

# COLLEGE OF CHOICE TASK FORCE

## FALL 2004

### PROCESS

The Task Force met six times from September 23, 2004, to December 2, 2004. The first meeting was used to map out the process that would be followed in subsequent meetings and to realign membership so that all critical areas were represented. As the information from the Chancellor's Office Student Flow Study and the High School Graduate Study was not going to be available until late October or early November, the Task Force members began with a review of relevant college choice literature and research and with information gathered through focus groups. The focus group process was practiced by the Task Force members at the second meeting; besides staff members, a representative number of students attended, leading to a comprehensive conversation. The Task Force members dispersed to conduct focus groups with various student constituencies. At the third meeting, researcher Terrence Willett reviewed the results from the focus groups, and then the considerable data that was generated from this arena was categorized into areas of satisfaction, improvement, strengths and weaknesses. By the fourth meeting, survey data from Chancellor's Office, High School Graduates, and from Gilroy High School science students was available. Based on all sources of information, the Task Force created a list of potential action items. The action items were prioritized at the fifth meeting through a voting process in which each member cast ten votes; the top vote getters became the eight recommended items in this report. At the final meeting Task Force members worked on rationales and support details.

### ACTION ITEMS

#### 1. MARKETING DEPARTMENT (20) /OUTREACH COORDINATION (12) /HIGH SCHOOL RECRUITMENT (8)

The College of Choice Task Force focus groups as well as the Task Force meeting members observed that Gavilan has noteworthy strengths. For example, students who attend the College, especially those who have attended larger institutions to the north and returned to Gavilan, report that Gavilan's small size and personal service are major attractions. In addition, students report both in the focus groups and in the *2003 High School Graduate Preliminary Results* that "Quality instruction and services" are the top reason why they choose a college. In focus groups and in the community at large, students named specific instructors who have supplied them with first rate educational experiences. Information brought to the Task Force indicates that administrative, counseling, and teaching staff at Gavilan's feeder high schools are discouraging students from attending Gavilan, sometimes because they believe that students would be better served by four-year institutions, and sometimes because they do not realize that Gavilan has a viable transfer program. What the Task Force concluded was that there was no more critical issue than getting the word out about Gavilan's exemplary services to the community. The transfer program, for example, might be marketed under the title of Transfer Institute. As the marketing efforts fall into the hands of only two people, Gavilan's Public Information Officer and Gavilan's Outreach Coordinator, the recommendation is that a marketing department be added along the following lines:

- Change Public Information Office to Office of Public Information and Marketing, with Outreach Coordinator (and possibly graphic artist) part of the department. Hire appropriate staff as necessary.
- In partnership with the GCEF, develop an active Alumni Association
- Create a college Marketing Committee to approve marketing plan, and look at identity items such as logos, publications, and community events
- Continue to use market research to assess community needs and perceptions.
- Expand reach of advertising into the northern (more expensive) areas of the district
- Develop a marketing or business plan and program with an analysis of who Gavilan serves and what its goals are
- Create a diverse Advisory Board
- Set up database for outreach and recruitment activities to area school districts, business and industry, and all community activities or events
- Utilize various marketing techniques: direct marketing letters, outdoor advertising, PowerPoint presentations, brochures or mini-catalogs. Make them available through a lending library.
- Expand the printing budget to produce high quality printed material.
- Train all college staff that does outreach for consistency and quality control.
- Create a trained Speakers' Bureau
- Identify college positions that need to have a consistent, formal relationship with educational leaders and gatekeepers

## 2. COLLEGIAL ATMOSPHERE AND ACTIVITIES (18)

Students reported in the focus groups and Task Force meetings as well as to members outside the Task Force meetings that what has influenced many of them to remain at Gavilan has been an involvement with a program or group. Tutoring in the Writing or Tutoring Centers, serving as staff for the school newspaper, working on a mural, serving the College through the ASB, being part of an athletic team, belonging to such programs as MESA, TRIO, EOP&S, or Puente, or enrolling in a program such as the First Year Experience, often means the difference between whether a student stays or leaves Gavilan. The *2003 High School Graduate Preliminary Results* report states that "It appears at least for some students, an enhanced reputation and perception that Gavilan College is a new and different environment from the high school setting may be attractors for some students." For these reasons, the Task Force recommends that the College take steps to create a sense of belonging and interest for students. For example, a "Starbucks" type coffee area could be set up in the cafeteria where students could drink coffee and use the wireless connection to do class work, creating a serious college atmosphere. Live music performances, Writers and Scholars in Residence, a spruced up reading room in the Library, guest speakers and debates, and film screenings would all be college experiences that would distinguish the Gavilan from the high schools. In addition, community building activities such as potlucks or barbecues, celebratory banquets, field trips to colleges or educational sites, and the creation of real world projects would all help students to choose to stay at Gavilan College. Finally, the creation of cohorts of students through a Transfer Institute, additional college majors, and career clusters would foster a sense of belonging. The Task Force recommends an Activities

and Events Committee and/or Activities Director to provide the organizational component for these efforts.

### 3. CUSTOMER SERVICE (16)

A critical area for attracting student to the campus and retaining them is customer service. The number two reason students choose a college, according to the *2003 High School Graduate Preliminary Results* report, is “College staff who are welcoming and friendly.” It is the Task Force’s recommendation that customer service should be designed along the following lines:

- Expand web-based services to increase consistency and cut down on lines and customer service demands.
- Conduct college-wide mandatory staff training that is interactive, ongoing, with follow-up and that keeps all staff “current.”
- Ensure that training that has the same “family look” to it so there are consistent themes and approaches that are used college wide.
- Send staff to private industry-sponsored conferences and workshops as well as community college-sponsored events.
- Provide a professional development budget to ensure that all staff has the skills and knowledge to deliver leading-edge services and to use leading edge techniques.
- Rotate staff through high-stress positions to improve attitude, energy and customer service, specifically at Admissions and Records during registration crunch.
- Establish an effective formal student feedback procedure.
- Establish a routine evaluation process for institutional services to students.
- Continue to market and improve telephone registration services.

### 4. FULL TIME FACULTY AND STAFF (16)

The number one college choice factor in the *2003 High School Graduate Preliminary Results* report is “Quality instruction and services.” While Gavilan instructors, both full- and part-time, are delivering a quality product, part-time instructors typically work at several institutions and are not available to meet with students or develop programs. At the same time, full-time staff are spread thin trying to teach their current loads, update curriculum, and develop new programs to meet the learning needs of students. An example would be in the English Department where six full-time staff members are involved in Learning Communities, First Year Experience, Puente, Writing Center development, the College newspaper, online instruction, the emerging film program, and the literary club Friction. Full-time instructional staff is needed so that relevant, high-level instructional programs can be created and sustained. No matter how professional marketing efforts are, if Gavilan’s educational product is not first rate, students will not wish to remain at the institution. In addition, the College is currently expending hours of staff time recruiting, hiring, paying, and mentoring new adjunct instructors, who typically leave after several years. Even though Gavilan is in compliance with the State standards for hiring ratios, the needs of a small campus may exceed State minimums when there are insufficient numbers of faculty to fill departments or serve on committees. Expanding the number of full-time instructors would ensure greater consistency in programs and the opportunity for the development of models that will ensure student success.

The College is similarly understaffed in non-instructional areas. Insufficient numbers of staff means that some work cannot get done, which in turn impacts student services and the way those services are delivered (customer service).

#### 5. WEB REGISTRATION (16)

“Being able to register using the web” is the number five reason in the *2003 High School Graduate Preliminary Results* report why students choose to attend a college that is not Gavilan. Task Force members report instances of students choosing to attend a college other than Gavilan because they could register online. Web registration gives Gavilan a presence in the virtual community and a competitive edge in attracting students who can easily register electronically at other institutions.

#### 6. CLEAN CAMPUS (14)

Unattractive grounds, dilapidated classrooms and furnishings, and restrooms that are dirty or that have fallen into disrepair have a negative impact on students and visitors to Gavilan. While Measure E will help with renovation projects, a focus on upkeep is necessary to creating a positive image of the College.

#### 7. VOCATIONAL AND CAREER LADDER PROGRAMS (13)

The *Student Flow Preliminary Results* report shows that Public and Protective Services has many enrollments at other colleges (1842 at Gavilan as compared to 9599 at colleges other than Gavilan). While Gavilan may not be able to offer certain specialized programs, the College should take a careful look at where vocational programs can be expanded and plan for those areas where students can cycle back from the employment arena to prepare for the next career step. The Nursing program is a good example of an effective career ladder.

#### 8. NIGHT PROGRAMS (13)

In order to bring student attendance in the night program back to previous levels, night program student services should be up to par with those offered during the day. Focus and Task Force participants identified lighting, safety, food service, and Bookstore and Library hours as major concerns for students in the night program. Members suggested that the security officer might sit in the cafeteria and be available during breaks and at the conclusion of classes. The cafeteria might survey students for food preferences and offer full meals for evening students. The Task Force also recommended the return of an evening college coordinator who works until 10:00 p.m.

#### ADDITIONAL ITEMS

The additional action items considered by the Task Force and the number of votes they received are listed below. As some of these items overlap with the above categories, they have been incorporated into the items as appropriate:

Cafeteria (10)

Men's Soccer (10)

Program Expansion (10)

Majors (9)  
Job Placement (7)  
Academic Rigor (6)  
Alumni Association (6)  
Reduce GE Requirements (6)  
Sixteen Week Calendar (5)  
Transfer Express (5)  
Faculty Advising (4)  
New Computers (4)  
Retention Connections (4)  
Complaint Center (3)  
Athletic Facilities (2)  
Parking (2)  
Wireless Campus (2)  
Degrees (1)  
Childcare for Athletes (0)  
Student Email (0)