

# **MERRITT COLLEGE**

## **STATEMENT OF COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL PLANS**

Merritt College is a comprehensive, public community college located on a 125-acre site in the hills of East Oakland. Merritt also offers college-level and essential skills courses at area high schools, the Fruitvale Education Center, and other locations in the community.

Merritt College promotes and enhances the quality of life in the urban area it serves through vocational and technical programs, courses appropriate for transfer, career and continuing education, and basic skills instruction. Merritt also provides comprehensive student services.

The college is committed to meeting the educational needs of the diverse student population it serves through excellence in instruction. The college provides opportunities for intellectual, social, emotional, cultural and physical development of the student. Educational opportunities are offered to all who can profit, regardless of age, sex, race, sexual identity, socioeconomic background or disability.

The student population is diverse in ethnicity, preparedness, age, physical ability, and educational goals. More than eighty percent of the student body is non-white, and the average age is 33 (based on fall 2009 demographics). In fall 2009, 83% of Merritt students attended part-time, and 75% of the student body attended day classes. Enrollment and ftes generation have remained stable over the last 5 years, with an average headcount of 7,500 and average ftes per fall term of 2000 despite a reduction of over 10% reduction in sections from fall 2008 to fall 2009.

### **REVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND FACILITY NEEDS**

Educational planning for the next five years is centered on assessing the transfer, workforce development, and basic skills needs of students and the communities served by Merritt College. In planning, consideration is given to alternatives to the traditional modes of instruction, technological changes, and workplace changes.

- Consistent with the philosophy of the Peralta District that other methods of instructional delivery be explored, Merritt College faculty continue to expand the number of courses offered through distance education. Although the existing buildings consist mainly of traditional classrooms and laboratories, cabling and infrastructure upgrading projects have provided the capability to accommodate diverse instructional delivery methodologies and flexible scheduling. There continues to be a critical need for upgrading the science laboratories, which will be addressed upon completion of a proposed new Science-Allied Health Center Building. R Building renovations were completed in fall 2007, which provided necessary facilities updates for Student Services functions. In addition, remodeling of P Building third floor created a much-needed large classroom that can accommodate 200 students, and renovated facilities for the DSPS High Tech Laboratory and Learning Opportunities program.

Major areas of needed facility renovation include the following:

- Renovations to Building A to accommodate the current usage and provide accessibility compliance. When the building was constructed in 1971, it housed vocational programs such as automotive, welding, and machine tool programs.
- A new permanent facility to house the Child Development Program.
- Upgrading of Science Labs, stock rooms, and associated building ventilation reconfiguration to address urgent facilities needs in Building D.
- A new Science-Allied Health Center is in progress as a separate building.
- Upgrading of power grid, network capacity and cooling/ventilation in computer labs in P Building and the Library.
- Renovation of the Landscape Horticulture instructional area.
- Creation of appropriate access for the Self Reliant House (currently has no legal access).
- Creation of a Genomics-Microscopy Center.
- Need for power upgrades in computer labs in P Building (P103 and P218). This is an ongoing request.

The Q Building currently is undergoing renovation and will not be habitable until mid-2011. After renovation, it will continue to house Administrative Offices and Business Services Offices, including Production Services. The renovation is intended to address issues of poor facility configuration and lack of appropriate ventilation in Business Services.

### **DIVISION OF MATH, SCIENCE AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Educational planning for the next five years is based on the following assumptions;

- The current high enrollment levels in Biology will continue. The number of students unable to access this program will continue to be high and will likely increase, particularly in light of the permanent workload reduction mandated by the State and the continuing pressure to enroll in the college's AD Nursing program.
- The rapid increase in enrollments seen recently in Biology, Microbiology and Chemistry will continue as courses in these areas have become prerequisites for applying to the college's Allied Health programs.
- Enrollments in the new Microscopy and Genomics programs are expected to increase and expand the overall course offerings and career path opportunities for students. Space in the new Science-Allied Health Center is necessary to house the extensive and highly sensitive equipment used for these programs.
- Enrollment in Landscape Horticulture will remain strong and may increase substantially when facility upgrades are completed.
- Enrollment in Math will remain high, particularly as the college more effectively addresses the needs of its basic skills students through program innovation.
- Grant funding to increase capacity and retention continues for the AD Nursing program.

- New grant funding has been awarded to establish a Chronic Care Assistant program at Merritt College. All costs will be grant funded for 3 years through a Department of Labor grant.
- Computer Information Science program enrollment and employment will remain depressed, but can be revitalized through new directions such as a Health Information Technology program currently in development.

## **SCIENCE LABS – D BUILDING AND NEW SCIENCE BUILDING**

There is a critical need to repair Building D to bring it in conformance with current applicable health and safety standards, and to build a new building to house the science and Allied Health programs currently housed in the D building in order to provide state-of-the-art learning environments competitive with four-year institutions that reflect industry standards. In addition, two newly developed programs, Microscopy and Genomics, require space that is ventilated, plumbed, and electrically outfitted to meet sensitive and expensive equipment needs. These programs will place students in jobs within one to two years. A new facility will meet our college mission of educating underrepresented student populations to become successful citizens in a global workforce.

After the new Science-Allied Health Center is completed in 2013, the college plans to partner with the district to use Building D for district-wide contract education and community education programs. A modest renovation would provide the college with a large assembly area which could be used district-wide for community events. This reconfigured space would provide a revenue generating opportunity that Merritt College cannot currently support with the existing configuration.

## **LANDSCAPE HORTICULTURE BUILDING**

The Merritt Landscape Horticulture program is unique in the region. It has exhibited sustained growth and high enrollment and these trends are expected to continue. This growth has stretched the ability of the current aging facilities to support the program. The building is scheduled for extensive renovation to begin in the near future. This renovation should support the program's needs for the next five years.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY CENTER (SELF-RELIANT HOUSE)**

The construction of the new track and field facility several years ago eliminated the only legal pedestrian access to the Environmental Study Center. Vehicle access has also been cut off. This facility can now only be accessed on foot and only by walking along a drainage channel that is unlit at night and completely inaccessible for anyone who has even a minor disability. Thus, the Center can be used only during daylight hours via a path that is unsafe even during these hours. As a result, use of this building has been severely restricted, and classes have been rescheduled in other buildings. Lighted vehicular and pedestrian access must be provided to this building as soon as possible. The enrollment growth of this program continues to be severely impacted given that the Environmental Study Center building cannot be used to capacity due to lack of access and inadequate restroom facilities or water sources. In addition, the Environmental

Studies program lost land to the track and field upgrade, and was promised comparable space at the base of the embankment. This land needs to be cleared and graded in order to be useful.

## **COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS, BUSINESS, AND ECONOMICS**

The P building houses general-purpose classrooms used primarily for the Business, Accounting, Economics, Paralegal and Computer Information Systems courses and programs. It also houses the computer labs for the Computer Information Systems (CIS) and Business programs. The college's CIS program has been drastically downsized due to a severe drop in enrollment. This enrollment decline parallels the economic downturn in the computer industry, but since Merritt's loss of enrollment has been steeper than those experienced on other campuses, the deficiencies in the P building infrastructure were also undoubtedly a major factor. This is borne out by a parallel weakening of enrollment in Business and Economics, which schedule classes primarily in the P building. The building power supply is inadequate to support the current needs of computer labs and classrooms. The cooling, heating and ventilation systems have been partially renovated; however, some classrooms remain too hot or too cold to be used at certain times of year. The configuration of the heat ducting system in the building creates severe noise problems and unacceptable air currents in many classrooms. Most of the classrooms have concrete walls and ceilings and are uncarpeted. This causes acoustic problems that adversely impact students' ability to hear and understand the instructor, especially when classrooms are full. All these inadequacies significantly impact the teaching and learning process.

The college must rely on both the classrooms and computer labs in the P building to support a number of programs that are being reconfigured to make greater use of computers in instruction. The problems discussed above are, therefore, of serious concern and may inhibit the growth and success of these programs.

## **GENERAL CLASSROOM NEEDS**

Programs in the Math, Science and Vocational Programs division have experienced increased enrollment and class size in the past several years. Average class size has increased, making the programs more cost efficient, but the college is chronically short of classrooms that can hold more than 50 students. Several of the Division programs routinely enroll 60 or more students per class, and efficiency in Biology and Chemistry programs is increased by combining two or more laboratory sections (which are safety-limited as to size) into the same lecture section, resulting in lecture class size from 60-105 students. In 2003, a door was added to a classroom to increase its capacity to 70 students. Even with this additional classroom, we have had to restrict the size of some classes, thus turning students away. There is a critical need to increase the number of classrooms that can hold 60 or more students. Some of this can be done by reconfiguring some classrooms and adding second doors to larger rooms.

## **DIVISION OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

The A Building now houses most of the Humanities and Social Science offerings. With its conversion to a major classroom building, there is an identified need to upgrade the

heating/ventilation systems. The infrastructure and cabling project provided power upgrades and the potential for Internet connections to all classrooms and offices in the A Building. A 128/129 are in the process of being renovated as swing space for the Library construction project, which will begin as soon as the Library facilities are moved to A129. This project has resulted in the loss of A128, which had been used as the primary classroom for the college's Administration of Justice program.

## **MUSIC**

During the summer of 1996, the Music program was moved to a remodeled space in the A Building. This space is not completely adequate for practice rooms, studios, and storage for the Music library and instruments. Staff and faculty believe it is necessary to revitalize the Music program at the college to ensure comprehensiveness of the Merritt offerings and to improve the quality of student life on campus. Recent innovations, curriculum expansion, and equipment purchases have resulted in a renewed interest in the program.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION/ATHLETICS**

Since the campus opened in 1971, many of the Physical Education classes were offered in portable buildings. These facilities became so inadequate that it was necessary to move the Weight Training program to a newly constructed Fitness Center in the A Building. Currently, the space serves over 600 students per term, and needs to be air conditioned for comfort during warm weather.

Body Conditioning classes share space in the gymnasium with other P.E. offerings, and Dance classes were moved off campus (and then eliminated as part of the budget reduction). Not only is the gymnasium unsuitable for these offerings, but also scheduling has been a problem resulting in a loss of class enrollments. The gymnasium is located in the F Building, and there is no disabled access into the F Building from the back parking lot (where there are parking spaces for disabled students and staff). The gym floor and gym roof are scheduled for repair work during the summer of 2010.

The athletic fields were renovated in 2002-2003 through Measure E bond funds, creating a new Mondo track surface, a synthetic turf athletic field, bleachers with a press box, and an electronic scoreboard. Keeping the soccer fields in good condition is a constant challenge. With the allocation of sufficient resources, the fields would be receive more use by the college and be sought after by our community partners.

## **LIBRARY**

The Merritt College Library is one of the most attractive and problematic buildings on the Merritt campus. Its top floor affords a breathtaking view of the bay on one side and the hills on the other. The expanse of glass windows that provides such views also allows overheating of the building, and there is no air conditioning or ability to cross-ventilate the upper floors on warm days. The Library toilets need to be replaced or refurbished due to missing tiles.

During the next five years, the Library and its facilities, services, instruction, and collections will be undergoing significant changes. Currently the Library is slated to move into a “swing space” in A129 for at least one year while the L Building undergoes a much-needed renovation. This renovation will address infrastructure issues, viz. air conditioning, ventilation, electrical, data, and plumbing/water lines that have limited the full capacities of the existing building. In addition, the current DSA-approved plans provide for reasonable ADA access to the first floor (future location of the Learning Center) of the building through the addition of a first/second story elevator installation.

During the Library’s swing space phase, the campus will be more reliant on networked information resources provided through the Library’s database contracts that are part of a system-wide consortia purchase; due to the limited footprint of the swing space, study seating areas will be limited.

The Library recently acquired computer upgrades through the acquisition of public access laptop computers; in addition, the department might consider a laptop/ebook/notepad loan system to accommodate projected student needs for computing and research. In terms of current and anticipated program needs, the approved plans and tentative FFE budget will allow for the creation of a bibliographic “instruction area,” the realignment of the reference collection with reference librarians, and FFE upgrades for reserve collections, periodicals, governance, and reprographics areas. Assuming that there are sufficient resources, the Library seeks to “build out” one group study room with cable/satellite/conferencing capabilities so students can access PCCTV and related educational media. These improvements would provide opportunities for faculty/students to “narrowcast” to other Peralta sites.

Currently the PCCD Library Chairs are coordinating with District IT and Education Services to acquire and implement a next generation integrated library system. One component of this system will allow for distance education students to access materials remotely via IP validation. The new ILS will enhance student access to the colleges’ resource materials. The reintegration of the Library and Learning Resources Center will provide for a more centralized location for student academic research, materials, and instructional support.

## **LEARNING CENTER**

The Learning Center has been modified over the past years to incorporate a math tutorial and math lab area. Merritt College Learning Center services are a model for the Peralta Colleges, but the Center is beginning to experience space constraints due to heavy student use. A new space has been identified in Building L that will be renovated, beginning in 2010, to better serve students seeking Learning Center assistance. The newly renovated Learning Center space will be configured to accommodate more space for tutoring, a Writing Center, a Math Lab, a Science Center, and a Center for Africana Studies.

## **CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

The Child Development program is currently located in a converted auto shop area. While the space and the yard meet health department requirements for a limited number of children, the

space is undersized and inadequate, and does not meet State Community College guidelines and standards for educational training. This location provides a limited space of about 2,500 ASF. A new 11,300 ASF facility is needed to house demonstration, instructional and administrative space for an education program designed to support 60 preschoolers, 26 toddlers and 14 infants. A permanent structure is needed that will be built on the campus in a location that will allow safe and efficient “direct auto access” for dropping off and picking up the children. The college recognizes that a larger facility and expanded program would necessitate the hiring of an additional full time I/T practicum instructor, a site supervisor/administrator to run the program, and the expansion of the .5 classified position to a full time position.

Given the current Peralta hiring freeze and possible classified layoffs, it would not be possible to currently implement this plan. The program does need a new facility, so the college is documenting the continued need in the five year plan.

### **AUDIO VISUAL SERVICES**

The Humanities and Social Science disciplines are extensive users of AV Services. There is currently no AV staff, nor a designated space to access AV equipment. In addition, a multimedia center is needed in order to conduct workshops on technologically advanced instructional methodologies, and to provide assistance to faculty wishing to develop video and computerized classroom presentations.

### **STUDENT SERVICES**

The remodel of the R Building/Student Center involved a multiphase project to consolidate services for students by relocating Student Services offices (i.e. the One-Stop Career/Transfer Center, Counseling, Financial Aid, Admissions & Records, DSPS Main Office, EOPS, CalWORKS, and Athletic Director’s office) from P and Q; moving Health Services, the Bookstore, Student Activities, Council Chambers, and club offices; installing additional restrooms; and completely remodeling the Food Service/Cafeteria area. The facility lacks multimedia in the Student Lounge which is vital to offering “first class” rental capabilities to generate revenue, and for educational/instructional purposes. Plans for the R Building include offering a “food court” in the cafeteria area, adding a “Pete’s Coffee,” improving signage, designating space for a student-run “copy center”, and improving seating in the cafeteria, Student Lounge, and student study areas.

### **CAMPUS GROUNDS**

The campus grounds have vastly improved over the few years through continuation of the campus landscaping project. There are now two clearly-identified entrances to the campus, and walkways and paths have been created throughout the campus with accompanying signage. There are continuing issues concerning the grounds: a road at the side of the gym needs to be paved to connect to the legal roadway to prevent vehicles using an unauthorized dirt track that endangers federally-protected vernal pools.

The college recently completely renovated the tennis courts. The new track is completed, and the college is now hosting track meets on campus. Restrooms, a concession stand, and faculty offices at the track site have been completed.

All buildings on campus are in varying stages of receiving improved ventilation and heating systems. Buildings A, D, and Q are particularly uncomfortable in summer and winter for students, staff and faculty, as the room temperatures are sometimes extreme. Many problems have been identified regarding the proper heating and ventilation of classrooms and offices.

A new water pipe system was completed several years ago on all outside water pipes. However, no inside pipes were replaced. Existing water and sewer pipes need to be replaced in all of the campus buildings. With the exception of four recently upgraded student restrooms, all other restrooms on campus need to be remodeled. Much of the electrical wiring and cabling on campus have been upgraded to accommodate the increased usage of computers and to provide Internet access in all campus areas. However, additional power was requested for computer labs in P218 and P103, but was not provided.

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