advancement, skill-building, and personal growth.

### **Opportunities for Future Marketing and Messaging**

- Continue incorporating key messaging themes:
  - #1 in Transfers
  - Affordability
  - Student support resources
  - Wide range of programs and certificates
  - Flexible learning options (in-person and online)
- Strengthen messaging around:
  - Attending SMC for upskilling, career advancement, or career change, not just transfer pathways
- Expand use of authentic student testimonials to better reflect the student experience
- Develop faculty welcome and introduction videos to build connection and engagement with prospective students

Rebecca’s Presentation can be found:

[SMC Marketing Focus Group Findings DPAC Budget 4.01.2026 FINAL.pptx](#)

Link to video-marketing video:

[Proud to Be SMC Video](#)

### **V. Adjournment: 2:55 pm**

**For all documents**, visit [www.smc.edu/administration/governance/district-planning-policies/budget-planning-subcommittee.php](http://www.smc.edu/administration/governance/district-planning-policies/budget-planning-subcommittee.php)

**Future Budget Planning Committee Meetings:** Meetings will be on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, except as noted, and will begin at 2:00 pm.