

## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

Successful leadership and management of colleges depend on the ability of faculty and staff to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Decision-makers need to anticipate environmental changes and assess their impact on the organization. The purpose of the environmental scan is to provide a broad range of information that will enable decision-makers to understand the current environment, anticipate future trends, and incorporate this understanding into the strategic directions of the college.

### ***Maximizing Student Success***

The continued economic downturn has prompted unprecedented changes in postsecondary institutions. Today, higher education institutions are serving increasing numbers of students, providing more services, and facing greater accountability to improve student success. In response to budget downfalls, many four-year institutions have increased tuition and fees to levels which are no longer affordable for current and potential students. More than ever, many are turning to community colleges as the 'affordable' option for higher education. Nationally, community colleges are considered a key component to rebuilding a healthy economy. In particular, community colleges are being charged with streamlining program completion, producing more college graduates, increasing online course offerings, and expanding workforce development. In addition, community colleges must anticipate and prepare workers for high-demand and future jobs such as engineering and green jobs.

### ***Creating a Culture of Assessment***

Greater accountability continues to be a central focus among higher education. Without question, "the assessment of student learning has become an essential operating requirement for colleges and universities" (Ewell, 2008). As local, state, and federal leaders ask the question 'are students learning,' postsecondary institutions are responding to this question by developing learning outcomes, measuring progress, and documenting the process. New learning outcomes models that assess the institution's contribution to student learning efforts along with greater faculty involvement will be key factors as institutions face greater accountability demands.

### ***Creating an Organizational Culture that Supports Learning***

The organizational culture of an institution often impacts learning in a number of important ways. In times of economic crisis, many institutions are encouraged to make long-term policy adjustments including: employee benefit changes, external vendor contract negotiations, sharing resources and administration systems, and partnering collaborations. Historically, the mission of community colleges has been widespread. It is predicted that the multiple missions of community colleges will begin to merge as local, state, and federal officials look more to community colleges to educate and prepare individuals for the workforce. The challenge for many institutions will be balancing external demands with the internal culture of the college, preparing staff to effectively respond to the evolving community college role, and finding ways to promote the organization's culture during an economic downturn.

### ***Creating Dynamic Environments that Support Student Learning***

Dynamic student learning environments often include home, work, and college. Research and trends suggest that students will continue to expect learning opportunities presented at "high speed" with instant feedback and measured outcomes. Additional trends suggest that new media will enable technology-savvy students to "immerse themselves in context rich settings," participate in more collaborative learning, and contribute to their overall success. College vocational training programs may

also see advancement as the U.S. Bureau of Statistics reports that 18 of the 20 fastest-growing occupations within the next decade will require career and technical education.

***Maximizing Partnerships and Resources to Support Learning***

National stimulus financial support is providing progress in the renewable energy sector. The targeted monies have encouraged a greater number of students to enroll in community college/business partnership programs that promise training in “green” jobs. National data indicates the current economic downturn has coincided with enrollment increases at many community colleges. However, a variety of indicators suggest the population of metro Phoenix may be shrinking, further reducing the tax base and negatively impacting state budgets. This carries the potential for reduction in available funding for postsecondary institutions at a time when postsecondary institutions are serving an unprecedented number of students.

Stimulus funding derived from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)*, requires a commitment to advance essential education reforms to benefit students from early learning through post-secondary education. The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) includes: “college and career ready” standards and high-quality, valid, reliable assessments of all students. Arizona’s share of this fund, dedicated to support state education budgets, is estimated at \$860 million over the next two years.

# Maximizing Student Success

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**Finding:**                    **Shaking Up the Community College Concept**

- The City University of New York is considering the creation of a new type of community college to complement its six existing two-year institutions. The vision is consistent with national calls by many educators to look for new ways to get more community college students to complete programs speedily. The plan proposes stricter requirements and a narrower curriculum than many community colleges currently offer. All first-year students would be required to take a predetermined core curriculum and would then be limited to their choice of roughly 12 majors—each with a prominent focus on internships and other on-the-job educational opportunities. The proposed majors are mostly in pre-career fields of study such as nursing, surgical technology and energy services management.

**Implications:**        Streamlining community college degree offerings has gained popularity in recent years as one strategy to improve transfer and graduation rates. Some suggest that expanding the career and workforce development curricula is the most proficient use of limited funds. Federal and state government support often cites the workforce development features of the community college as the more efficient method of training “work ready” completers. MCCCDC may better serve students and potential workers by modeling this strategy and expanding workforce development offerings.

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**Finding:**                    **Regents to Look at ASU Proposal to Cut AIMS Awards**

- Arizona State University has proposed suspending its scholarship program for high school students who pass the state AIMS test because of severe budget cuts. The proposal would require the approval of state board of regents and could affect hundreds of students entering the university next fall. Currently, 5,785 freshmen through juniors attending ASU, UA and NAU receive AIMS scholarships, with a total value of \$25.5 million. ASU has 2,509 current recipients of AIMS scholarships totaling \$12.5 million, UA has 2,265 students receiving tuition waivers worth \$10.6 million, and NAU has 1,011 with scholarships valued at \$2.4million.

**Implications:**        The reduction in the number of AIMS scholarship recipients may cause financial shortcomings for some students who, subsequently, may decide to enroll in the lower cost community colleges.

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**Finding:**                    **Plan Aims to Add Graduates**

- The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) is studying a plan to nearly double the college and university student enrollment by 2020. This process would involve funneling more high school students to the universities and transferring more students from the community colleges. The proposal also involves growing online programs.

**Implications:**        The potential impact of the ABOR plan could result in a greater number of students enrolling in community colleges and transferring to the university. The increased enrollment could require more faculty, program resources, and classroom space.

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**Finding: ASU Plans to Lay Off Faculty to Save Cash**

- Arizona State University is preparing to lay off an estimated 200 faculty associates and dramatically boost some class sizes beginning this spring as it braces for more state budget cuts.

**Implications:** Dramatically increasing class sizes can negatively impact student success. The increase in class size may also detour students from enrolling at ASU, which may have additional growth opportunities for Maricopa.

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**Finding: Enrollment Down in Arizona's Public Schools**

- The Arizona Republic conducted a study of Maricopa County public school district enrollment. School districts in the outlying valley area are showing increases (e.g., Dysart, Chandler & Higley) while districts in established older areas (e.g., Mesa Public Schools) are experiencing enrollment declines. Even minor enrollment declines result in significant budget cuts (\$6,000 per student) and have resulted in Districts considering closing some schools and cutting specialty employees (e.g., librarians, nurses).

**Implications:** As Maricopa enrollment continues to become more youth based, public school enrollment trends could provide insightful information on which community colleges will continue to grow or decline. It appears that colleges located in the "fringe" areas of Maricopa County will continue to enroll more recent high school graduates over the next several years. In addition, reductions in per student spending could also limit the overall preparedness of students enrolling in Arizona's postsecondary institutions.

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**Finding: Hispanic Student Enrollment Continues to Grow at Public Schools**

- Strong growth in Hispanic public school enrollment is expected to continue for decades, according to a recently released U.S. Census Bureau population projection. The number of Hispanic students in the nation's public school nearly doubled from 1990 to 2006, accounting for 60% of the total growth in public school enrollments over that period. There are now approximately 10 million Hispanic students in the nation's public kindergartens, elementary and high schools; making up about one-in-five public school students in the United States. The bureau also reports that Hispanic school-age population will increase 166%, from 11 million in 2006 to 28 million by 2050. The non-Hispanic school-age population is estimated to grow by just 4%; from 43 million to 45 million over this same period. Hispanic school-age students represent more than 40% of enrollments in three states (Arizona, New Mexico and Texas).

**Implications:** Demographic trends throughout MCCCDC correspond with the U.S. Census Bureau data. The MCCCDC campuses could benefit by continuing their efforts in preparing for the needs of an expanding Hispanic student population. Maricopa may also expect larger numbers of non-English speaking students as well.

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**Finding: Advanced Placement Enrollment on the Rise**

- More Arizona students are taking Advance Placement (AP) courses and exams as a way to cut college costs and become more prepared for higher education. In 2008, 10,573 public high school students took at least one AP exam compared with 5,720 students five years ago. A majority of students took AP courses in science, math, English and history.

**Implications:** Trends indicate that many students opting to take AP exams hold aspirations of immediate enrollment in four-year colleges and universities. MCCCDC may consider tapping the potential higher education seeker to consider transfer to college and universities with AP credits, after initially attending the more cost efficient community college.

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**Finding: Community Colleges Seen as Source of Engineers**

- Currently, only 12 percent of baccalaureate engineering degrees are awarded to African-American, Hispanic, or American Indian students. Recent data shows that across all disciplines, approximately one-third of students who enroll in public, two-year colleges eventually transfer. Opportunities for improving the number of students choosing and completing baccalaureate degrees in engineering fields are numerous for community colleges. Suggestions for smooth pipeline transfer include: state-wide agreement governing articulation, clean credit transfer, promoting engineering as community college major, selecting specific offerings in community college engineering sub-disciplines, qualified faculty, appropriate laboratory equipment, adequate financial aid, effective mentors, program specific academic advisors, and external grants.

**Implications:** MCCCCD can serve an important role in improving transfer and baccalaureate achievement in the engineering field. Arizona Board of Regents and the Governor have endorsed efforts (i.e., 2020 Vision) designed to better educate the state's workforce, improve state's research base, and increase bachelor degree completion to serve the state's growing educational and workforce needs.

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**Finding: Studies Focus on Factors That Influence Freshmen Success**

- Three new studies of college freshmen suggest that even the most promising students can run into academic difficulties as a long-term consequence of experiences like attending a violent or run-down high school or being raised by parents who never went to college. One study indicated that students who enter college with comparable academic records and family backgrounds can have different levels of success in their freshman year, depending on their high-school environment. Another study found that low-income freshmen tended to post lower grades if their high school had high levels of violence or disorder, had enrollments that were heavily black or Hispanic, or had a high percentage of students with limited proficiency in English.

**Implications:** Many students who enter MCCCCD from county feeder high schools may have experienced similar family, educational, and/or social environments as described. An awareness of these individual student factors may provide valuable information to colleges hoping to positively address student success behaviors.

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**Finding: Community-College Students Need Better Financial Advising, Survey Finds**

- In the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, known as CCSSE, nearly half (45 percent) of respondents cited a lack of finances as a hardship that would likely cause them to withdraw from classes or leave college – more than twice as many (19 percent) as those who cited a lack of academic preparation. Those findings suggest that institutions must do more to familiarize prospective students with financial aid and to steer enrolled students through the complex application process. There are very large numbers of community-college students who are eligible for federal financial aid, but who do not apply for it.

**Implications:** MCCCCD college financial aid staffs are currently expanding efforts to engage more students in the financial aid process and ease the confusion over money available for financing college. The Obama administration's stimulus money (increased Pell grant awards) may also play a significant role in improving access and availability of much needed grant and student loan sources.

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**Finding: 4-Day School Week Gains Momentum**

- A shorter week (4-days) is seen as one way for many school districts to adapt to shrinking funding support. Many U.S. school districts are experiencing tight budget constraints, which is one reason why more are considering a schedule that delights students and makes working parents cringe.

**Implications:** Extending school hours and eliminating one day of classes each week, could save resources currently used to support transportation, utilities, and other operational expenses. Although a condensed school week may save financial resources, this strategy must also consider the implications to student success. In particular, student academic performance in Arizona is considerably low, and strategies designed to save money must not negatively impact student academic achievement.

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**Finding: New Fees Could Put Tuition at ASU, UA Above U.S. Average**

- Arizona's two biggest state universities are proposing tuition surcharges of more than \$1,000 that could push them past the national average in college costs for the first time. To make up for cuts in state funding, Arizona State University is proposing a \$1,200-a-year "economic recovery surcharge" for all students while the University of Arizona wants a \$1,100 per-year surcharge. Northern Arizona University is seeking \$350 more. The surcharges could move ASU and UA above the national average for college costs. Last academic year, 53 percent of undergraduate students at Arizona's three state universities graduated with debt, up from 47 percent four years earlier. The Arizona Board of Regents reports average debt roughly \$17,500.

**Implications:** Surcharges at the three universities could send entering students to community colleges rather than pay the additional fees.

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**Finding: New Way Urged for Gauging Schools**

- Half of Maricopa County's high-school graduates who enter Arizona universities or colleges must take a remedial math class, and just under a quarter must take a remedial English class. Some Arizona State House leaders are proposing a pilot program that could lead to making the percentage of students who graduate "college-ready" the prime indicator of how well a high school performs. The study tracked students from 115 Maricopa County districts or charter high schools that entered one of the three state universities or Maricopa Community Colleges, accounting for 55 percent of the county's 2006 graduates, or about 17,400 students. Study results indicate: seventy-seven percent were prepared to enter a college-level English course without extra help; half were ready for college algebra. The legislature will also examine the future of AIMS, possibly eliminating it as a graduation requirement, or replacing it with a college entrance (ACT, SAT) type exam.

**Implications:** Underprepared Arizona high school graduates, make-up of a good proportion of MCCCCD entering students. The importance of this proposed task force, and resulting exit exam alternatives, hold a high level of interest for tax payers, K-12 curriculum, funding levels and sources, dual enrollment options, and intended competencies. The impact of remedial math and English courses raise concerns for current MCCCCD programming, faculty hiring, and student success efforts.

# Creating a Culture of Assessment

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**Finding: Majority of Institutions Have Common Learning Outcomes**

- According to a study by Hart Research Associates - members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), 78% of participating institutions have a common set of learning outcomes for undergraduates. The skills most commonly assessed are writing, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and oral communication.
- Approximately 72% of member institutions assess learning outcomes across the curriculum, and an additional one in four (24%) are planning to incorporate this type of assessment. More institutions assess at the department level (68%) than the general education level (52%).
- AACU member institutions use varied approaches and tools for assessment - 36% use assessments based on a sample of students, 24% use departmental assessments for evidence of general education outcomes, and 17% use assessments that all students complete.

**Implications:** The strategies used by other institutions to assess student learning outcomes are similar to many of the strategies currently in place at EMCC, and also serve as a model for future implementation. As the assessment of student learning outcomes becomes increasingly important, an understanding of how other institutions assess learning outcomes may also be of greater value.

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**Finding: Better Forms of Student Learning Assessment Needed**

- A recent report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that to improve the success rates of students who are unprepared for college-level work, community colleges must develop enhanced forms of student learning assessment, analyze the data to discover best teaching practices, and get faculty members more involved in the assessment process.

**Implications:** Involving faculty in the assessment of learning outcomes is key to the overall success of the process. Faculty can provide meaningful insight into the development of value-added tests, common exams across course sections, and other forms of student learning assessment.

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**Finding: Community College Learning Assessment Measures Institutions Value Added**

- The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) uses new assessment instruments that present complex realistic problems or performance tasks. The institution- and not the student- is the primary unit of analysis. The performance tasks require students to analyze complex material and to construct written responses that demonstrate their abilities to think critically, reason analytically, and communicate clearly. The assessment is designed to measure an institution's contribution, or value added, to the development of these competencies, including the effects of changes to curriculum and instructional methods.

**Implications:** Assessments, such as the CLA, represent the progress made in assessing student learning outcomes and provide some additional strategies to employ as EMCC continues to assess the degree to which students are learning.

**Finding:****Congress Shows Colleges they're not off the Hook on Accountability**

- The Commission on the Future of Higher Education recommended that colleges measure and report student-learning outcomes. Congress has prepared legislation packed with new requirements for colleges to document their performance. Agenda items in the reauthorize Higher Education Act will double colleges' reporting requirement including more information on graduation rates, grant aid, and perhaps most significantly – the success of their teacher-training programs. Under the new law, colleges with teacher-training programs will be required to set “quantifiable goals” and report results in raising the number of prospective teachers in certain subjects affiliated with the nation’s teacher shortage. The new law also includes other provisions that require all colleges to report the average amount of grant aid awarded students and the average “net price” (sticker price minus financial aid) for students receiving federal financial aid.

**Implications:**

Arizona’s response to the state’s K-12 teacher shortages continues to engage the community colleges in providing a level of teacher preparation curricula. The MCCCDC plays an important role in helping the state meet the community needs in teacher preparation, and securing adequate student available financial aid to support these efforts. Awareness and compliance with proposed federal regulations regarding these programs holds implications for the district.

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**Finding:****University of Phoenix Reports Its Students' Academic Achievement**

- The largest private university in North America, University of Phoenix, released an academic report with findings indicating the effectiveness of its educational model. Results show the model's effectiveness in helping students who are underprepared to succeed in college. Standardized test results imply that Phoenix students improve "risk factor" skills in reading, writing, and mathematics at a rate greater than students at other colleges.

**Implications:**

Immediate reactions from some educational leaders view the “Phoenix report” as a very positive development and encourage all colleges to be open in self-reporting. The potential MCCCDC impact from results presented in this report may influence student's college attendance choices, particularly when considering the available success rates regarding at-risk factors.

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**Finding:****Arizona Students Struggle on First Science AIMS Test**

- The first AIMS science test, administered during spring 2008, produced less than desired results. More than 60% of high-school students failed. Student's initial science test results proved less successful than scores in math (67%), writing (68%) and reading (73%). The science portion of the exam is not currently required to earn a diploma, but the Arizona Science Teachers Association support it becoming a requirement.

**Implications:**

The importance of math and science education cannot be underestimated in educating a globally competitive workforce. Recent emphasis on preparing students for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas have been encouraged at the local, state and federal level. Increased Federal Grant opportunities in STEM areas have proved financially and programmatically beneficial for many MCCCDC institutions. Increased efforts to link the community colleges with K-12 partnerships may help create an environment for improvement in teaching and learning science.

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**Finding:****SAT Coaching Found to Barely Boost Scores**

- Some families spend thousands of dollars on coaching to help college-bound students boost their SAT scores. A recent report by the National Association for College Admission Counseling finds that many of these test-preparation courses are not as beneficial as consumers are led to believe. The report criticizes common test-prep-industry marketing practices, including promises of big score gains with no hard data to back up such claims. The report also finds fault with the frequent use of mock SAT tests because they can be devised to inflate score gains when students take the actual SAT. Some test-prep companies acknowledge there is nothing to hold them accountable for score-gain promises. Approximately two million students spend \$2.5 billion a year on test preparation and tutoring.

**Implications:**

State officials are currently considering adding SAT score results, along with AIMS scores, in determining high school achievement and “college-readiness.” Arizona students should be aware that the costs for SAT coaching may not produce the results expected by student participants. MCCCDC colleges do not currently require a SAT score for admission.

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**Finding:****State Students' SAT Scores Decline Three Years**

- Arizona's student scores on the SAT exam have declined for a third consecutive year, with reading scores the lowest in a decade. Approximately 30 percent of Arizona high-school students take the SAT. The other popular college entrance exam, the ACT, has no mandatory writing section like the SAT. An increased number of students taking the exam, including more minorities and first-generation college students, are being attributed to the recent decrease in scores. State SAT numbers remain above national scores.

**Implications:**

The SAT examine is designed to measure first-year college readiness. Although not necessary for admission in MCCCDC institutions, such a trend may influence student university preparedness (acceptance) and choice of initial college enrollment.

# Creating an Organizational Culture that Supports Learning

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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**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.

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# Creating Dynamic Environments that Support Student Learning

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**Finding:** **Learning Will Continue to Occur in Media-Rich Environments**

- A recent study suggests that new media will enable technology-savvy students to immerse themselves in context rich settings, to express themselves individually, and connect to social groups for affinity and support. A student, who develops their digital literacy building worlds, and role playing in games, will expect learning to parallel those environments. Students will want technology to support collaboration with each other.

**Implications:** Learning within media-rich environments will continue to be an important factor contributing to student success. Both Maricopa and EMCC should continue to consider this trend as course curriculum and competencies are developed and modified.

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**Finding:** **Recession May Drive More Adult Students to Take Online Classes**

- Downturns in economic conditions often see two-year colleges and private for-profit institutions enrolling more students. Competition for the growing pool of students interested in online learning is increasing and may be leading schools to increase their geographic reach while concentrating on degree-seeking, as well as non-degree, and nontraditional students.

**Implications:** MCCCDCD may choose to increase the geographic reach by offering more online courses while concentrating on specific student demographics that have indicated an interest in online course offerings.

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**Finding:** **Program Teaches High School Students Specific Job Skills**

- Programs once referred as “vocational” education no longer exist in many high school curricula. A good number of today’s “vocational” programs consist of classes known as career and technical education, or CTE. The Arizona Department of Education has aligned the curriculum for every CTE course with corresponding academic standards. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 18 of the 20 fastest-growing occupations within the next decade will require career and technical education.

**Implications:** The State commitment to high school CTE programs offers potential opportunities for the MCCCDCD. Continued career and technical education could impact vocational training courses and programs offered through the community colleges.

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**Finding:** **Learning Will Continue to Take Place Anytime and Everywhere**

- As more millennial students enroll in postsecondary education, the expectation of a tailored college experience will increase. Learning environments often include home, work, and college. Students can expect learning to occur at a high speed with instant feedback and payoffs.

**Implications:** Understanding the unique learning needs of incoming students and incorporating these strategies into the classroom may be fundamental in attracting and retaining millennial students.

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# Maximizing Partnerships & Resources that Support Learning

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**Finding:** **College Role in “Green Job“ Growth**

- Across the country, many people are looking to the renewable energy sector hoping that “green-collar jobs” will offer stability in the current economy. Some students are enrolling in community college or apprenticeship programs that offer training in wind turbine mechanics, solar panel installation, fuel-cell engineering or energy efficiency. Government support has rallied excitement for the prospect of a green jobs corps, as President Obama’s stimulus package places nearly \$20 billion into greening the economy. The pronounced goal to double the supply of renewable energy in three years calls for a new class of trained workers in environmental fields. Green jobs training programs will receive \$500 million from the stimulus.

**Implications:** Numerous new programs could be explored by the MCCCDC colleges to possibly include wind turbine mechanics, solar panel installers, fuel-cell engineers or energy efficiency experts. The federal monies targeted for such initiatives, and Arizona’s strategic location in the sun belt, suggest obvious incentives for exploring options.

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**Finding:** **Colleges Woo Adults Who Have Some Credits but No Degree**

- The Lumina Foundation for Education reports that nationally, about 54 million people in the labor force have no college degree, and of those, 34 million have no college experience at all. Many states are now taking efforts to persuade thousands of adults with some college credits to re-enroll at one of the state’s public four-year institutions.

**Implications:** The MCCCDC colleges may consider the benefits of reaching out to former students who have not completed a certificate or degree. Challenges with this recruitment approach include: (1) persuading busy adults to return to college (2) convincing them of the value and importance of pursuing a degree, and (3) maximizing accommodations to match their lifestyles.

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**Finding:** **New Nurses Face Hiring Challenges**

- Recent nursing graduates are finding it difficult to obtain employment as hospitals are scaling back on hiring because of the recession. Also influencing this trend is the fact veteran nurses are less likely to retire, while part time nurses are working more hours to add to their income.

**Implications:** The relevance of this to MCCCDC nursing programs may suggest a need for increased partnerships and placement assistance.

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**Finding:** **Arizona Unemployment Rate Hits 5.9 Percent**

- Arizona’s unemployment rate has reached its highest level since July 2003 and is increasing faster than the national unemployment rate. Losses continue to be felt in construction and retail, while jobs continue to increase in education and healthcare.

**Implications:** Historically, MCCCDC college enrollments increase with increasing unemployment. Declining areas can be sources for students looking to retool

and resources need to be allocated to training programs in areas with job growth.

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**Finding: Surprise School Will Blend Community College and University**

- Not quite a community college and not quite a university, a “communiversity” intends to offer the best of both. The “communiversity” is a partnership of three Maricopa Community Colleges and as many as five universities, Rio Salado, Glendale and Phoenix community colleges will join with four-year universities to bring education to students instead of having students travel to their campuses. When students earn an associate degree, they will not have to transfer to a four-year campus hoping that most of their credits will be accepted. Instead, the student will continue on a path that could lead to a master’s degree, even if more than one college is involved.

**Implications:** The project partnership mentioned involves MCCCDC and university systems. Agreements among multiple education systems may benefit students and communities by offering viable alternatives to earning a baccalaureate degree without extensive travel.

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**Finding: Colleges Charging Tuition Based on Majors**

The new thinking among university officials in Arizona and elsewhere is that students who enroll in programs that are more expensive to offer should be responsible for the additional costs. The extra charges, which are often called “differential tuition” or “program fees,” can add several hundred dollars to tuition bills. The higher fees are most common at the graduate level, but they have filtered to the undergraduate level in the past two years. At ASU for example, nursing students working toward bachelor’s degrees will likely pay \$750 more a semester, while engineering students may pay \$300 more per semester. College of Design students will likely pay \$300 more per semester. The charges are in addition to the proposed 5% increase in base tuition for all ASU students.

**Implications:** MCCCDC transfer students may experience higher “differential tuition” increases because most increases are recognized within a student’s junior and senior years. Maintaining a lower overall tuition schedule than four-year institutions, MCCCDC colleges have often witnessed beneficial enrollment changes when universities raise tuition and fees. Such notable enrollment changes may be less influenced by the suggested university tuition and fee increases.

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**Finding: Community College Enrollments Up, but Institutions Struggle With Costs**

- Recent National data indicates the downturn in the economy has coincided with enrollment increases at many community colleges. The hardest-hit institutions appear to be those in states with a diminished manufacturing economy or a burst housing bubble, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. History holds that when the economy declines, college enrollments rise. However, the same downturn in the economy also applies to the funding available for postsecondary institutions.

**Implications:** The current legislative budgetary concerns are having a powerful influence on MCCCDC funding. Higher education throughout the state are being forced to curtail costs, cut or reduce program offerings, raise tuition, and explore alternative cost cutting measures. Projected fiscal year 2009-10 budget concerns indicate financial tough times, while service demand increases.

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**Finding: State Fiscal Stabilization Fund**

- The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program is a new one-time appropriation of \$53.6 billion under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)*. Of the amount appropriated, the U.S. Department of Education will award governors approximately \$48.6 billion by formula under the SFSF program in exchange for a commitment to advance

essential education reforms to benefit students from early learning through post-secondary education, including: college- and career- ready standards and high-quality, valid and reliable assessments for all students; development and use of pre-K through post-secondary and career data systems; increasing teacher effectiveness and ensuring an equitable distribution of qualified teachers; and turning around the lowest-performing schools.

**Implications:** Arizona's share of this fund, dedicated to shoring up each state's education budgets, is estimated at \$860 million over the next two years. The criteria will require the state to "maintain" a budget at the 2006 level in order to obtain the funds. The funding should provide some assistance as the state works through this recession. The fund also includes other funding dedicated to Arizona which could benefit Maricopa.

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**Finding: Greater Phoenix May be Losing People**

- "For the first time in modern history, Phoenix's population could be shrinking. It's an idea that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago, when Phoenix was surging up the list of the nation's most populous cities. Now, a variety of indicators suggest that fewer people are living here than a year ago." Several indicators suggest the tax base will be reduced, thus impacting the state budgets.
  - \* Foreclosures have increased and water hook-ups are down which means fewer homes are occupied.
  - \* Trash collection sites have decreased meaning less people are buying products and producing waste.
  - \* People are spending less money which means sales-tax revenues are decreasing.

**Implications:** The issue for Maricopa is that whenever the tax revenue is at risk and state budgets are impacted, the Maricopa Community College's budgets are directly impacted. Monetary changes can impact all services to students, including programs, facilities, number of classes offered, etc.

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**Finding: Campus Computing Goes Green to Save Money**

- A conference held at the University of California at San Diego, offered a new generation of technologies that promise to help colleges make their IT departments both more efficient and more sustainable. Colleges affected by the rising costs of powering and cooling their data centers have been targeted, in part, because some costs are difficult to measure and/or poorly understood. Considered approaches included a data center that could direct cool air only when the facility is generating the most heat; and supplying computers directly with local DC power which might save up to 30 percent in electricity costs.

**Implications:** Options for reducing operational costs, as well as promoting "green" technology, are currently being entertained by a number of MCCC institutions. Sustainability dialogues should occur, not only during these pressing economic times, but persist in continuous efforts impacting wise and effective decision-making.

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**Finding: Maximum Tuition and Fees Paid Under New GI Bill Program Increase**

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently revealed a list of state-by-state tuition and fee caps that help determine the amount of benefits veterans can receive under the new GI Bill. The maximum fees that the new aid could cover improved considerably in several states from initial estimates posted in February. The new GI Bill was designed to allow veterans attendance at any in-state public college at no cost. The state-by-state caps represent the maximum amount a veteran's in-state education could cost, but the caps are also used to determine how much the federal government will help pay for a veteran to attend an out-of-state or private college. The average fees per term reported nationwide almost doubled, to \$6,883 from \$3,645.

**Implications:** GI Bill recipients should be able to meet the tuition and fee requirements set by the district. Lower tuition costs at MCCCCD colleges may also encourage veterans to consider enrolling and applying the GI Bill.

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**Finding: Stepping Up to Help Students**

- An increasing number of community colleges are stepping up to help financially struggling students weather the recent economic storm. Prominent institutional offerings include reduced tuition to laid-off workers and college leaders forgoing salary increases and bonuses.

**Implications:** Application of these two cost cutting measures should be considered by MCCCCD college leaders. Results of such actions could hold beneficial implications for many Maricopa district students and administrators.

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# On the Horizon

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## **Finding: Huge Paying Technology Careers Without 4-year Degree**

- Career opportunities in technical areas offer high salaries without the completion of a four-year college degree. Many jobs in manufacturing, information technology and health care, often requiring a fair level of computer technology skills, provide high wage employment opportunities. Vocational high schools and community colleges are leading the way in providing the necessary technical skills. While completion of a four-year degree remains a hedge in job security and advancement, a two-year associate degree can enable salary earnings nearly three-quarters of a 4-year degree.

**Implications:** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, average salaries in the fastest growing jobs requiring post-secondary and associate degree training ranged from \$36,000 to nearly \$65,000 in 2007. In Maricopa county, the manufacturing sector, precision machinists and technical health care professionals are currently showing consistent employment growth opportunities. Job trends in high tech fields challenge MCCCDC to provide the educational training to meet community needs.

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## **Finding: Community Colleges Anticipate Boom in Baby-Boomer Students**

- The “Plus 50 Initiative’ is a three-year project designed to create and support programs for adults over 50 at 15 community colleges. The programs director believes that community colleges must do more to engage older students in job preparation. A survey of institutions involved in the project revealed that while 86 percent of those institutions offered enrichment programs for older students, only 58 percent had work-force training and career-development services tailored to them. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects an overall increase in older workers continuing in the workforce with the number of 55 to 64 year olds increasing by 36.5 percent and 65+ by 81 percent between 2006 and 2016.

**Implications:** Options related to “Plus-50” training and retraining programs will remain important for community members and should be considered as a district-wide priority.

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## **Finding: New Teachers Can Expect Tough Job Search**

- Many valley school districts are announcing teacher cutbacks due primarily to funding issues related to the economy. New teachers graduating from the state’s colleges and universities will face difficulty in landing a teaching position. Although some districts are experiencing a decrease in enrollment, most cite potential state budget cuts influencing their hiring decisions. There remains a critical teaching shortage for qualified special education, math and science teachers; however some districts will be underfunded in meeting those concerns. Beginning teachers hoping to land an appointment upon graduation may have to consider relocating outside the county to more rural areas.

**Implications:** MCCCDC may benefit by knowing the top employers in the state and help provide their students the educational training necessary for employment. The competitive educational offerings by the Apollo Group’s on-line educational services may also be of interest.