



## **Institutional Self-Evaluation Report**

### **Quality Focus Essay**

January 2021

# Quality Focus Essay

## Introduction of Projects

Merritt College has identified equity as a critical focus for improving student success metrics and addressing persistent disparities in longitudinal findings. To that end, the Office of Instruction and Student Services are focused on the collaborative development and implementation of strategies that will improve program completion and transfer rates among our disproportionately impacted student groups. Specifically, the College has identified four action plans for enhancing access to certificate and degree programs across the institution that align with the four pillars of Guided Pathways: Clarify the Path, Enter the Path, Stay on the Path, and Ensure Learning and with ACCJC Standards I.B., I.C., II.A. and II.C. These plans include a broad range of support and resources to provide relevant assistance to students as they pursue their academic and career goals with the intent of (1) closing the achievement gap that exists for Latinx and Black American students and (2) increasing graduation rates among these same groups by 15 percent in two years.

## Action Plan(s)

The College will initiate the following four action plans during the 2020-2021 school year:

**Action Plan 1.** In alignment with the College’s Guided Pathways planning, develop efficient pathways for all of majors that are scheduled to support timely program completion and improved student success rates by Fall 2021. Whenever possible, the College will create two-year pathways with first and third followed by second and fourth semester sequencing in order to maximize the opportunity for both full-time and part-time students to complete their programs in the least number of semesters. Providing part-time student pathways addresses the equity gap that often exists for individuals that cannot afford to attend college full-time. Collaboration between the Office of instruction and Student Services will facilitate student access to practical forms of support that address quality of life barriers and enable them to focus on their learning and successfully complete their programs. In spring 2020, the College developed its areas of interest (“meta majors”) and began mapping programs to ensure that students can readily understand the timing and sequencing of courses they need to take in order to complete their desired program of study in the most optimal way. In fall 2020, the program mapping was completed, and the College is now poised to begin implementing these pathways during this academic year (2020-2021). The promotion and marketing of these areas of interest and their respective pathways initiates the full cycle of the four Guided Pathways pillars by clarifying the path. Merritt is currently making strides in fulfilling the requirements of all four pillars. Though uniquely focused on their respective approaches and intended outcomes, the remaining three projects below also align with the Guided Pathways pillars. (Action Plan 1 aligns with Standards I.B.6., I.C.1, I.C.4, II.A.6)

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources	Timeline
Creating program maps for all College programs	Department Chairs and Program Directors develop proposal to submit to Dean	Consulting Partner: Irving Chin	December 2020
Consultation with Math and English Chairs to discuss the development of program maps that have those disciplines as requirements	Department Chairs and Program Directors in collaboration with the academic deans.		November 2020
Review of Program Maps by Guided Pathways Committee	Guided Pathways Faculty Lead	Consulting Partner: Irving Chin -GP Funds	February 2021
Consultation with Counseling	Department Chairs/Program Directors and Division Dean		Early March 2021
Program Mapping Presentation	Guided Pathways Committee, Math and English Chairs	Consulting Partner: Irving Chin – GP Funds	March 18, 2021 - Flex Day
Training of counselors and other faculty/staff responsible for student outreach and counseling	VPSS and Counseling Dean	GP Funds	April 2021

**Action Plan 2.** Launch the new college-wide marketing theme, “Success by Design” (Clarify the Path). This campaign will integrate and leverage existing and planned resources, including the redesigned website, Merritt Hub (digital recruitment community), College Central (employment placement website), Guided Pathways program mapping, and Guided Pathways areas of interest. Marketing will feature career and transfer programs and ensure a cohesive presentation of the exciting new Merritt brand on our website, in advertising, and in our considerably expanded social media presence. One of the main target audiences of this campaign includes students who did not apply to or gain admission to 4-year universities. (Action Plan 2 aligns with Standards I.B.6 and I.C.4).

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources	Timeline
Collaborate to determine marketing theme and scope	President, VPSS, VPI, SEM Committee, Researcher, Three Senate Presidents		November 2020 - February 2021
Upload Areas of Interest and Program Maps to College Website	Website Support Team		
Development of Promotional Video	Communication Faculty Lead, District PIO	GP Funds	February 2021
Launch: Merritt Hub, College Central, Program Maps	Merritt Hub Consultant	SWP Funds	February 2021

**Action Plan 3.** Develop a Career Exploration Summer Academy in partnership with OUSD’s Linked Learning Division to enable students to earn college credit and explore hands-on (virtual) CE programs while earning a stipend for completion (Enter the Path). The programs that have been identified for the first Academy are: Administration of Justice, Emergency Medical Technician, Fire Sciences, and Paralegal Studies. (Action Plan 3 aligns with Standards I.B.6 and II.A.7).

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources	Timeline
Meet with OUSD to discuss summer academies and determine interest	PCCD SWP Director, Div II Dean, CE Faculty, K-12 Partners	SWP Funds	Fall 2019
Confirm CE faculty that are interested in participating in summer academy	Div II and III Deans, CE Faculty		Spring 2020
On-going meetings w/OUSD to flush out details	Div II and III Deans		Spring 2020
Development of Flyer and Outreach to Students	Div II and III Deans	SWP Funds	Spring 2020
Finalize Career Exploration Schedule (transition to Virtual)	Div III Dean, CE Faculty, K-12 Partners	SWP Funds	May/June 2020

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources	Timeline
ePAFs for participating Faculty are initiated	Div III Dean	SWP Funds	May/June 2020
CRN for COUNS 207A is provided to OUSD/K-12 to do a batch enrollment	A&R, VPI, Deans, Scheduler, K-12 Partners		May/June 2020
Career Exploration Academy is Launched	A&R, VPI, Deans, Scheduler, Participating faculty, K-12 Partners	SWP Funds	June – July 2020
Debrief and review of Data	Div II and III Deans, Participating Faculty, K-12 Partners		July/August 2020

**Action Plan 4.** Launch a pilot cohort program intended to increase the academic success of Black and Brown students in STEM fields (Enter the Path, Stay on the Path, Ensure Learning). The model will include monthly professional development workshops to train instructors to adopt pedagogical approaches that are culturally sensitive and relevant. Student services staff will receive training in equity approaches that positively impact the student experience. Students will receive weekly coaching sessions and embedded tutoring for their transfer-level program courses. The College will carefully track improvements in academic success and program completion among this cohort to assess the impact of these individual changes and their contributions to these students’ success. The goal is to narrow the achievement gap that persists for Black and Brown students in STEM programs. (Action Plan 4 aligns with Standards I.B.6, II.A.7, and II.C.3).

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources	Timeline
Identify workgroup composed of faculty and staff	STEM faculty, department chairs/ program directors and administration		Early October 2020
Planning Sessions: Determination of Program(s) Focus and schedule, Cohort size, Secure funding sources (apply for grants and College CE grant funding for program costs and student stipends), Select cohort faculty and staff, Identify CBO to assist with wrap around services and Industry partners to participate on advisory committee	STEM faculty, department chairs/ program directors and administration		October – November 2020
Present as Informational Item	Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, College Council		February 2021
Develop training for faculty and classified staff	Advisory Committee, Administration	Consultants (Bakersfield Program Staff)	February 2021
Recruit students: Review existing applications of students with declared majors in the identified STEM programs, Outreach to high schools, STEM dual enrollment classes,	HS Outreach Specialist, Counselors	Grant funding Researcher to perform query to identify eligible students	July 2021
Orientation	Cohort Faculty members, Counselors	Grant funding	August 2021
Implementation of Cohort First Semester Schedule	Cohort Faculty members, Counselors	Grant funding (Stipends for students)	Fall 2021

## **Anticipated Impact on Student Learning and Achievement**

The overarching anticipated impact of these projects is to make progress in closing the achievement gap that exists for Latinx and Black American students. The College intends to achieve the following specific outcomes:

- Increase graduation rates among Latinx and Black American students by 15 percent in two years.
- Decrease the average number of years that it takes Merritt students to graduate by 30 percent in two years.
- Strengthen the partnership between Merritt and OUSD schools with the result that more than 15 percent of students participating in the Career Exploration Summer Academy will enroll in one these programs at Merritt after they graduate from high school.
- Double the number of non-White students that graduate in STEM fields in two years.

## **Outcome Measures**

The College will measure the success of the four Quality Focus Essay action plans by the following metrics:

***Action Plan 1:*** Student success rates, graduation rates, transfer rates, semesters enrolled

***Action Plan 2:*** Increased enrollment among target audiences, retention and graduation rates of students that enrolled as a result of the marketing campaign

***Action Plan 3:*** Increased enrollment in the Administration of Justice, Emergency Medical Technician, Fire Sciences, and Paralegal Studies programs as a direct result of the summer exploration program.

***Action Plan 4:*** Enrollment, graduation and transfer rates of Black American and Latinx students in STEM programs