



Mission College
Organizational Structure Review
Summary of Survey Themes

Spring 2011

Purpose

In Academic Year 2009-2010, Mission College began to implement organizational changes approved by College governance bodies and supported by District staff. This first phase focused on the realigning of all instructional divisions, assigning Dean support for each division while retaining the established Division Chair and Department Chair structure. The purpose of this survey was to provide an opportunity for all college members to reflect on their experience over the last year, and to provide feedback on what they have experienced to inform future planning and improve organizational effectiveness.

Background

Mission College initiated a review of its organizational structure following receipt of the Accrediting Commission's recommendations based on the 2007 Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Accreditation Team Visit. Specifically, Recommendation 7 stated, "The team recommends that the college develop organizational structures and strategies to effectively provide administrative support and oversight necessary to accomplish the institution's mission and purpose." As part of this review, the College and District commissioned the California Collegiate Brain Trust to conduct an evaluation and make recommendations in this area as well as on other practices.

A number of recommendations came out of the Brain Trust report and subsequent discussions within college participatory governance groups. Although areas were identified across the college, the primary focus for the revised structure was within the area of Instruction. Instruction was noted as having a particularly unwieldy structure with too many direct reports to the Vice President of Instruction, leading to inefficiencies in operation and unrealistic expectations of oversight. The Brain Trust further identified that Mission College was not meeting typical enrollment efficiencies and was spending more on non-contractual release time than was typical for similar colleges.

Shifting of some administrative functions from a release-time method to full-time administrators was proposed to provide increased oversight and accountability with regards to legislative and legal mandates, enrollment management, and a streamlined flow of communication within the Office of Instruction. Use of full-time administrators for these functions would provide twelve-month coverage for administrative duties. Further, reductions in faculty release time were seen as an opportunity for skilled full-time faculty members to work with students in the classroom and maintain continuity of their programs. As outlined in Academic Senate minutes (4/23/09), the revised structure was also intended to improve transparency, provide more 'checks and balances,' and address shortcomings with the "peer-to-peer" system of Division Chairs. Finally, the revised structure was proposed to better align departments within instructional divisions.

As part of the discussions, college participatory governance groups reviewed multiple proposals before adopting the final proposal. The adopted proposal was selected as a balance of addressing identified needs with minimal financial impact. Financial data provided indicated that the recommended

reorganization would result in cost savings. While cost savings were not the primary motivation for the restructuring, the College moved forward with this proposal with an expectation of reduced costs and improved efficiency.

Survey Implementation

The survey was administered online in late Spring 2011 and announced via email to subscribers of the All Mission College email distribution list. Participants were asked to describe their affiliation with the College, however all responses were submitted anonymously. An initial announcement was followed by a reminder part-way into the survey period. In total, 98 people responded, including 44 full-time faculty, 27 classified staff, 18 administrators/managers/supervisors, and 9 associate faculty. Including full-time and associate faculty, faculty represent 54% of all respondents. Participants mostly came from instructional areas (58%), with approximately half as many participants, 25%, from student services, and 17% from other areas. Over three-quarters of all survey participants (79%) have been with Mission College for more than five years.

Summary of Recurring Themes

A number of recurring themes emerge from the survey responses. These themes are observable across the different questions, but do not reflect the entirety of responses. The feedback provided demonstrates a high level of variation, but even with that variation, certain themes are identifiable.

Theme: Unclear roles and responsibilities

Summary

Responses repeatedly show that there is confusion and ambiguity about the roles and responsibilities within the updated organizational structure. Survey respondents indicate a lack of understanding as to the distinction of responsibilities between Department Chairs, Division Chairs and Deans—particularly indicating a lack of understanding of the activities and responsibilities of the Deans. This confusion is further noted at the classified staff level, as the updated structure has created confusion as to which staff are assigned to support which areas.

A related concern is that the “additional layers” have led to more complicated and time-consuming processes; other respondents, however, felt that processes have become more streamlined and effective.

Discussion

It is not clear from the written responses whether the concerns raised are due to the actual structures themselves, or due to a lack of communication regarding the revised structures. In simple terms, is this a problem on paper, or a problem in practice? Although Deans and Division Chairs have revised Job Descriptions, it may be the case that these descriptions do not adequately describe or delineate daily operational duties. Alternatively, it may be the case that existing documents are sufficient, but communication and subsequent understanding are lacking. Further, a lack of understanding of administrative and managerial roles and responsibilities may well have preceded the revision of the organizational structure rather than emerging as a result of the new organizational structure.

Theme: Concerns with implementing the reorganization at a time of workforce reductions

Summary

Several responses highlighted concerns that this phase of the reorganization was occurring at the same time as workforce reductions. More specifically, several respondents questioned the initiation of updated high-level managerial positions at the same time as losses in classified staff. The perception is that administration was growing while positions which interact most with students and faculty were being reduced.

Combining these concerns with the confusion over roles and responsibilities, some respondents further questioned whether all of the levels of administrative functions (Department Chairs, Division Chairs, and Deans) were necessary and whether these “layers” improved or hindered functionality.

Discussion

Whereas the changes from the structural reorganization and the reductions in workforce were completely separate processes, survey respondents perceive the two processes as linked.

The reorganization was initiated due to issues identified in the Accrediting Commission Recommendations and subsequent recommendations from the California Collegiate Brain Trust. Structural changes were made as a response to these recommendations and approved by the College and District.

These changes included the replacement or revision of existing positions into higher level positions with increased areas of responsibility and consolidated administrative functions within the Office of Instruction.

Alternatively, reductions in workforce were identified by the College due to reduced funding at the State level and were part of an overall District effort to reduce total budget. Although these processes were distinct, they did occur in a similar timeframe and many respondents voiced concern that some positions were being created just as other positions were being identified for elimination. These

concerns may also be a product of the stated confusion on roles and responsibilities, as it is hard to identify the benefits of unknown activities. In contrast, positions that were lost as a part of reductions were known quantities.

Theme: Concern that workloads have become overwhelming at all levels

Summary

Another repeated theme is that workloads have become overwhelming. This concern is not limited to any one group—as it was noted for classified staff, staff in support roles to managers, instructional faculty, Department and Division Chairs, and Deans. Several respondents indicated the need for additional staffing at the classified and support levels, including SOCs and the Office of Instruction staffing.

Discussion

While there was a strong recurring theme of increased workloads, the reasons cited for the overwhelming workloads varied. In some cases, survey respondents identified that there are fewer staff to do the same amount of work, thus resulting in increased workloads. In the case of Area Deans, it was noted that the persons in these positions already had full workloads before the revision, and that these individuals now had significant additional responsibilities. Similarly, some respondents felt that Divisions have become too large for the Deans, Division Chairs, or administrative support staff (including SOCs) to effectively manage all assigned tasks.

Some survey participants referenced additional change as a result of new leadership in the position of College President. Although these comments did not attribute increased workloads to this change, such a change brings with it new directions and activities that may have contributed to the feeling across the campus of burgeoning workloads.

Theme: Need for cost-savings financial information

Summary

While less common than the above themes, a recurring concern was the lack of sharing of financial cost-savings information prior to the release of the survey. Some respondents expressed doubt as to whether there have been any cost-savings, while others expressed frustration at being asked to provide evaluation without the financial data at hand.

Discussion

Although the purpose behind the revisions to the organizational structure were in response to recommendations from the Accrediting Commission, and not primarily designed as a cost-savings

measure, these changes were adopted with the understanding that there would be limited cost savings. Cost-savings information has been shared through the Governance and Planning Committee (GAP), however survey responses show that few individual are aware of such documents.

One point of confusion may revolve around the source of the cost reductions which allowed for the implementation of Area Deans within the revised structure. Costs for the revised administrative positions, as well as overall cost savings within the Office of Instruction, are a result of reductions in release time to faculty for performance of administrative functions. Reductions in release time, primarily from Department and Division Chairs, allowed for the revision of administrative positions into Area Deans. Under this change, administrative duties formerly carried out by faculty using release time would now be assumed by Deans. These costs and the related cost savings are distinct from budget reductions and cost savings which led to the elimination of positions.

Summary Results by Question

PLEASE SEE THE FULL SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT FOR RESULTS BY QUESTION AND THE APPENDIX WITH COMPLETE TEXT OF RESPONSES. THE REPORT IS LOCATED ONLINE AT:

<http://www.missioncollege.edu/research/data.html>