

DRAFT

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De Anza College Education Master Plan

The Context:

De Anza College enters the next decade with a reputation as an institution of exemplary collegiate instruction and support, offering a wide range of courses and programs to a diverse and exciting community of students. This is a reputation earned through the commitment and imagination of an extraordinarily talented faculty and staff, working with limited resources and too few amenities to meet the needs of our students.

How shall we maintain our excellence in the face of dramatic cut-backs in state support, a rapidly changing social, technological and economic environment, and the ever-changing demography of our region? What are the implications for us of changes in admissions and transfer policies at the UC and CSU, themselves victims of drastic cuts in state spending? How can our faculty, staff and administrators sustain or redefine our identity in the face of new challenges in our region, commit ourselves to new initiatives in our academic and support programs, and clarify our highest priorities for development and direction?

A strategic review of our priorities and goals is provoked not only by the immediate changes in the external environment, but by the belief that our current dilemmas are not momentary lapses in an otherwise happy story of robust state support and consistent student demand. Shifts in our enrollment may be rooted in long-term changes in the demographics of age and location in our region, as well as deep changes in the economy, demanding from us a critical review of who we serve and how we might serve them better.

In the face of these changes and projections we must be clear about our priorities in the distribution of scarce resources, and clear about how we might better deliver the quality programs for which we are known. This may mean we do more of some things, less of others, or change some of what we do altogether. But which things do we choose, and why?

Three years ago De Anza College initiated a long-range strategic planning process to address these issues, in preparation for this renewal of our Educational Master Plan. Strategic planning required hard work, asking a lot of men and women who were already working fulltime to meet their classes, counsel students, review our programs and our facilities, manage the schedules and keep ahead of the deadlines. But strategic planning allowed us to define a set of priorities regarding which communities we would reach out to, how we would focus our resources in individualizing support for student success, how we would engage ourselves in insuring our own cultural capacity to engage the wide diversity of students we serve, and how we might embrace and reinforce our collaborations with local communities.

Three years later we now address the review and redefinition of our educational master plan. Just as we had three years ago, we start with a review of the environment in which we do our work, the challenges that define our environment.

1. Funding
2. Enrollment and Demography
3. The Economy and Labor Market
4. Technology
5. Our Competition
6. Student Learning

1. Funding: De Anza is coming through another year of steep budget cuts from the state, following a decade in which the contradiction between resources and enrollment demand deepened. Even before the cuts of the last two years, the college B budget per FTES had declined over 60% from 2001 to 2006 (from \$255 per FTES to \$88); there had been repeated cuts in staff, instructional technology, and the support programs that sustain an engaged faculty and empower students. For the past two years we have sustained an additional 10% reduction in state apportionment, deployed one-time savings to keep people in jobs, and watched our enrollment grow even as we cut courses by 5%.
2. Enrollment and Demography: Our overall enrollment trend for the last two years is flat, due entirely to the elimination of most of our off-campus Job Corps enrollment. Our on-campus enrollment is up more than 4%, despite the elimination of courses and support programs.

While our enrollment of our immediate district high school graduates remains stable, this is a relatively small share of our overall enrollment. Currently, four of the top five feeder high schools for De Anza are in San Jose or Milpitas. Our first-time to college enrollment among Latinos is up 77% in three years, up 30% for Filipinos and for African Americans. De Anza has become the college of first choice for students across the region, especially for those most in need of developmental and basic skills instruction. How do we balance the demand for basic skills courses against the demand for a fully developed transfer curricula? If the college built its reputation on transfer, can it honor that history by insuring that less-well-prepared students are given the widest opportunity to achieve at the highest levels?

The fastest growing communities in our region are among those most in need of quality and low-cost educational opportunities, particularly in working class and immigrant communities. Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic demographic in a region notable for its diversity, where Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino, other Asian and African-American and European-American students and families look for opportunity. How can De Anza best respond to

this diversity, especially in light of systematic and deep divisions of economic class that also mark the region?

What about the goals of our students? A more detailed review of enrollment in our academic programs reveals dramatic declines in some areas where we have traditionally been strong—especially in computer sciences—and increased demand in areas where we do not have sufficient program infrastructure—like the life sciences and nursing.

We must come up with answers to the questions posed by these trends. How do we better support students over 50, and should we? How do we attract a larger share of a relatively stable cohort of high school graduates, and which communities should we reach out to more? How can we be more of a cultural resource for the region; how can we better serve students with widely diverse needs and talents?

3. The Economy: The recent collapse of the financial and housing markets precipitated a local recession of deep significance. Real unemployment approaches 20% in Silicon Valley, and the most recent recovery of the stock market is not yet accompanied by a rebound in employment. We face a permanent change in the local landscape, where both employment and entrepreneurial opportunity will require ever higher levels of education.

Quite independent of the most recent crisis, there have been multiple analyses of our local economy, including one commissioned three years ago by the District in an effort to better understand the local job market. Every analysis concludes that the exodus of manufacturing jobs is a permanent feature of the economy, that job growth will be in high skill fields, especially in business services, computing, bio-sciences and software development, and that high school equivalencies will be inadequate to gain employment offering a living wage. More detailed analyses provide insight into the flexible and adaptable skill sets employees will look for, and suggest that colleges will have to better prepare students for multiple career paths rather than for narrow technical competences.

College planning is always caught between the demand for immediate responsiveness to a changing labor market—with its attendant dangers of over-preparing for job niches about to disappear—and the demand for broader and deeper preparation in literacy, writing, math, science, and the arts. But even a glancing look at the employment trends in our region will direct us to certain general fields and away from others. On which fields should we concentrate our efforts? How can we partner with our local communities, governments, and businesses to better prepare students, and how do we build and sustain new programs in the face of restricted budgets?

4. Technology: No one with even a passing acquaintance with contemporary

teenagers can doubt that digital media have become a ubiquitous force in defining the availability and nature of information, entertainment, even knowledge itself. For some this is a cultural catastrophe, for others an occasion to explore alternative methods of engaging students in their own learning. The explosion of delivery systems—from computers to PDAs to iPods to whatever comes next—offers an opportunity for colleges to experiment with a wide variety of technology-mediated instruction as well as new forms of distance learning. Especially with the growth of internet II and broadband, or the development of simulated “dry” labs and pod-cast study groups, we are challenged to craft a thoughtful and coherent engagement with technology, one that is driven by an account of what we expect students to learn, and takes into account the new ways of learning available to technologically-savvy student.

The challenge of technology is made especially sharp for De Anza because the passage of the recent new bond provides us an unparalleled opportunity to explore and expand our uses of technology. But which kinds of technology will we invest in, driven by what curricular models and with what learning outcomes? Does technology provide opportunities to integrate the arts and sciences in new ways? How shall we assess our projects, and against what standards will we judge our students to be expert users of the technology?

5. The Competition: De Anza has rightly occupied a relatively secure spot in the local educational ecology. The strength of our programs, the quality of our instruction and student support, even the beauty of the campus—all combined to bring us a healthy share of students well beyond what we might expect from our district alone. But we cannot rest secure in the region. Virtually every local community college has initiated significant curricular changes, built or renovated buildings, crafted outreach programs and community partnerships, and tried to create and sustain new identities of service to their immediate communities. As gas prices escalate and more proximate colleges get stronger, we may have to provide new reasons for students to come to De Anza, or craft new partnerships with our sister colleges to better serve our multiple communities.

Beyond the public institutions, there are a plethora of for-profit degree-granting schools (Phoenix, National, Alliant) and local university extension and continuing education programs that offer exceptionally flexible programming, short courses, and good student support for a certain range of students. Are there ways we can meet the needs of students who currently choose these competing options?

6. Student Learning: At the center of any educational Master Plan is an account of substantive student learning outcomes. Indeed, our Academic Senate has led a robust and aggressive effort to define both Institutional Core Competencies and disciplinary student learning outcomes, as well as student

services learning outcomes. At the heart of this work is the core question: given the changing economic, cultural, and technological environment, what are the fundamental challenges faced by our students, and how do we best prepare them for living and working in that environment? If we restrict ourselves to an account of what students need for transfer, or what they need for technical certification in any particular field, we may miss a major opportunity to clarify our own real purposes here. How do we best honor our deep commitment to educational equity among the diverse students who come to De Anza? How will we assess our progress in better preparing students to become powerful and resourceful participants in the region's economy, society, and politics?