

MORTON COLLEGE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2011



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

TO THE MORTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY,

Introduction

Morton College has made a considerable difference in the lives of thousands since 1924. Morton was founded as a public junior college to further the higher education aspirations of students from Cicero, Berwyn, Forest View, Lyons, McCook, Stickney and other near west suburbs. The founders had special foresight and determination, as Morton was only the second public junior college founded in Illinois. Its founders had a special interest in meeting the higher education needs of their local community. They wanted their community to have convenient opportunity for their sons and daughters to prosper. The Morton community has undergone profound changes in the last 20 years, including an increase in its Latino population from 6.6% to 74% since 1980. As this shift made Morton College the largest Latino-serving public college or university in the Midwest, a review of the mission was necessary in order to serve the college's "new" community. To enable the necessary changes to the mission, a Blue Ribbon panel of citizens from diverse backgrounds and expertise was appointed and charged with researching how Morton College could meet the community's needs so that Morton College, once again, could distinguish itself by its sense of purpose — a College that understands and changes to meet the needs of its community, now and in the future — a college that embraces collaboration among and between all stakeholders.

Revitalizing the Community College: Morton's Movement

The community college was based on the assumption there were large number of people not served by existing institutions and the unserved were to be the clientele of these new colleges... Community colleges should reach out. Go to the people who are unserved. Give priority to those who need the education they did not get at an earlier age... Bring people into the mainstream.

--Edmund Gleazer in *Values, Vision and Vitality*

Forty years ago, people referred to the rapid building of community colleges across the country as "the movement." Community colleges were opening at the rate of one per week to meet community needs during the peak growth years. The community college created educational opportunities, access, and affordability like no other phenomena in the recent history of higher education. And communities responded - during the 1960's and 70's, enrollment and construction growth exceeded the vision of many college founders. Community colleges changed the higher education landscape, to preserve the integrity of access and opportunity; we must pursue a real relationship, an informed relationship with the community.

Community colleges currently enroll over 45 percent of all undergraduates; however, community needs continue to evolve as the greater society undergoes rapid change. Over the past twenty years, colleges have struggled with visions, missions, and their roles

within their communities. Economic changes, demographic shifts, work force demands, and funding restrictions have slowed the community college "movement."

Contemporary community colleges exist in an increasingly global environment, others are struggling with the challenges of educating and preparing rural populations for a workplace to growing more technologically complex. Regardless of location, constituency needs are changing at rapid rates and some colleges remain unchanged and unresponsive to developing community needs. While some colleges are paralyzed by growing demands and have lost their direction, others have risen to the challenges by taking counsel from Gleazer (1980):

...three elements are associated with viable community colleges They have the capacity to be adaptable, they maintain a continuing relationship with learners, and they are community oriented (p.7).

The **capacity for adaptability** is critical because nimble organizations, those capable of assessing needs and making necessary changes in a timely fashion are most responsive to the community. **Maintaining a continuing relationship with learners** is the key to facilitating learning and essential to student success. Colleges can maintain a relationship with its learners through the services it provides from the front desk of students services to faculty-student interactions in the classroom. **Community oriented colleges** collect data so that they become acutely aware of community needs. The leadership organizes personnel and constituents to assess its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the development, execution, and assessment of a plan to meet community needs.

Morton College: physical plant

The College campus and physical plant have been greatly improved. Changes have been made to ensure that our faculty and our students are offered the best possible for instruction in a safe, healthy, and pleasant environment. We have a new sense of pride in our college, and our entire campus reflects that pride.

Morton Community College, like others across the nation, had lost its sense of purpose and connection to the community several years ago. Established during an industrial boom and having served a predominantly White population, the college had changed very little to meet the needs of a growing Spanish-speaking population before 2002.

The facilities, organizational structure, and services reflected decades of stagnation. The college had become complacent according to administrators. Students consistently described the College they encountered before 2003 as "stuck in time."

Students and administrators agreed that the facilities were antiquated and the campus atmosphere was less than appealing. Moreover, students and faculty noted the library; science labs and other critical centers for learning were substandard and affected the campus climate.

The environment was an obstacle to the growth and development of students and the college, but more distressing was that a large number of students were "left out" before recent changes. Though ESL serves more than 33% of students, the College provided

very little support for the program until 2003 – per one administrator, routine and lack of communication forced the program to rely largely on grant funding to support itself. Programs in Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, Adult Education Community Programming and Outreach, and English as a Second Language have been integrated into the everyday life of the College and now have a prominent presence in our physical plant.

Students, faculty, and community members are impressed with the results of ten million dollars investment in the remodeling of the library, art classrooms, and science labs. The Board of Trustees and the college's leadership have strengthened their relationship with their learners and community by demonstrating their commitment to make Morton College the community's college.

A Capacity for Adaptability

After rolling up its collective sleeves in 2003, the leadership team appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel of citizens from diverse backgrounds and expertise to research the community's needs and learned how Morton College could be its central resource. The Panel held public hearings and assembled considerable data about the College's service to the community.

The panel met with students, faculty, administrators, community leaders and researchers to develop recommendations to help the college serve its constituency in an exemplary fashion.

The Panel outlined five key recommendations to guide the college in its mission to better serve the Morton community:

- 1.) Improve student academic outcomes
- 2.) Remove barriers to student success
- 3.) Meet the needs of Spanish-speaking students
- 4.) Improve Morton's image through marketing
- 5.) Develop partnerships

The recommendations reflect the students' need for more support from the college and the community's need to be included and more effectively served by the College.

Maintaining a Relationship with Learners

Committed faculty were key in maintaining the vitality of the College over the years according to administrators, faculty, and students. They emphasize how much attention faculty give students and the resourcefulness of the instructors, despite funding restrictions. Faculty have been critical in maintaining the institution's relationship with Morton's learners, but the Panel stipulated the need for involvement and relationship-development with students by the entire organization.

Building and maintaining relationships requires comfort, trust, space, and time. With the advent of the revitalization of Morton, the leadership has strengthened its relationship with learners by increasing personnel diversity, improving technology, and renovating facilities.

Morton student surveys and national research indicate that Latino and other minority students are particularly encouraged and responsive to diverse faculty and personnel. Bilingual administrators, recruiters, phone operators, and greeters have been critical in creating a more welcoming climate for the many Spanish-speaking students to campus.

Morton has increased the overall number of Latino personnel. The number of Latino administrators hired increased from zero to 53 percent. The percentage of Latino faculty is almost 10%. Morton College has made great advances in its effort to become a diverse college representative of the community it serves.

Technology has been used to enhance the College's connection with students. Computer monitors with announcements, event updates and deadlines in both English and Spanish are particularly effective on campus. Morton has recently provided email accounts for all students, further enhancing students' ability to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and student services personnel.

Changes to our Campus have made Morton College a more collegial institution where students learn and interact with peers and faculty. The library is considered the greatest improvement on campus and is considered the "hot spot" on campus. Morton now boasts a cyber café in the library.

Renovated space in the Nursing Department has expanded the program's ability to teach more students, as well as provide them with state-of-the art technology. Nursing faculty now have more space and time to teach and tutor students. A new seminar room located near faculty offices is available for small study groups and tutoring. The creation of this space has facilitated a learning space where students and faculty can continue to work to promote student success.

New "smart" classrooms, those equipped with computers, projectors, screens, and Internet access make it possible for faculty to spend more time teaching and modeling the use of technology than checking out and transporting equipment from the media center.

Renovations, improved technology, and diverse faculty have helped to build the comfort level, trust and time spent on campus. Students are "hanging around" the science and nursing labs and participating in more study group sessions in the cyber café in the library and the cafeteria. More time spent on campus, with each other, and with faculty is essential in the development and maintenance of the relationships students need with the community college.

Community Oriented

Partnerships with local high schools and community organizations have increased enrollment by 13 percent. Embracing the community also includes the building of new structures. Symbolic of Morton's mission to be the community nexus is the new museum, a work in progress. The College collaborated with Western Electric to construct a museum illustrating the Morton community's multicultural past. Just as the campus

greeters, signs, and art work embrace and welcome Latino students, the Museum captures and celebrates the community's Czech, Italian, and Polish past.

The Movement

The Community College Movement, like all movements, ebbs and flows according to the many internal and external factors that impact it. Morton College is only one example of a college that has consciously chosen to collaborate with its constituents in order to remain viable. Over two decades ago, Gleazer warned community colleges to engage their constituents:

I urge each community college to begin its own analysis of the local issues surrounding the mission of the community college; to develop materials to create an informed discussion; to build a network of cooperation with other community agencies...For an institution to have a sense of mission, the participants require commitment to a set of aims persuasive enough to elicit cooperation and vitality. As threatening to our institutions as the erosion of inflation can be, the greater danger we face is the erosion of our spirit (p.179).

This imperative was issued more than twenty-five years ago, but the message remains applicable as community colleges seek to serve immigrants, international students, and the under prepared students who continue to stream through the "open-door" college. The next wave of the movement does not depend on the building of a new college a week, but the renewal of the commitment each college has to the dynamic communities they serve.

Momentum

Morton continues its transformation as it continues to address the issues articulated by the Blue Ribbon Panel. Enrollment is increasing; the community is becoming more engaged in conversations about education and workforce preparation; the College is redoubling its effort to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking students; most importantly, all constituents are developing critical relationships within the organization and the business community. Active and engaged college personnel, leaders, and organizers have renewed their promise to support and serve the Morton community. With the advent of these new relationships and renovated facilities, the president and the board have now turned their attention to the two most critical recommendations made by the panel--improving student outcomes and removing barriers to student success.

Sincerely,

Brent Knight, Ed. D.
President

MISSION

As a comprehensive community college, recognized by the Illinois Community College Board, Morton College's mission is: **To enhance the quality of life of our diverse community through exemplary teaching and learning opportunities, community service, and life-long learning.**

VISION

Morton College will become the institution of choice for the community it serves through a strong commitment to student services and academic excellence.

GOALS

To ensure the enrichment of its educational programs and student-support services, Morton College is committed to ongoing self-study and assessment.

1. Maximize the College's resources to support student learning.
2. Conduct ongoing assessment of student learning to discover new ways to help students succeed.
3. Develop responsive curricula and programs to serve community needs.
4. Encourage community families to embrace the educational opportunities Morton College provides

STATEMENT OF VALUES

Morton College strives to enable the community with educational programs and student-support services to all students at an affordable cost without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, disability or marital status. The programs and services will emphasize preparation for additional post-secondary study, job-entry and career advancement, developmental education, and activities that enhance the cultural, civic and economic development of the community. Morton College works to create a safe and healthy environment where Students can pursue their educational goals and personal development. Morton College is committed to:

- **Excellence**— belief in excellence in teaching, educational programs, administrative support, and services to students, faculty and staff;
- **Collaboration**— belief in collaboration to enhance student learning, communication and success among students, faculty and staff.
- **Scholarship**— belief in scholarship and intellectual curiosity
- **Freedom**— belief in freedom of thought and expression
- **Diversity**— belief in the appreciation of the diversity in our community and our evolving global society
- **Responsibility**— belief in social responsibility and community involvement
- **Innovation**— belief in cultivating a learning environment that values innovation and creativity, through the evaluation and incorporation of emerging technologies and methodologies, towards an enhanced quality of instruction and administrative support for our students, faculty, and staff.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

In order to demonstrate that Morton College is fulfilling its mission Critical Success Factors will be used to measure accomplishments through indicators of performance in the advancement of Morton College's goals and service to the community it serves. Indicators of effectiveness will be quantitative and qualitative. They will be monitored to measure the college's success in advancing institutional goals and mission.

- Flexible, responsive and successful Education Programs:
 - Achievement in general education
 - Achievement in technical education
 - Achievement in workforce & continuing education
 - Articulation agreements
 - Equal opportunity to access all programs
 - Accreditation

- Positive student outcomes:
 - Student goal attainment
 - Graduation rates
 - Certification exam rates
 - Pass rates
 - Course completion rates
 - Retention rates
 - Student satisfaction
 - Transfer rates and performance

- Quality support services:
 - Assessment of programs and services
 - Entry testing and course placement
 - Access and equity to services
 - User satisfaction

- Economic development and community involvement:
 - Positive interaction with the community
 - Proactive community outreach and services
 - Partnerships, collaboration and alliances
 - Enhancement of economic development

- Effective leadership and management:
 - Strategic/operational planning and goal attainment
 - Resource management
 - Public/private resource acquisition
 - Facility and technology development
 - External collaborations and partnerships

- Collaborative organizational climate:
 - Ongoing professional development
 - Faculty/staff diversity
 - Employee satisfaction
 - Internal collaborative projects/efforts

A College in Transformation: History and Institutional Profile

Morton College, in its 80th year of serving the residents of Berwyn, Cicero, Forest View, Lyons, McCook and Stickney, is the second oldest two-year college in Illinois and a pioneer in the community college movement. Its pioneering efforts started in 1924 when 11 teachers set up classes and began instructing 76 young men and women. Little did this band realize they were setting in motion an idea of historic significance.

From the beginning, Morton College offered a university transfer program that quickly gained a statewide reputation for academic excellence. But recognizing the needs of other community residents, the College soon branched out. Today, besides its University Transfer Program, the College provides programs in careers, liberal studies, continuing education and community service and through them, a wide spectrum of courses.

In 1966 a series of events began a new chapter in the College's long history. Until then the College was governed by the Morton High School Board of Trustees and administered by the high school officials. But in a referendum held in December 1966, voters agreed to separate the College from Morton High School District 201 to form an independent community college. In a second referendum in April 1967, citizens elected a board of trustees to guide the College. Then in July 1967, events culminated in the new board of trustees legally severing the College's administrative ties with the high school, forming a new district and naming a new administration to run the College.

The most imperative need of the independent college was a home of its own. But finding the right site in a built-up community proved more difficult than anticipated, and for several years plans failed to materialize. In the meantime, the College became a storefront campus, leasing classrooms at Morton East High School, community churches and storefronts.

In November 1972, the new board and administration took steps leading inevitably to a new campus. They selected a site and made plans for a bond referendum to build the campus. On April 8, 1972, the referendum was held, and voters overwhelmingly approved by a four-to-one margin a \$5 million bond issue to build and furnish a new campus.

Ground was broken on December 16, 1973. Twenty-one months later, on September 22, 1975, culminating a year-long 50th anniversary celebration, classes began on the new campus. On November 23, 1975, the campus was dedicated to the residents of the Morton College District. On November 30, 1994, the College acquired the 12.5 acres of land adjacent to the campus' eastern boundary. This completed the total site design of the master plan developed in 1972.

The 21st Century has seen great strides in institutional improvement, with major renovations of the Library, science laboratories and nursing education facilities completed by 2005, and a major update of campus computing facilities scheduled for summer 2006.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Consistent with its mission, Morton College's educational philosophy conforms to requirements set forth in state law and stresses the importance of helping individuals live and work as better informed citizens in a dynamic society. This philosophy is reflected in the College's programs that model core values of truth, compassion, fairness, responsibility and respect. These programs, which are available to all individuals qualified to profit from them, are summarized in our Role and Scope

ROLE AND SCOPE

Morton College implements its mission through clearly defined programs, services and partnerships that focus on:

Adult Education Program This program is committed to shaping the future of Adult Education students by providing English as a second language, basic education and GED preparation courses.

University Transfer Program Courses in these curricula parallel in content, credit and quality with degree-granting institutions.

Career Program Career curricula prepare students for workplace, technical and semi-technical positions and lead to an associate in applied science degree or certificate. Students in these curricula receive initial job training, upgrade workplace and technical skills and become qualified for career opportunities.

Liberal Studies Program The liberal studies program is designed for students desiring maximum flexibility in preparing to transfer to a baccalaureate degree granting college. Transfer, career and continuing education courses may be used to meet a student's specific educational goals. Students completing this program earn an associate in liberal studies degree.

General Education Program General Education courses are required in all curricula leading to an associate degree. They provide students with basic knowledge in communications, mathematics, physical science, social and behavioral science, humanities and health and physical fitness.

Continuing Education Program Curricula and courses in the continuing education program focus on improving basic academic skills and life-long learning opportunities. Programs include developmental education, general studies, vocational skills and personal development.

Community Service Program The community service program consists of noncredit continuing education courses and activities designed to meet the hobby, leisure time and cultural needs of the community.

Student Services Program The Student Development Program helps students develop as they work to achieve their educational goals. Academic advising, career and personal counseling, financial aid assistance and job placement represent some of its functions.

Academic Support Services Program The academic support services augment classroom instruction. The Learning Resources Center, Academic Skills Center, Writing and Math Center, and Peer Tutoring Program are components of this program.

MAJOR TRENDS

Morton College recognizes the influence of a dynamic community and environment. Following are major trends and issues anticipated over the next five years that will play a critical role in the institution's planning processes:

- Demographic:
 - The College's service area is expected to increase in population. According to the Community College Strategic Planner (ccbenefts.com), Cook county will see a 4% increase in total population from 2005-2010, a total of more than 235,000 new residents. District 527 represents 6 core communities in Cook County.
 - Within this total increase, the Hispanic population will see the largest growth, with over 135,000 new residents.
 - The population will increase in age, with the largest percentages of growth in residents between the ages of 50 and 69.

- Technological:
 - The evolution of technology will continue, affording an increasingly diverse array of web- and computer-based tools that can be employed towards increasing student learning and student success.
 - Online and mobile modes of learning will become increasingly expected by students.
 - The capacity for technology to enhance non-teaching functions will increase dramatically.

- Educational:
 - Changes to the College curriculum are expected due to changing due to changing demographics, advances being made in technology, and dynamic economic conditions.
 - Continued demand for serving students with limited English language proficiency is anticipated.
 - Innovation in delivery of developmental education will be pursued, toward a more effective method of meeting student need.
 - Collaborative initiatives with district K-12 institutions, as well as 4-year institutions of higher education, will continue to be developed.

- Financial:
 - The state continues to struggle to meet diverse demands with limited resources. As a result, state funding will continue to be a challenge.
 - Increased costs due to aging buildings, infrastructure, and necessary site improvements are anticipated.
 - The College will continue to assess its position among peer institutions trending towards increased tuition.

- Political:
 - Legislation affecting the lives and livelihood of the immigrant population of the student body and district at large is anticipated.
 - Increased competition for government funds is expected to continue.

STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Morton College Strategic Plan has used material collected and reported to our stakeholders in the advancement of Morton College's Mission, Vision, and Values. It also builds on the work done by previous Strategic Planning Committees who met with individuals and organizations representing the communities served by Morton College. This Strategic Plan is meant to serve as a guide of how Morton College plans to implement advancement of its institutional goals for 2006-2011. As a vision our future, it sets a direction for Morton College to meet its identified challenges in serving the residents of District 527.

The Strategic Plan will guide annual assessments that in turn will drive development of fiscal budgets. The systemic approach will result in collaboration, and enhance effectiveness and productivity.

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