

College of DuPage
Advisory Committee for Tomorrow (ACT)
**FINAL REPORT AND STATEMENTS OF
RECOMMENDATION**

Presented to the Board of Trustees – November 14, 2001

INTRODUCTION

This document is the set of consensus statements of recommendation from the Advisory Committee for Tomorrow (ACT). These statements were developed from common themes and messages gleaned from the following: ACT Guiding Principles document, ACT Emerging Issues document, Executive Summaries from ACT Small Group Engagement Activities at ACT meetings, presentations from staff, follow-up small group reflection sessions, and documentation produced by Sadie Flucas and others for the all-day Saturday “Framing the Issues” and the subsequent Issues Forums held at an ACT meeting.

The statements are a result of ten ACT sessions representing more than 20 hours of actual meeting time and many additional hours of participant time devoted to studying reports and materials. Participants invested additional time preparing for or reflecting on reports, materials, presentations, campus tours of facilities, and engagement activities. It also represents considerable time and energy on the part of some ACT members who prepared for, and participated in, the all-day Saturday session. Community Chairpersons and College leadership, including two representatives from the Board of Trustees, gave of their time and expertise to lead and support the ACT process.

STATEMENTS OF RECOMMENDATION

I. Leadership

- A. A clear and concise document should be produced by the Board of Trustees to help clarify the strategic direction of the College. The document should be consistent with the C.O.D. mission statement and should be “learner focused”. It should reflect a compilation of any existing programmatic strategic plans. It should describe the priorities of C.O.D. and the plan to maintain and improve the quality and high standards of services and programming.
- B. Specific steps should be taken to effectively communicate the message of the document (see item A above) to all stakeholders (i.e. patrons and constituents including students, community members, taxpayers, patrons, and all representatives of the C.O.D. service area). This should be done as part of the communications and marketing plan of the College.

- C. C.O.D. stakeholders should be involved in an ongoing education/engagement program like the Advisory Committee for Tomorrow (ACT) to help the College leadership better understand the needs and “thinking” of its constituency; and, help stakeholders better understand and appreciate the impact of the College in the life and development of the community. An engagement program would also help the constituents to better understand the challenges the College faces in meeting the educational needs of the community. This process can help the College “stay in touch” with the community it serves and give the community an opportunity to comment on programs and services offered by the College as well as help the College define educational needs of the community for the future.

The College should plan and implement an effective communications program for C.O.D.’s external publics.

- D. Consistent with the C.O.D. mission, the College should continue to strengthen and increase partnerships and joint ventures with service and community organizations, area businesses, hospitals, local governmental entities, and other academic institutions in the community including K-12 schools and nearby colleges and universities. Partnering and communicating with these organizations is viewed as essential for the College to stay on course with the expectations of its constituents.
- E. The College must implement a more effective program of internal communications. The C.O.D. staff family must be engaged in the decision-making process and informed about key issues and directions of the College. A well-informed internal audience can be the greatest resource for communications with the College external audiences.

II. Programming and Staffing

- A. The College must make every effort to maintain and improve the quality and high standards of service and programming to its constituency.
- B. C.O.D. must work to insure a user-friendly academic environment making it easy for students to access programs, as needed, for them to reach their educational goals.
- C. Programs and services available at the College should be in response to the educational needs of the community.
- D. Class size for College courses should be maintained at a level conducive to delivering instruction in the most effective manner for student learning for the specific course or program.

- E. A program to recruit and retain top quality staff members must be implemented. This includes providing budget allocations for competitive staff salaries for full- and part-time staff members.
- F. Implement a plan to provide an appropriate balance between full- and part-time faculty. Redefine full- and part- time roles of staff members.
- G. Utilize new, effective, methodologies for delivery of instruction and services always keeping in mind the needs and best learning style of the student.
- H. Continually seek and implement best practices for most effective delivery of instruction and services.
- I. Technology must be seen as strategic and central to all decisions regarding delivery of services and programming in the future. The College must examine and take advantage of opportunities to utilize more technology and less face-to-face delivery to the extent it is appropriate, effective, and affordable for the user/learner. Issues in the C.O.D. Information Technology Strategic Plan must continue to be addressed in a timely manner to make sure the College is not only staying current, but providing leadership in this critical area.
- J. Meaningful and effective staff development opportunities must be strengthened and enhanced.
- K. Realizing that the community college is no longer just a place to prepare students to go on to a university, C.O.D. should develop new models to meet the opportunities and challenges of life-long learning in a global society. The following are specific examples provided in this concept:
- The College must maintain a flexible approach to programming, ready to expand its scope of programming depending on the educational needs of the community.
 - The College must continually be sensitive to the role it plays in the local and regional economy and, therefore, should offer up-to-date and in-demand workforce training programs scheduled at flexible times to best serve the user.
 - C.O.D. should continue to enhance and expand its services and offerings to students who are working to obtain a baccalaureate education. This may involve seeking new partnerships and working relationships with area four year institutions of higher learning. Effective communication with, and counseling of, these students regarding transferability of courses should be strengthened to make sure the student is not wasting time, effort, and money in reaching this goal.

- The College should continue to work toward addressing the educational issues outlined in the Program Needs document, which summarizes opportunities and challenges in specific instructional, training, and service areas. See the document for details regarding this recommendation.
 - Programming should be in response to demand or need of the constituency. The College should review the time of year and time of day for program offerings as well as the delivery system (i.e. an appropriate mix of internet/web-based programming for courses or portions of courses conducive to such delivery).
 - The College should work to create the most appropriate environment for learning, from those items often taken for granted such as HVAC systems that deliver correct classroom temperature, to the more obvious instructional tools and instruments as evidenced in what has been referred to as “smart classrooms” and specifically designed and dedicated instructional spaces such as learning laboratories.
 - Along with responding to changes with new and innovative programs, the College must also continue to teach fundamental skills (i.e. math, reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and essential business skills (teamwork and creative problem-solving skills). These skills will continue to be important in the workplace of tomorrow.
 - Because of technological and other changes in the workplace, C.O.D. must be prepared to meet the needs of its constituency who change careers during their adult life. Programming could include workshops, seminars, and job fairs as well as specific courses.
- L. Responding to increasing diversity in the population and the workforce was a recurring theme during the ACT process. Whether English as a Second Language (ESL) programs or other, broader, cross-cultural educational efforts, it is suggested that the College must be prepared to meet not only changing job responsibilities but also changes in the workforce itself.

III. Operations (Facilities)

The College of DuPage Board of Trustees should carefully review the Facilities Master Plan (FMP) presented to ACT. While there may need to be adjustments and modifications to the FMP, it does provide a reasonable road map to help address the many program and student focused needs outlined in the program section of this document.

It should also be noted that ACT recommends continual engagement of the College of DuPage community regarding any modifications and/or revisions to

the FMP to insure each piece is relevant to the program direction and vision documents of the College, reflecting its intent to be a good neighbor.

ACT further understands that, while not all the implementation steps in the proposed Facilities Master Plan would require an increase in tuition and/or tax support, most would. Therefore, to proceed with all the elements in the FMP, the College would need to take appropriate steps to secure additional funding. Also, while experts have provided a statement of probable costs for the entire Facilities Master Plan implementation, the College should escalate these values based on an actual schedule of implementation and refine the actual scope of work for each project, utilizing the services of professionals.

The following statements reflect the major components of the proposed Facilities Master Plan. The FMP prescribes a specific sequence of implementation that reflects the critical interrelationships between many of the Plan's components.

- A. **Maintain** facilities: the College should continue to proactively maintain all existing facilities and infrastructure, as appropriate, to maximize their value and useful life for educational programming.
- B. **Replace** facilities: the College should eliminate and replace all facilities and infrastructure that have lived their useful life, but still represent an appropriate need.
- C. **Renovate** facilities: the College should remodel and renovate all facilities and infrastructure that are outdated and no longer appropriate for use in their current condition. However, new space must first be added in order to maintain existing operations during renovation.
- D. **Expand** facilities: the College provides its programs and services at one of the lowest space utilization rates of any of its peer institutions. For example, while many of the original C.O.D. classrooms are 600 Square Feet, most typical college classrooms today are designed at 900 Square Feet. Both technology and pedagogy styles have caused space standards for college instruction to increase.
- E. **Add** facilities: the College should provide additional structures and infrastructure in order to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of its services to students and community. Portions of these new facilities will serve as replacement space for displaced programs such as those in the West Campus facilities when those buildings are eliminated.
- F. **Regional** facilities: the College should expand existing remote facilities, consolidate rental facilities, and create new remote facilities for a broader outreach to all portions of the District.

IV. Stewardship

A. Affordability

1. According to comparative data among neighboring community colleges, C.O.D. student tuition is considered reasonable and affordable. In considering sources for additional funding, The C.O.D. leadership and Board of Trustees should explore the possibility of increasing tuition and fees to help offset operational expenses. This is especially true if the College leadership were to consider a ballot issue that would result in an increase to taxpayers.
2. Communicate availability of other financial resources (financial aid grants, scholarships, student loans, etc.) to insure College programs remain affordable to students in need of special financial assistance.
3. C.O.D.'s current tax rate is low in comparison to other area community colleges and the College has not had an increase in its tax rate in 25 years. Therefore, in addition to increasing tuition for students, the College should also consider placing a referendum on the ballot in the near future as another possible source of revenue to address the quality programming issues described above in Sections II and III. Any proposed tax increase should also be reasonable and affordable to C.O.D. taxpayers.

B. Accountability/Responsibility

1. The College must continue to implement efficiency evaluation procedures and measures. The College must continue to be diligent in cost containment and even more aggressive in this area in the future, especially if a ballot item is placed before the voters.
2. The College must continually improve the effectiveness of its process to evaluate existing programs and services. The College must strive to provide the right programs and services to constituents at the right time and in the right location. Where appropriate, the College leadership should be prepared to drop or modify selected programs that are having minimal impact. A program of organized abandonment should be put in place to eliminate programs and/or services that are outdated, ineffective, or otherwise deemed to be not within the mission and strategic direction of the College. Not only should such a program be in place and utilized, results of the program should be appropriately communicated to C.O.D. community members so they can be assured that such efficiencies and evaluation measures are taking place.

3. Utilize partnerships to help reduce redundancy in programs. In doing this it can result in a win-win situation for the College and the organization, as well as the taxpaying constituency of the College.
4. Create clear linkages between providers of similar services thus helping to minimize costs for the College and the user.
5. The College should continue to maintain its current General Fund balance goal of approximately 18% of budgeted revenues. The 18% General Fund balance is important because of potential delays in tax distributions from the County Treasurer and other unbudgeted emergencies that may occur during the school year. To maintain this level of fund balance in the future, the College will need to seek more efficient methods and procedures for cost containment and seek additional sources of revenue.
6. C.O.D. must continue its sound financial practices and status in order to earn the highest possible bond rating in the event a referendum for capital improvements were to be approved by voters at some point in the future. This is important because it determines the amount of interest the College would pay on the issuance of any bonds in the future.

C. Sustainability

Another reason for completing the recommendation noted under Affordability (A.3.) is the fact that approximately 40% of the College's revenues come from local property taxes, which are subject to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law or the "Tax Cap". The Tax Cap formula restricts the revenue the College can generate, and as a result over time the total tax rate for the College has declined. Since the beginning of the Tax Cap in 1991, the College has lost \$15,494,000 in property tax revenues.