

Creating an Organizational Culture that Supports Learning

Finding: Economy Encourages Leaders to Explore Longer-Range Changes

- As the economy worsens, pressure increases for colleges to cut costs yet remain affordable. At a recent conference examining these concerns, higher-education leaders and economists suggest institutions consider long-term changes rather than short-term fixes. Colleges should consider making changes not only to survive this downturn but to thrive afterward. One official expected to see a shift in demand within higher education, especially from more-expensive private institutions toward less-expensive public colleges. Some college administrators said they were considering long-range, systemic changes, using the economic crisis as an opportunity to do so. In the past, such changes have lacked the level of political support necessary to actualize. Ideas under consideration include: adjustments in employee and student health care, administrative systems, services provided, and vendor contracts. Additional strategies include centralization of functions at decentralized universities, and sharing resources or programs with other colleges.

Implications: The identified trends for institutions of higher education provide the MCCCDC a suggested framework when considering options for long-term planning policies. Depending on Arizona state budget and financial conditions, these strategies may provide additional avenues to pursue for MCCCDC.

Finding: Community Colleges are Essential to a Healthy Economy

- Results from a report conducted in seven states to determine the public's understanding of the value of community colleges and the impact they might have on the local economy found that community colleges can continue to serve the country's citizens as well as help stabilize the state's economy by investing in advocacy, changing the public's preconceptions of community colleges, and building statewide collaborations.

Implications: Stronger advocacy at the state level could help to strengthen the community's understanding of the importance of community colleges. As an organization, community colleges could work internally to better educate the community regarding their role in rebuilding and sustaining a health economy.

Finding: Higher Enrollments Increase Safety, Privacy Concerns

- Confidentiality issues that were once primarily the concern of four-year colleges and universities have now moved onto the community college campus. Colleges are encouraged to be proactive in addressing campus safety issues, yet cautioned when crafting informed policies and procedures to balance privacy, safety and security, and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, (FERPA) concerns.

Implications: MCCCDC colleges could benefit by addressing similar issues through district policy and campus adherence.

Finding:**Re-Examining the Sacrosanct Credit Hour**

- In the early 1900s, the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement for Teaching, along with the General Education Board, promoted the adoption of the student credit hour as a common measure for comparing activities and encouraging greater efficiency and competition among institutions.
- The credit-hour measure made possible the calculation of relative faculty workloads, cost of instruction per student hour, and ultimately the rate of educational efficiency for individual professors, fields, department, and colleges. Many state governments began using the credit hour to standardize budget formulas in public-university systems and to compare student workloads between institutions by converting enrollment into “full-time equivalencies.” Many believe the current pretense of “regulating time” as the basis for academic credits should be re-considered. The authors suggest a change in the language from “student credit hours” to “student credit units,” along with the elimination of other time-based measures, like academic calendar requirements, that are associated with credit hours.

Implications:

A Carnegie definitional change that defines what constitutes education achievement measures holds significant implications for MCCCDC colleges. Many facets of operations could be influenced: funding formulas, achievement measures, educational delivery modes, distance learning, degree and certificate requirements, transfer equivalency, and accreditation to name a few.

Finding:**2-Year Colleges Worry That Job Training May Displace the Humanities**

- Passage of the vast economic-stimulus bill was a big win for community colleges, but its focus on job training has some two-year-college officials worried that the humanities could see a decreased emphasis as laid-off workers rush through work-force development programs. The article singled out local Workforce Investment Boards, through which billions of dollars in stimulus money are being channeled. The boards are asking community colleges to create three-to six-month job-training programs, which are shorter than the traditional year long certificate programs that sometimes include a humanities component.

Implications:

This trend could have almost immediate impact regardless of whether community colleges are requested to formulate three to six month long training programs in keeping with the economic-stimulus bill provisions.
