



STRATEGIC CONVERSATION

**PRESENTED TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES
JANUARY 10, 2012**

DR. JOTHANY BLACKWOOD & DIANE CLEROU

Connecting to the Vision

- **Visioning:**
 - On January 24, 2012 the Board of Trustees will participate in a Visioning process that will allow them the opportunity to reflect on the current status of SCCCD and cast their vision for the future of the district. This process was identified in a presentation by Dr. Fran White, CBT at the December 2011 Board Meeting.
- **Strategic Conversation:**
 - On February 7, 2012 the Board of Trustees will invite students and district employees from all constituent groups to engage with them in an informal, but structured dialogue about the theme that emerged from the Visioning process. While the process shares common components as a charette, a significant deviation is its exclusion of external stakeholders as it focuses on gaining input from internal stakeholders.
- **Charette:**
 - On March 1, 2012 the district will hold its traditional charette that will be shaped from themes identified in the Strategic Conversation. The charette will gain both internal and external stakeholders' perspectives on the development of the district's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, including the vision, mission, values, goals and objectives.

Understanding Strategic Conversation

- A Strategic Conversation is an informal, but structured discussion on a strategic policy issue that results in a clearer understanding of that issue. Due to the timeline in developing the 2012-16 Strategic Plan, this process was linked to Visioning and the charette. But as we look to institutionalize Strategic Conversations on an annual basis, the board will take a leadership role in identifying policy issues and work with senior leadership for more systematic planning for this annual districtwide event.
- A Strategic Conversation helps an organization or board thoughtfully examine why it is making the policy decisions it makes, while connecting and involving all internal stakeholders affected by those decisions in a positive and meaningful way. Topics reflect policy issues facing the Board of Trustees, rather than operational issues.
- The concept of Strategic Conversation was developed by the Maricopa Community College District Governing Board and staff in 1994.
- It has been successfully adopted by multiple districts to explore subjects including diversity, finance, nontraditional education, marketing, quantum mechanics, employee issues, leadership and student issues, among others.

Understanding Strategic Conversation Continued

- To observe and participate in this process, Dr. Jothany Blackwood and Diane Clerou participated in a Strategic Conversation hosted by North Orange Community College District (NOCCD) on October 25, 2011.
- This included an opportunity to meet with board members and interact with constituent groups on the value and purpose of this process.
- It was emphasized that the process allows Board members to more closely connect to the colleges and gain the input of internal stakeholders, while allowing constituents to hear the board's priorities in a structured dialogue.
- The process, timeline, the planning group, participants, and outcomes for SCCCD has been documented in a report that is posted on the district's website and highlighted in this presentation.

Timeline

- The Strategic Conversation is a two hour structured dialogue that is preceded by a one-hour reception with the Board of Trustees.
- The Board of Trustees of SCCC will host a Strategic Conversation February 7, 2012.
- Registration/ Social Hour with refreshments 1:00-2:00pm.
- Strategic Conversation event 2:00-4:00pm.
- The event will be held at Fresno City College in Old Administration Building #251.
- The Board of Trustees' meeting immediately follows this event at 4:30pm.
- The two colleges and centers will rotate hosting this annual event.

Planning for Strategic Conversation

- As Strategic Conversation is a Board driven event, the workgroup consists of the Chancellor, the college Presidents, members of Chancellor's Cabinet and is chaired by a member of the Board of Trustees.
- Dr. Jothany Blackwood and Diane Clerou will also work directly with the planning group to provide support for the event.
- Weekly planning updates will occur as part of the Chancellor's Cabinet meetings, with additional meetings scheduled to accommodate Board members' schedules.

Participants

- The invitation to participate in the Strategic Conversation is limited to internal participants including board members, students, faculty, classified and management employees of the district.
- The district office will send out an electronic invitation with the topic on behalf of the Board to only internal stakeholders. Individuals will self-select to participate and must RSVP.
- Prior to the Strategic Conversation, internal stakeholders will receive a brief paper on the topic that provides an analysis of the issue identified for discussion. This provides the framework for the sessions at the event.
- Participants will also receive a second document titled Strategic Conversation: Just the Facts that defines the process and answers frequently asked questions.

The Process

- **Opening:** The session will be opened by the hosting college president who will introduce the Chancellor for remarks. A Board member will provide the purpose of the event and framework for the topic of discussion.
- **Part 1:** Participants will be initially assigned to tables to ensure a balance of constituent groups. Each table will have a pre-designated facilitator and recorder and the speaker will be selected from the guests.
- Each table will respond to the same question and is allotted 30 minutes to brainstorm responses. This will be led by the table facilitator and recorded on both a whiteboard and a form for the district's collection of findings. Each table will provide a 2-3 minute report out.
- **Break:** During a 15 minute break, a team will synthesize the responses and identify the themes which will be assigned to a table for part 2. A second Board member will open up part 2.
- **Part 2:** Participants will self-select a table based on their interest and expertise on the topics listed by table. Table facilitators and recorders will continue their roles at the same table with new participants and brainstorm resolutions for the topic. Each table will provide a 2-3 minute report out.
- **Closing:** The Chancellor will close the event. Findings from the Strategic Conversation will be synthesized and forwarded to all internal stakeholders and used during the charette. It will also become a part of the official minutes of the Board of Trustees.

Outcomes of Strategic Conversation

1. Engage Board members and internal constituent groups in discussion of a specific districtwide strategic issue.
2. Integrate comprehensive strategies identified in the Strategic Conversation into districtwide and/or college planning processes.
3. Revise goals and objectives of the districtwide Strategic Plan, during the annual review, based on findings from the Strategic Conversation if applicable.

Observations on the Process

“The value of this process is it allows us as a Board to hear directly from constituent groups without the filtering that normally occurs when the Board is presented information.”

-Donna Miller, Board Member NOCCD

“This allows us to make root changes by taking the opportunity to include many of your suggestions in our strategic plan and objectives.”

-Dr. Ned Doffoney, Chancellor NOCCD

“I feel like the student voice is heard when we come out and participation varies depending on the topic.”

-Student leader

Sharing Strategic Conversation

- Districtwide presentations scheduled by Dr. Jothany Blackwood and Diane Clerou:
 - Chancellor's Cabinet January 9, 2012 2pm
 - Board of Trustees January 10, 2012 4:30pm
 - District Office January 12, 2012 9am
 - Strategic Planning Workgroup January 13, 2012
 - North Centers Vice Chancellor's Cabinet January 17, 2012 2pm
 - Reedley College President's Cabinet January 18, 2012 1pm
 - Fresno City College President's Cabinet January 19, 2012 2pm
 - Communications Council January 31, 2012 9am

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS