

Alvin Community College

Collaborative Brain Trust Strategic Planning Project

Phase I: Discovery Report

May 26, 2015

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT PLAN

Alvin Community College (ACC) began its strategic planning initiative in December 2014. A college cross-functional Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) was formed at that time, and a formal "launch" of the process commenced with the College January workshop days, where two facilitated sessions were held: (1) with faculty and staff of the College, and (2) with the Alvin Community Advisory Committee. In February, the *Collaborative Braintrust (CBT)*, a nationally recognized firm providing technical support services to community and technical colleges across the nation, was engaged to facilitate and provide technical support to the strategic planning initiative.

CBT assembled a team of two consultants, highly qualified and experienced in facilitating the development and implementation of strategic plans for community colleges, to carry out the project. The CBT team is conducting its work during the 2015 Calendar Year to assist the College in its development of a long-range (five-year) strategic plan, and to provide recommendations for its successful implementation.

The CBT Strategic Planning Project ("The Project") will comprise the first two Strategic Planning components (Phases One and Two) of the five-year planning process. The remaining component (Phase Three) is the Operational Plan, which will need to be developed subsequent to the Strategic Plan. The timeline for the three phases of the five-year planning process is:

- *Phase One – Discovery (Winter-Summer 2015)*
- *Phase Two – Plan Development (Summer-Fall 2015)*
 - *Breakthrough Strategic Goals*
 - *Institutional Objectives*
- *Phase Three – Operational Plan (Winter -Spring 2016)*
 - *Action Plans*

CBT will provide the technical support to the College to conduct the first two phases of plan development, which will complete November 2015. A formal "launch" of the strategic plan will take place during the January 2016 workshop days. The CBT team is working closely with ACC's President, Cabinet, and designated staff, as well as its college Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC) throughout the project. This report summarizes the Discovery Phase (Phase One) of the project. The draft *Alvin Community College 2015-2020 Strategic Plan*, along with a final report, will be provided for Board discussion and approval October 2015.

PHASE ONE – DISCOVERY: OVERVIEW

The purpose of *Phase One – Discovery* was to conduct a comprehensive institutional assessment of Alvin Community College. This assessment provides the foundation upon which the Five-Year Strategic Plan can be built in order to meet the future needs of the College, its students, and the communities it serves. The methodology used by the CBT team, and findings for this first phase of the project are included in this report.

The Discovery Phase consisted of the following four key components:

- Environmental Scanning
- Data and Document Review
- Internal Stakeholder Input
- External Stakeholder Input

The consultants assessed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for ACC in the above areas. A variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed, including: an organizational review, several in-depth surveys, individual and small group interviews, campus forums and focus groups, and facilitated sessions for the Community Advisory Committee members, faculty and staff. Findings have been summarized and are presented in the sections that follow in this report. In conjunction with this Discovery Phase, the college has engaged EMSI for more in-depth environmental scanning of the Alvin Community College region and its surrounding area.

DISCOVERY PHASE KEY FINDINGS

I. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Overview

The environmental scan provides an economic and demographic background of Alvin Community College's service region. The ACC taxing district includes all of Alvin ISD, portions of Angleton ISD. ACC's service area includes Pearland ISD and Danbury ISD. An in-depth Environmental Scan, with a workforce gap analysis, is being conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists, International (EMSI) to determine workforce needs of the ACC region and surrounding area. Additionally, CBT reviewed materials from across the region, and conducted interviews of economic and workforce development partners from the college's service area. Included in this review were such entities as the Alvin-Manvel Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Alvin Economic Development, The Alliance (Economic Development Alliance for Brazoria County), and Pearland Chamber of Commerce.

General Findings

The ACC service region, like that of the Greater Houston area, and Gulf Coast region, is experiencing growth in both housing and business and industry. Highlighted below are the major factors affecting the local economy, positive trends, areas of concern, and current and future workforce issues.

Major Factors Affecting the Local Economy

- New jobs added to primary sectors of Construction, Retail and Trade
- Expansion of Major Medical and Health Care Facilities
- Low Unemployment rate of 4.2% (March 2015)
- Growth in Petro Chemical Industry
- Alvin's proximity to gulf shipping channel
- Expansion of industries, retail and housing in Manvel and the west side of the District
- Plans for construction on the 288 Corridor – projected to bring major/higher-end medical facilities, greater need for law enforcement personnel and auxiliary personnel

Positive Trends

- Unemployment rate for Alvin has decreased from 9.4% in January, 2010 to 4.2% (March 2015)
- Greater Houston area-has had job growth of approximately 2.9%, higher than the national growth level of 2.2% (March 2015)
- Housing starts have increased in the past year (2014-2015)
- Roads and infrastructures are increasing and expanding, bringing greater and more convenient access for residents of the ACC region
- Retail market is increasing in the District and surrounding region
- ACC has numerous certificate and degree programs for health care and medical disciplines that could be expanded
- ACC has Programs in CNC Machinist, Commercial Truck Driving, Industrial Design and Welding.
- ACC has increased its dual-credit offerings so that some area high school graduates are now graduating with both a high school diploma and an associate degree from ACC, ready to join the workforce more quickly than in the past

Areas of Concern

- ACC does not have enough entry-level job programs to address the current rate of job growth in areas such as Petro Chemical, Retail, Construction, and Transportation
- ACC is not producing the number of graduates needed in the areas of HVAC Technicians, Pipefitters, Welders, and Machinists

- ACC does not currently have a presence on the west side of the service/taxing district where substantial economic growth is occurring
- ACC's Latino population has increased substantially and is approximately 40% of student population; ACC does not have an English Language Learner program to support the educational pursuits and job readiness of this increasing population
- ACC has not consistently kept up with facility upgrades and replacements; therefore, substantial revenues will be required to modernize, replace, and expand facilities in order to accommodate the increased student population and programming needed to address the area's projected population and job growth
- Some area residents have more confidence in neighboring community colleges to meet growth needs due to the lack of programming, facilities, equipment and/or marketing of ACC offerings to meet current and future programming needs to support the region's economic growth
- Expansion of the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) may be in direct competition with ACC's traditional student base
- ACC's dual-credit enrollment and enrollment of incarcerated individuals continues to grow. The College's Dean of Students reports that combined, these two cohorts make up 40-45% of the College's total headcount

Current and Future Workforce Issues

- Medical facilities are hiring registered nurses (RNs) with baccalaureate degrees vs. associate degrees. Since ACC prepares students for the associate degree, more articulated 2 + 2 agreements will be needed for student to bridge to the baccalaureate level.
- Petro Chemical and other industries have a need for higher-level STEM workers
- Need for Industrial Training Center for incumbent workers, as well as new employers and their employees
- New industries coming to Alvin area warrant need for more welders, machinists
- Culinary Arts – huge need in Greater Houston Area; ACC does not have the facility to train at the level needed
- With increased economic growth and activity, there is a need for increased and stronger partnerships with Economic Development Agencies and Chambers of Commerce
- Retail is expanding greatly in the ACC area; not enough programming to support
- New Parkway construction will require more workers – entry level to engineers
- Students need to be prepared in the technology used by current and future companies

II. DATA AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

The second component of the Discovery Phase was an in-depth review of ACC data and documents. Data was gathered both on line and on site. Document review was conducted and further exploration was conducted as a result of on-site interviews revealing data elements embedded in departments. An extremely important finding

of this phase was the need for collected data and research to be centralized, synthesized, and organized around college priorities and with identified Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to guide board policy, direction, and administrative decision making.

Data Strengths and Positives in Data Capacity

ACC collects a great deal of data, which serves as a strength in building the institution's capacity to engage in continuous improvement. Strengths, challenges, and opportunities were identified from the data and document review process. Key findings are outlined below.

Strengths:

- A variety of planning documents, and a beginning process of aligning planning processes, exist to assist the College with its strategic planning.
- Some measurable student success data have been established that can be aligned from the strategic to the operational level.
- A set of standardized effectiveness indicators are collected by the state of Texas that provide the ability to benchmark against other institutions.
- An array of survey results has been collected – some each year, and some sporadically over the past decade; these data can be useful as a basis for examining key trends, benchmarking against other institutions, and as a launch point for further investigation of specific situations.
- Both desire and intent exists among College leaders and many staff for data-informed and evidence-based decision making to improve College programs and services for student success.
- Utilizing the institution's research capacity to more effectively collect, analyze, and use data for decision making and integrated planning has been identified by the new President as a priority.

Challenges / Opportunities:

- Development of an Integrated Planning Model would serve ACC well for the alignment and integration of the College's fragmented processes; it would also serve as a communication vehicle for establishing a unified approach across the College, as well as a tool for orienting new employees. The model should be data and evidence driven, including their use to improve organizational effectiveness and enhance student success.

- ACC has many individual reports, requests for reports, and stand-alone data that need to be compiled. Moving to a “data Warehouse” model, where users obtain data that assists them in their day-to-day work, and executives can use data more comprehensively for making important decisions and assisting the Board with policy decisions, is a more contemporary, efficient, and effective model of operating a Research Department. Additionally, this will aid the College’s ability to develop a “Dashboard” model where the Board and others can track ongoing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for student success and organizational effectiveness. Both of these approaches improve data-driven decision making by providing a greater ability to connect parts to the whole, see “connections” among data, and to identify patterns and trends over time for a more comprehensive view of areas of strength and concern.
- A standardized set of surveys need to be identified and used consistently each year for better trend analysis; more importantly, results of such data collection must be synthesized and used for demonstrable improvement in college procedures and practices to improve student success and organizational efficiency.
- Improving coordination of the separate data collection and reporting efforts will ease some of the burdens on the Research Department and help the College understand the patterns extant in their data.
- Developing clearer information on student progress, including tracking of cohorts over time should be considered. Increasingly, state and other funding sources use measures of results or outcomes rather than headcounts, and likewise, accreditors are requiring these measures to be used. Internally, as well, the College needs to be aware of where its loss points are so it can develop ways to address these.
- Connecting the Research Department more closely with the Teaching and Learning components of the College will better support student success goals. This connection will align evidence-based processes effectively to create systems, and their integration for the improvement of programs and services, with ultimate achievement of the institution’s Breakthrough Strategic Goals. Specific areas of focus for the Research Department that would be advantageous to the College would be the preparation and dissemination of reports; analysis, presentation, interpretation, and discussion of data and information for improvements; and the preparation of information that can be used to proactively seek additional revenue streams.
- Following development of the College’s Five Year Strategic Plan, a research agenda in alignment with that plan will be critical to support the plan.

Data Overview

Evaluation of data quality, quantity and communication

The College has quantitative data reports on enrollment, course-by-course grade distribution, teaching schedules, budget expenditures, etc. However, these are stand-alone documents that include little or no analysis. Cohort data, disaggregated student enrollment data, a comprehensive faculty workload report, and other such reports are needed to identify strengths and areas of concern, and to support strategic planning efforts. The CBT team's Discovery Phase process was greatly hampered by lack of such data and reports to determine new directions, and noted this area as an important focal point for the new five-year plan.

The Program Review process is linked to federal and state reporting requirements, compliance with accreditation standards, etc. For internal use, it needs to be strengthened in order to tie results to the College's planning and budgeting processes. Reviews are mostly internally conducted by program staff, without external objectivity, and are not grounded in a data-driven, decision-making framework that results in program improvement, redirection, or discontinuation. Additionally, student services reviews, and administrative services reviews are not regularly conducted. Those that exist are limited in scope and mostly in compliance areas such as the fiscal audit, financial aid, and other state and federal requirements.

Several qualitative data processes are in use, including a College annual survey of faculty and staff, and the Noel-Levitz *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*, both of which serve a role in continuous improvement efforts.

Implications from the data for ACC

Institutions often suffer from DRIP – Data Rich, Information Poor – with individual pieces of data that are not connected with one another over time or in comparison with other similar items. This can negatively affect operational decision making as the data (and operational work) remain in silos, and managers lack information to support agile actions.

Separate and often uncoordinated data collection processes and/or data reports result in information that is not comparable technically, nor for substantive reasons. This also furthers the silo approach, with a “my data vs. your data” scenario that slows the process of understanding issues and developing solutions. It also results in duplicative Research Department requests from users across the College, and complicates the work of the Research Department, which is responsible for producing the reports.

ACC has several broad indicators or measures of overall institutional performance, but not a comprehensive and consistent set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to

measure progress and communicate to stakeholders on a regular basis and in a form that has relevance to their actions. Providing data aligned from the strategic to the operational level is important to maximizing and measuring progress, as well as building in accountability at a grass roots, departmental level for performance toward institutional level performance.

There are significant gaps in types of reports or analyses that need to be addressed to help the College move forward. Among these are cohort tracking for retention, progression, and success, as well as the course success data. The latter are not cohort-specific, but new students most heavily subscribe to certain courses, while those closer to completion subscribe to other courses, so in effect they are “cohort-like”.

Disaggregated cohort data is likewise unavailable. Disaggregation includes student demographic items (gender, age group, carrying load, etc.), primary campus site or instructional delivery mode, enrollment data/trends, etc. These can include also broad groupings of programs with a “drill-down” to the detail. For example, all the health and allied programs could be grouped with a drill-down to registered nursing, certified nursing assistant, etc. Course success data disaggregation among gateway and other courses can be valuable in examining important milestones in student progression. Gateway courses are typically taken by large numbers of students, usually early in their enrollment in the institution; they can also include those courses specific to a program (for example, anatomy and physiology is a gateway course for those in nursing and allied health programs). Some of the aforementioned data was gathered when the College was a participant in the *Achieving the Dream* project, which was abandoned several years ago.

III. INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The internal sources of information utilized in the Discovery Phase of the Strategic Planning Project included:

- Formal survey: Board of Regents (Respondents: 8 of 9)
- Formal survey: faculty and staff (Respondents: N = 304)
- Individual interviews with key college personnel
- Focused sessions with Executive Team, SPSC, and other groups
- Facilitated session with faculty and staff - January Workshop Days (N ~ 200)
- Facilitated session with Student Government
- Open Staff and Student Forums

The consultant team findings that follow represent the results of all internal stakeholder input sources. These findings in some cases are perception, but perceptions that are held across multiple groups.

Campus Image, Reputation, Culture, and Infrastructure

Strengths:

- **The College has a strong commitment to student success.** A strong commitment to student success was expressed across all sources of input including students. The personal attention to students is a core attitude of college employees.
- **ACC faculty and staff are strengths of the College and at the heart of its success.** The caring attitude, commitment to students, and culture of respect and engagement among college employees was noted across all internal groups, including students.
- **The size of the college is a positive.** While at times being a smaller college has challenges in serving all needs, the college's size and resulting responsiveness and welcoming climate attracts students and supports their success.
- **The college is well known and has a positive image in the community.** Internal constituents and students report that they generally hear good things about the college in the community; overall, the college is well respected, visible, and valued in the communities it serves.
- **The college seeks and has applied information from employees to improve communications and operations.** In addition to the input from this strategic planning process, the college has regularly sought employee input through its annual staff survey and made improvements from feedback obtained.
- **The new Science Building is a strength.** The new building not only provides state-of-the-art labs and equipment, but also is a positive marketing tool for recruiting new students. Further facility modernization and new construction would be advantageous not only to the educational program, but also for marketing purposes.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Stereotypes or biases held by community members and potential students about community colleges may hinder enrollment by students who could be well served by the college.** Two-year colleges across the nation, as well as locally, often experience this bias. Both marketing and first-hand experience on campus by students, parents, families, and high school counselors are needed to counteract these biases.

- **There are mixed opinions internally about the name of the College.** Some internal constituents feel the name is fine, but marketing of “who we are,” “what we have/do,” and “who we serve” is needed. Others feel the name leads to being “Alvin-centric” in perception, and that it perhaps exists in reality as well. This is especially of concern since more than half of the student population comes from outside the District, and even those from inside the district are outside the city of Alvin.
- **As a college with a rich history and decades of service, many find the college valuing tradition over innovation.** The college has built its reputation on a number of high-performing programs and has relied heavily on this reputation for marketing. With new and expanded programming, as well as new delivery methods, a new branding and marketing plan will be needed.
- **The College has outdated Board Policies and Administrative Procedures.** Board Policies and Administrative Policies are outdated. However, the President and Board of Regents have recently taken action to remedy this by utilizing the services of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) to conduct an update.
- **Many of the College campus facilities are in need of renovation and/or repair.** A long-range facilities and deferred maintenance plan (including equipment and technology infrastructure) is needed, as well as funding, likely through a facilities bond, to address these needs. Attention to facilities to serve the West side of the district is also needed. The appearance of the parking lots and facilities, including deferred maintenance issues, yields a poor image of the College, leads to a perception that its programs are outdated, and undermines marketing to potential students.
- **The College has not formalized an integrated planning process.** The College has not had a formal process of continuous improvement based on data. Internal procedures are therefore underdeveloped for effective employee engagement in an integrated model of planning, budgeting, assessment, and continuous improvement. As a result, plans and budgets are often in a “roll-over” mode without priority placed on improvement, innovation, and change that mirrors the changing student body and emerging community needs.
- **Operational processes lack efficiency and consistency across departments.** There is not a formal process for cross-campus and cross-department alignment and collaboration. Operations are in a traditional hierarchical model, which is contributing to silos and impeding integrated systems thinking in the institution. Lack of direction and meaningful use of the research department further exacerbates this campus culture. The newly

formed Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) provides an opportunity to model cross-functional teaming across the college, and may serve as a forerunner to an ongoing College Council where system integration can be facilitated.

- **Employees seek meaningful involvement in planning and budgeting; planning processes do not always drive budget allocations nor grant development.** As the college develops its planning processes, providing opportunities for meaningful engagement in both planning and resource allocation will support accountability and ownership of decisions by employees as well as their managers. Often, the budget drives the plan rather than the plan driving the budget. Additionally, grant development is by departmental initiative rather than the College planning process establishing grant development priorities to support the institution's strategic directions.
- **There is an opportunity for strategic outreach, image building and community awareness.** This applies to the College as a whole as well as to the uniqueness of individual programs, services, and campus sites.

Educational Programs and Program Advisory Committees

Strengths:

- **The College has provided affordable, high quality educational programs for students in the ACC District and surrounding area.** Programs have met both transfer and career-technical needs of local residents and business and industry. The College has provided the equipment and support it can, given limited resources.
- **Several new programs have been added to address emerging needs.** These programs have been relatively well subscribed by incoming students.
- **Program Advisory Committees are in place for most all program areas.** Most committees hold one to two meetings annually, and information about the program, curriculum, and students is often shared.
- **A Curriculum Committee is in place for refinement and development of new curriculum.** A dedicated faculty member, who works with other faculty on campus and also communicates requirements that come from the state of Texas, chairs the committee.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **The College's program review process requires a more well-developed, data-informed program improvement model that ensures currency and consistency.** The effective use of advisory committees to improve programs is not consistent across programs. Programs are not comprehensively reviewed using data and outside objectivity to determine if they are current and relevant to today's workplace, nor for their effectiveness and efficiency with student recruitment, retention, progression, success, and job attainment/transfer.
- **Programs are primarily designed and scheduled for traditional students: full-time, daytime, and face-to-face.** Program design and scheduling in some areas is not evolving to meet the changing needs of working and non-traditional students. The College offers few options for accelerated or non-traditional modalities.
- **Expanded career services and graduate follow-up would be advantageous to the College and its programs.** Although the College has a Career Services Center, it does not have a well-developed job placement program for students and graduates, nor is graduate follow-up conducted for those entering the job market where results could be used for program improvement.
- **Program Advisory Committees are not uniformly strong in terms of their involvement and ability to ensure currency.** The College has no formal process to evaluate the amount, frequency, currency and impact of advisory committee input. Many committees are chaired and run by college personnel, and advice is not actively sought for program changes/improvements.
- **ACC has strong competition from neighboring colleges, universities, and proprietary schools.** Some of these institutions compete directly with ACC. Facilities were cited as a big factor in students choosing other colleges, while the student-centeredness and support provided by faculty and staff were cited as competitive advantages for ACC.
- **Shifts in population, jobs and industry development will require strategic program placement and development.** As noted above, the College has in the past been effective in matching programs to regional needs, but has not kept pace in recent years with the growth in the west side of the District. New program development, and the placement of programs, is needed to respond to the current population shifts and workforce trends.

- **The College does not have a clear plan to tie new program development and program improvement to budget planning.** Investment in curriculum development, staffing, labs and equipment is necessary. Additionally, the College does not have a clear process to establish priorities and tie these needs to the allocation of resources for existing and new programs.

Teaching and Learning; Recruitment; Academic and Student Support Services

Strengths:

- **Most faculty are viewed by internal stakeholders as competent in their subject matter and focused on the success of their students.** Faculty and staff attend workshops and contribute positively toward improving programs for students.
- **The quality of teaching and experience of faculty are strong.** Internal stakeholders reported that the quality of ACC faculty and the small class sizes are both strengths.
- **Online and hybrid courses have expanded access to ACC programs.** With the increasing number of non-traditional and working adult students, the use of technology to serve students and reduce commute times is a strength. Additionally, focus on continuous improvement of the distance education program is to be commended.
- **Student Services personnel are committed and effective.** The skills and programs provided by student services are excellent but in some cases staffing is insufficient to serve the increasing needs of both traditional and non-traditional students.
- **The Enrollment Services Center (ESC), as a “one-stop” for student services, is an important asset of the College.** The ESC was consistently cited as a College strength by both students and staff.
- **The College has implemented and applied results from annual surveys.** Both the Noel Levitz *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)* and ACC’s annual employee survey have provided meaningful feedback for improvement in several areas.
- **Advising and orientation are assets for those students who participate.** These are effective tools for new students, though not mandatory. It was noted that in the student forums, those students who struggled also admitted they did not attend such sessions.

- **New transfer relationships and 2 + 2 programs may provide new opportunities for students.** Students may increasingly seek general education and transfer preparation from ACC, particularly if they have clear pathways to follow. Increased articulation agreements, especially with the University of Houston may provide new avenues for students, as well as attract new student populations.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Stagnant enrollment trends call for strategic action.** The changing overall population, as well as changing demographics within high school populations is requiring the College to look at new populations and mechanisms for increasing its penetration rate for existing populations.
- **Technology planning will allow the College to support both student systems and instruction.** As new generations of students are served, the need to understand and plan for changes in instructional technology will be important. This includes shifts in how faculty and students use and integrate mobile devices into the teaching-learning environment, as well as currency in technology-supported classrooms and labs.
- **Instructional lab equipment and other classroom technology is lacking or outdated in many areas.** Business and industry donations, grant funding, and/or funding from general-purpose revenues via tax and state apportionment dollars is needed to ensure state-of-the art instruction at ACC and graduates who are prepared for today's workplace.
- **The expansion of UHCL into lower division coursework provides an opportunity for ACC.** Increased partnering with UHCL will be needed to minimize competition and maximize higher education services to the region. UHCL reported being interested in such collaboration.
- **The College lacks sufficient data and analysis related to student success that is necessary to develop and evaluate strategies and interventions.** Student success data (retention, progression, completion) are not tracked, analyzed, widely shared nor applied to the improvement of instruction. (See above Data and Document Review section.)
- **There is no Early Alert system at the College.** No Early Alert, or Academic Probation system exists at the College. Retention is not tracked, nor is there a plan for increasing the retention of students. There is an opportunity for increasing retention, progression, and student success by implementing these critical systems.

- **The Distance Education program has additional opportunities for growth and improvement.** Student success in this venue needs more critical analysis. Additional academic support and student services for on-line students would be advantageous.
- **The College has an opportunity to communicate with students more effectively through social media.** The use of Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter as well as new entries into the social media landscape, provide opportunities for the College to engage in new ways with students, both as vehicles for communication and as educational tools.
- **The College has established, through its Enrollment Services Center (ESC), a “one-stop” approach for student services, but has an opportunity to review both its customer services and the flow of its enrollment processes to create a consistent, simplified pathway for students.** Students voiced great appreciation for the Enrollment Services Center (ESC) where most services are in one location. However, there were several comments in the student forums regarding the lack of customer service skills among staff in the admissions area, and the need to make several return trips to accomplish all the components needed for admission, testing, advising, financial aid, and enrollment. This is particularly burdensome for working adults, and those with child care needs.
- **Career counseling is not a strong component of the new student process.** A more in-depth assessment of the needs of students and the responsiveness of the College is warranted in this area.
- **Traditional structures and processes do not always address the needs of non-traditional adult learners.** Many non-traditional students are working adults, and/or parents with children at home who require child care if they are to attend college classes. College processes have not adequately addressed this population. Areas cited by students as needing attention include: reducing trips to campus, especially for short meetings or advising sessions that could be done at one visit, by phone, or on line; student services are often scheduled during daytime hours and only on specific days/at certain hours and are unavailable in the evening; new student activities are targeted to younger students and considered “condescending” to students over the age of 20.
- **Incoming students are increasingly underprepared, and the English Language Learner (ELL) population has increased.** As is the case for most community colleges, more non-traditional students are seeking education and bringing complex challenges in terms of lack of preparation, motivation, college knowledge and other challenges. The increase in English Language Learners, and the fact that many new students are first generation students,

poses challenges for the College in supporting student success. These are important considerations for ACC's future, and were cited as a great concern by internal stakeholders. This topic was a major discussion point in the open faculty and staff forum.

- **The College does not have a strategic recruitment, outreach and enrollment plan to identify untapped markets and recruit and support new populations.** Untapped markets, including the recruitment of populations currently not being served, and new populations as area growth continues in the west side of the District, will require both outreach and attention to scheduling, programming and services.
- **Pell grants may be under-utilized by needy students.** The percent of students accessing financial aid at the College are fewer than the average for the income level/eligibility of the student body. There may be an opportunity to support students accessing financial aid and thereby increasing the number of students and/or their carrying load for progression and success in the programs.

Partners and Community Relationships

Strengths:

- **The College has strong educational partners.** The College has developed effective and collaborative partnerships and relationships with other educational service providers.
- **Relationships with employers have ensured currency and responsiveness of many college programs.** The College has developed the respect and effective relationships with many area employers who view the College as the vehicle for employee development.
- **The College plays an essential role in the economic and community development of the areas it serves.** The economic and community development agencies in the region depend on the College as a major player in workforce development, and have been pleased with the revitalization efforts of the new President.
- **Grants have allowed the College to expand its impact.** College programs have been assisted with several grants.
- **The Foundation has been a strong partner in scholarship development.** The Foundation has funded many scholarships, though it has yet to take on a more significant role in resource development beyond that of scholarships.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Changes in state funding and regulations may reduce local control.** New policy direction and requirements by the state of Texas may reduce funding for the College. The decrease in state apportionment funding, and the increasing shift to performance-based funding pose challenges for the College. New regulations for curriculum are placing restrictions on the College's degree patterns and unit load. However, this may ease matriculation for students and contribute positively to further 2 plus 2 articulation agreements.
- **The College lacks a process for strategic grant development to support its mission.** While the College has been successful in obtaining some important grants to support instruction and college innovation, grants have been primarily department-based and reactive. There is not a proactive process to prioritize and strategically seek grants that would support future directions of the College.
- **The Foundation has an opportunity to grow and have an even greater positive impact.** The Foundation currently fundraises for scholarships. More scholarships are needed, but also the Foundation could play a greater role in raising funds for endowed chairs, facilities, and other areas of need, aligned with the Strategic Plan. While events are great "friend-raisers" they are weak "fund-raisers" and very time-consuming, with only a minor return on investment (ROI) for the time invested by staff. The College has an opportunity for increased funds through such mechanisms as an annual campaign, capital campaign, and strategic meetings of the Foundation Director and College President with prospective major donors. Additionally, a strategic review and revitalization of membership could strengthen the Foundation.
- **Strategically designed partnership meetings by the new administration provide opportunities to move the College forward in its overall plan.** Meetings with community partners – universities, K-12, economic development partners, etc. - are not only necessary for networking and building good relations, but can also serve as an opportunity for executing strategy with follow-up plans of action and evaluation of results.
- **The College has an opportunity to use community events more strategically to build awareness and image.** Community events on campus can serve as a strategic component of outreach and recruitment, as well as community development.

Changes and Trends Impacting the College in the Next Five Years

Internal Stakeholders cited the following changes and trends as having the most impact on the College as it develops its Five Year Strategic Plan:

- The increasing importance of post-high school education
- The value to employers of portable credentials (e.g. certificates and degrees)
- The importance of retraining and currency for incumbent workers
- The increasing cost of university education makes community colleges an affordable option
- Increase in veterans and non-traditional working adult students
- Increase in underprepared and English as a Second Language (ESL)/English Language Learner (ELL) students
- Increase in mental health and discipline issues with students
- Impact on instruction of rapid changes in technology
- Increased use of social media (Facebook, Twitter and others) and implications for communicating with students
- Population growth and new highways
- Competition from online competitors within and outside of the region
- Importance of flexible scheduling and accelerated options for working adults and two-career or single parents
- Increasing proportion of student enrollments that are in dual credit and in the prison (currently 40-45% of the College's overall enrollment)
- The fact that more than half the student population is from outside the College District

V. EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The external stakeholder sources of information utilized in the Discovery Phase of the Strategic Planning Project included:

- Formal Survey: ACC Program Advisory Committee Members (N=276)
- Interviews of K-12 / High School Partners
- Facilitated session with K-12 Counselors (N ~ 30)
- Interviews of University Partners
- Interviews of Foundation, public sector partners, and Regional Economic Development Partners
- Facilitated session with ACC Community Advisory Committee (N ~ 80)

The following sections represent findings by the consultant team of the results of these external stakeholder sources. While findings in some cases are perception, these perceptions are held across multiple groups.

College Image, Reputation, Culture, and Infrastructure

Strengths

- **The College is seen as an asset to the community.** The College's reputation is that of a cost-effective, quality educational provider. Comments were strong in this area, describing how important ACC is to the quality of life in the region and to providing affordable higher education close to home.
- **The College is comprised of caring employees who at all levels have a strong commitment to students.** The leadership and staff of the College are committed to student success. Faculty and staff go out of their way to meet students' needs. Many external stakeholders noted ACC employees' friendly, personable approach to students.
- **The leadership of the College is both active and valued in the community as an important asset to community efforts.** The new President is active and visible in the community. External stakeholders noted specifically their appreciation of the renewed interest and involvement of the new President in the community.
- **The College's undertaking of a five-year strategic plan is seen as a forward move on ACC's part.** The strategic plan initiative is viewed by partners as forward thinking and visionary and demonstrates strong leadership. It also provides an opportunity to market ACC as a high quality higher education institution.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Like most two-year colleges, ACC suffers from the "community college stigma."** Parents, high school students, high school faculty and counselors, and other adults in the community often view ACC as the "blue collar" and/or "second choice" higher education institution. Oftentimes these individuals have not been on campus nor had direct contact with ACC programs and services. This stigma is heightened via television parodies and other references by the media to community colleges as "second class higher education institutions where you go when you can't get accepted at the university." This poses an image challenge for ACC.
- **Consistent with internal stakeholders, there are mixed opinions from external stakeholders as to whether or not the College should change its name.** Many believe the word "Alvin" in the title of the College is too confining and "Alvin-centric" in its perception in the community by both residents of the District and business and industry partners. Currently, more than half of the student population comes from outside the District, and

many students inside the district reside outside the city of Alvin. Others believe that the rich history and reputation of the College, along with the history of “who started the College” warrants retaining the name “Alvin”. The Board of Regents will need to explore this image issue further in the next five years as (a) continued growth occurs in the west side, outside the city of Alvin, and (b) as plans for the Grand Parkway and other infrastructure advancements possibly reposition the city of Alvin in the center of new commerce in the future.

- **While responsive to community requests for technical education and training, the College is seen as “slow to react to change” by some.** ACC is at times slow to react to changes in the workplace and community. External stakeholders see the College as responsive to the community for requests to work on new initiatives, partnerships, and articulation with other educational providers. However, they also expressed that programs that no longer meet job demand are not always reduced or eliminated. They cite that ACC needs to reset goals to align with changes in population, demographics, and the workforce. The new five-year strategic plan provides an opportunity to positively effect progress in this area.
- **Many external stakeholders commented on the need to “mend relations” from the past administration.** Many view the past administration as having been a barrier to ACC’s growth and ability to be an active player in the growth of the region. The new President has been well received in the community and is described as a “breath of fresh air” for not only the College, but also as a partnering leader in the community.

Educational Programs and Program Advisory Committees

Strengths:

- **Educational programs are seen as high quality.** Graduates are viewed as well prepared. Local employers are eager to hire ACC program graduates.
- **ACC offers programs for jobs in the region.** Supply and demand for program graduates are well matched in many occupational areas. Programs align fairly well with much of the area’s “natural labor shed.”
- **Program Advisory Committee members are responsive to the college’s requests for information.** Survey respondents included at least one representative from all committees except one, and most respondents spoke favorably of both the program and program graduates.

- **Some Program Advisory Committees are very active, engaged, and provide advice to the College for improvements in quality, relevance and currency.** For committees in this category, business and industry is well represented and chairs the meetings, which are well attended. Curriculum and student data are regularly reviewed, and advice is given and received to promote the health of the program.
- **Transfer agreements support transfer of students between and among Texas community colleges and university programs.** Higher education partners in general support such transfer agreements.
- **Students who transfer to the university experience similar success as those who attend the university for all four years of their baccalaureate education.** This student success fact is particularly important for the student who requires/desires a more affordable, close-to-home option for higher education.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **The College has limited scheduling for non-traditional students.** More evening and distance education courses are needed for working adults. “Cohort” approaches, blended with employer-based training where feasible, should be explored. External stakeholders expressed the need for ACC to address the needs of today’s students (including re-entry adults) and for more non-traditional scheduling options (evening; part-time; compacted, short-term “blocks”; and on line).
- **There are opportunities for expanding career-technical programs in areas of need.** External stakeholders provided a variety of suggestions of areas where expanded or new programming is needed, including:
 - Process technology
 - Welding; pipe-fitting; machinists
 - Retail
 - Transportation and construction technologies
 - Culinary arts and hospitality training
 - Increased offerings in the health care industry (such as Health Information Technology, stacked credential nursing, etc.)
 Further research is needed to determine the viability of these ideas and their geographic placement in the District.
- **Some Program Advisory Committees are less active, less engaged, and do little proactively to support the program(s) quality, relevance and currency.** For committees in this category, meetings are not held on a regular basis, or well attended; curriculum and student data is not regularly reviewed; more advice could be sought for program improvement;

“ownership” of the Advisory Committee could be strengthened by having its own chair and work plan (vs. being run by College staff).

- **Program Advisory Committee improvements are needed.** Many program advisory committees are chaired by College employees, who also control the agenda. Such committees “receive reports” rather than “give advice” for suggestions to improve the curriculum, modernize equipment and software, etc. Possible improvements cited included: recruitment and orientation for new members; more communication between meetings; more information on program data, students, and graduates; better representation of industry employers; more information from employers on industry changes, employee changes, etc.; more robust agendas to actually seek advice for program improvements; more student/graduate feedback; and more contemporary approaches to advisory committee meetings themselves (e.g. videoconferencing, skype, on-line meetings, electronic advisory surveys, etc.). Given the positive response (nearly twice the normal survey response rate), this is an untapped opportunity for the College.
- **Joint Program Advisory Committees may be a possibility.** Joint meetings with ISD representatives, or joint committees by program area, may benefit both education levels (K-12 and ACC). Work-placed learning, career exploration, and business and industry internships are all possibilities for this partnership.

Teaching and Learning; Recruitment; Academic and Student Support Services

Strengths:

- **ACC is generally viewed as having high quality classroom teaching.** The College is valued for its affordable, close to home higher education opportunities. Faculty are viewed as competent in most cases, and small class sizes are seen as an advantage over the university. The College is seen as doing the best it can with limited resources, though several cited the need for better facilities, equipment, and technology for ACC programs. On-line classes are valued not only for the expanded access they provide to students, but also for the additional benefit they provide to students who, when they graduate, enter the workforce with stronger computer literacy skills.
- **The College provides a wide array of services with limited resources.** Financial aid, scholarships, and student support services provide a holistic approach to being “student-centered” for student success.

- **Teaching and learning systems support student success.** External stakeholders view classroom faculty, counselors, and student services staff as working cooperatively to support student success.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Opportunities exist to expand the number of students attending ACC from local K-12 districts.** Exposure to ACC in middle school will aid recruitment efforts. More presence of ACC faculty and staff on K-12 campuses, and peer-to-peer faculty and counselor relationships will strengthen the college-going rate of local K-12 students. More aggressive, socially appealing marketing efforts (like those of some private/proprietary colleges) may support recruitment.
- **Recruitment of existing and new student populations is a challenge.** The College image (see above) continues to be a barrier to ACC being a preferred “first choice” higher education destination. “Targeted” recruitment efforts for specific populations may be beneficial. Outreach to/recruitment of unemployed and underemployed adults remains a challenge.
- **More distance education is needed.** On-line courses are limited. More courses are need for working adults, those without childcare, etc.
- **There is an opportunity to more fully develop the role of on-site counselors at area high schools.** It was noted that these counselors could be used more effectively for further strengthening the college-going rate of high school students, especially to ACC. Several examples cited were: financial aid sessions for students and parents, career counseling, and strengthening the relationship between high school and college faculty.
- **There are additional prospective student populations that could be recruited to the College.** Prospective student populations for recruitment cited included:
 - Working adults, especially those who are underemployed or who want to advance
 - Veterans
 - More High School graduates
 - Hispanic Community
- **Student support services could be more user-friendly.** The enrollment process is viewed as not always clear and user-friendly. The web site needs to be designed as a strategic communications tool with current program information and help for students seeking enrollment. The use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) is increasingly important for communicating

to today's 18 to 24 year old students. Additionally, support for first generation students and English Language Learners is an area of need.

- **Opportunities exist for streamlining educational pathways for students.** The new requirements by the state of Texas for a sixty-unit degree pose a challenge for developing curriculum for students to move smoothly into upper division coursework. Curriculum work between ACC and university faculty within disciplines can support student success, transfer, and reduced time to degree for students.
- **Faculty evaluation and professional development were both cited as areas of need.** While many cited high quality faculty as a strength of the College, the need to conduct quality faculty performance reviews was also cited as an area of need to provide remediation and/or terminate those that are outdated and/or not student friendly. Professional development for faculty to employ current teaching methods for today's students was of particular note.

Partners and Community Relationships

Strengths:

- **The College has forged several positive partnerships with external stakeholders.** The dual-credit program at the high schools was noted as especially helpful, as were several initiatives with local business and industry.
- **Dual-credit offerings and outreach efforts to ACC District high schools have increased.** Such activities as campus tours, career fairs, and hosting events in the community have all been very positive. In particular, expanded dual-credit offerings, and site-based counselors in area high schools were both cited as extremely positive.
- **Articulation agreements that are in place with partners (K-12 and University) are viewed as very positive.** Transcribed/dual-credit coursework at the high schools is valued for time-shortened paths to degrees for students. Articulated coursework with university partners benefits both institutions and their students.
- **The College is seen as a partner in Economic Development efforts.** The new College President is active in the community and supportive of economic development efforts. The College is poised to play an increasingly important role in this area as regional growth continues, and business recruitment is initiated.

- **The College works in partnership with business and industry for the good of the region.** Such partnerships have resulted in greater awareness of education and training needs, and planning for the future.

Challenges/Opportunities:

- **Dual credit offerings, while valued, need attention for continuous improvement.** Both educational systems need to work through the differences in milieu, teacher approach and pedagogies, and expectations of students between high school and college teaching and learning structures. The placement of college counselors in each of the area high schools has assisted in this process, though the role of these counselors is not yet fully developed.
- **There are opportunities for additional articulation agreements with university partners.** There is a desire and a need to develop more articulated programs and degrees. Additional opportunities for new programs/agreements may exist with the new state-required curriculum, and as business and industry growth continues in the region. Stackable credentials, workplace learning opportunities, and internships/externships are additional areas of opportunity.
- **The College has an opportunity to support and be an active player in economic development efforts in the region.** ACC has the opportunity to play an important role in the growth of the region. As housing developments, transportation infrastructure, and business and industry growth flourish, ACC has the ability to plan higher education and training for residents and prospective employees of emerging businesses and industries, as well as the work of community housing developments and infrastructure itself.

Changes and Trends Impacting the College in the Next Five Years

External Stakeholders cited the following changes and trends as having the most impact on the College as it develops its Five Year Strategic Plan. It is important to note that many of the areas cited by external stakeholders mirror those cited by internal stakeholders, connoting the strength and prevalence of these themes for the College and the region.

- Housing developments and Business and Industry growth in the region
- Expanded transportation and Infrastructure of the region (e.g. Grand Parkway)
- Technology changes; changing in industry; cloud technology; social media
- Need for Project Management across many occupations
- Need for classes /scheduling for working adults
- Influx of veterans with unique needs
- Increase in non-traditional students and strategies for their recruitment

- Increase in English Language Learners (ELLs) and the need to provide additional ESL/ELL support
- Affordable Care Act/Obamacare; Health care reform; Cost of health care
- Government involvement; policy changes at the state and federal level; performance-based funding
- Loss of local control over money and policy
- Declining state apportionment funding to community colleges and a shift to performance-based funding
- The need to better align with both K-12 and Universities
- Competition by other community colleges, universities and the private sector institutions

NEXT STEPS

Phase Two – Plan Development (Summer/Fall 2015)

Concurrently with the completion of Phase One – Discovery, the CBT team has already begun Phase Two – Plan Development. What emerged from the Discovery Phase as the greatest needs for the college over the next five years is a combination of advancement efforts to improve the college and its educational services, and also several strategic new directions for the college. These have been synthesized into six broad *Breakthrough Strategic Goals* that represent the highest priority areas of focus to guide Alvin Community College as it moves to Phase Two to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the next five years and beyond. Once the Board of Regents approves these goals, the CBT team will work with the College President, executive team, SPSC, and other key groups to complete the development of the *Alvin Community College 2015-2020 Strategic Plan*.