

Introduction to the 2008 ARCC Report

Background

This report on a set of performance indicators for the California Community Colleges (CCC) meets a legislative requirement that resulted from Assembly Bill 1417 (Pacheco, Statutes of 2004, Chapter 581). The details of the legislation appear in Appendix F of this report. For clarity's sake, we have named this reporting system *Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges* (or ARCC). The report itself has the title of "Focus On Results." As required by the Legislature, the CCC System Office (CCCSO) will produce this report each year and disseminate it so that each college will share it with its local board of trustees. The System Office will also make the report available to state government policymakers and the public at large.

The report's objectives are to make policymakers, local college officials, and elected boards aware of system and college performance in specific areas of effort and to inform the public about overall system performance. As a result, the legislative mandate specifies that each college has one year in which to interact with its board of trustees with respect to this report. Appendix G of this report documents the system's complete fulfillment of this requirement for the 2007 ARCC Report.

In comparison to the 2007 report, the 2008 report adds an eighth performance indicator to the college level indicators. Readers will observe that the 2008 report now includes coverage of noncredit courses as required by Senate Bill 361 (Scott, Statutes of 2006, Chapter 631). However, this coverage of noncredit outcomes only extends across courses designated as part of the "Enhanced Noncredit" funding. Because each college had the option to apply for this special funding, only a fraction of the colleges will appear with data for this new performance indicator. Furthermore, the 2008 report has college peer grouping for the ESL (English as a Second Language) improvement indicator. The pilot status of the 2007 data for ESL prevented us from creating a peer group comparison for ESL in the 2007 report.

This report drew upon the contributions of many parties. The framework for ARCC used the expertise of a team of researchers from the Research and Planning Group for the California Community Colleges (i.e., the RP Group), a panel of nationally recognized researchers on college performance, a statewide technical advisory workgroup, and staff at the System Office. In Appendix H we list the individuals who played these important roles in helping to formulate the ARCC.

How to Use This Report

We acknowledge that a variety of people will see this report, and we recognize that these individuals will differ widely in their reading objectives and in their familiarity with the report's topic. With this in mind, we have tried to design the report so that policy makers at both the state and local levels will have a clear presentation of essential performance indicators for the system and for each community college within it. The body of the report emphasizes tables of summary data that provide snapshots of system and college level performance. Readers should read the brief introductions to each of these sections

Introduction to the 2008 ARCC Report

(system and college level) to understand their contents. These introductions cover the framework for ARCC, and they should help most readers to understand the performance indicators cited in this report. Appendix E, which presents a short list of terms and abbreviations, may also help the general reader.

Readers should avoid comparing the results in the 2008 report to those shown in the 2007 report. The 2007 report acted as a pilot for the 2008 report, and the 2008 report uses recently corrected data from the colleges. Some of the data corrections resulted from the system's project to improve data quality (known as Curriculum Reporting for the Community Colleges, or CRCC). Other data changes have occurred, such as data resubmissions by individual colleges, and the array of data amendments since the 2007 report really makes it unproductive to compare the two reports.

We recognize that researchers, analysts, and college officials will require documentation of the methodology for the performance indicators in this report. Such technical details appear in three of the appendices. Appendix B (methods for calculating the indicators), Appendix C (regression analyses for the peer grouping), and Appendix D (cluster analyses for the peer grouping) specifically address methodological issues, and they tend to require technical knowledge on the part of the reader.

The report's first section covers the system's overall performance over time, and this will help readers to see the broad context of the system's performance. The section that follows system performance presents specific information for each college. The first two pages of college level tables display how that college performed over time on eight basic indicators. The year-to-year figures for these performance indicators should give readers a good idea of how any given college has done during the past few years, especially in terms of its progress in areas that are generally recognized as critical in community colleges.

The third and fourth pages for each college display basic demographic data for the college's enrollment. This information will help readers understand the student population served by that college. For many readers, such information can indicate relevant aspects of a college's effectiveness (i.e., who does the college serve?), plus it can provide additional context for the reported performance indicators.

The fifth page for each college shows the "peer grouping" information for the college. On this page, readers will find a comparison of a college's performance on each of the seven indicators. For each performance indicator, we have performed a statistical analysis (peer grouping) to identify other California Community Colleges that most closely resemble the college in terms of environmental factors that have linkage to (or association with) the performance indicator. Interested readers should refer to Appendix A to see the names of the colleges that comprise each peer group. We emphasize that the peer group results are rough guides for evaluating college level performance because each college may have unique local factors that we could not analyze statistically for the

Introduction to the 2008 ARCC Report

peer group identification. Because the data from the colleges may have changed since the analysis shown in the 2007 report, colleges may fall into new peer groups in this report. The preliminary nature of the new indicator for Enhanced Noncredit courses compels us to omit college peer-grouping for this indicator. We believe that the data for the 2009 report will have higher quality and completeness than the pilot data that were available for the 2008 report.

The sixth page for a college shows that college's own self-assessment, and this brief statement from the college administration may note, among other things, unique factors that our statistical analysis may have missed. Therefore, readers should carefully review this self-assessment because it may help to explain the performance figures for a college. Please note that these self-assessments could not cover any tabulation of the pilot data for courses involved with Enhanced Noncredit funding because these tables were unavailable at the time that the colleges produced their self-assessments. Obviously, the six schools of continuing education in our system could not produce any text for self-assessment because the only performance indicator we have for them is success in Enhanced Noncredit.

The best use of this report will require the integration of information from various parts of the report. Judgments about the performance of any particular college should especially pay attention to the sections on year-to-year performance, peer group comparison, enrollment demographics, and the college self-assessment. A focus upon only one of these pieces of information will probably provide an incomplete evaluation of college performance, and this may lead one to make unfair judgments about an institution. Consequently, we hope that users of this report maintain this multi-dimensional viewpoint (from the different report sections) as they draw their conclusions or as they communicate about the report to other people.

Readers should also note that the report refers to the System Office (abbreviated as CCCSO) and to the Chancellor's Office (abbreviated as CCCCO). These titles represent one and the same entity, and staff people have been using the two titles interchangeably in their communications.

Additional information about ARCC is available at the following website:

<http://www.cccco.edu/OurAgency/TechResearchInfo/ResearchandPlanning/ARCC/tabid/292/Default.aspx>

If you have any questions or comments about the report, please e-mail them to:
arcc@cccco.edu.