

MJC Quality Focus Essay



Through the process of self-evaluation, Modesto Junior College (MJC) has engaged in thoughtful discussion about its progress toward institutional improvement. Our College constituencies reviewed and analyzed work of the last several years, noting areas in which accreditation standards have been met or exceeded, as well as areas that can be improved. MJC identified two action projects where energies will be focused over the next three years, with the goals of improving student learning and student achievement. This Quality Focus Essay (QFE) outlines action projects the College will undertake that build on past successes, honor current work, and align with the Institution's momentum to strengthen effective, forward-thinking approaches to improve student learning and achievement.

Two themes emerged from the self-evaluation report, complementing the College's priorities and linking with Accreditation Standards. These themes have been developed into action projects that will advance ways in which student learning outcomes drive decision-making and improve student achievement rates through the development of guided pathways.

Action Project One: Holistic Support of Student Learning

Action Project Two: Clear Educational Pathways to Improve Student Achievement

The two Action Projects will be implemented through the framework of the new MJC Education Master Plan (EMP) priorities. Progress in meeting identified Action Steps and Timeline milestones will be monitored through formative assessment of the Action Projects as they unfold and summative assessment when they are completed.

Goals for Action Projects are listed separately; however, the College sees them as integrated and complementary, improving outcomes for students and increasing the effectiveness of processes that support those outcomes. Each project aligns with Accreditation Standards:

Action Project	Desired Goals/Outcomes	Standards
Holistic Support of Student Learning	Strengthen processes that enable faculty to analyze, refine, and document improvement based on learning outcomes Provide regular opportunity for substantive and sustained dialogue about the analysis and refinement of curriculum and pedagogy Institutionalize the integration of outcomes data into institutional planning, resource allocation, and evaluation processes	I.B.2 I.B.3 I.B.4 I.B.5 II.A.2 II.A.3 II.A.11 II.A.16
Clear Pathways to Improve Student Achievement	Enhance support networks for student advising (specialists, counselors, and advisors) Identify and publish entry-level pathways (areas of focus or meta-majors)	II.A.1 II.C.5

Implementation will include multiple councils, workgroups, and other stakeholders, including the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE), the Outcomes Assessment Workgroup (OAW), the Program Review Workgroup (PRW), The Resource Allocation Council (RAC), the Student Advising Workgroup (SAW), and the Pathways Workgroup (PW). In addition to these focused groups, the participatory governance structure including Academic Senate, administrators, classified staff, and the Associated Students of MJC will all participate; coordinated through College Council. Each of the named workgroups will have specific responsibilities in the Action Projects. Progress and evaluation will be coordinated through the office of Institutional Effectiveness. The progress and integration of the two Action Projects will be accomplished by:

- Regular reporting on activity progress in College Council
- Coordination meetings with the leaders of each workgroup involved in the Action Projects to align implementation efforts
- Formative evaluation of the implementation process to support continuous improvement
- Summative evaluation of the completed projects

Action Project One: Holistic Support of Student Learning and Student Achievement

Identification of the Problem and Action Project

MJC prioritizes and holds itself accountable for the quality of student learning in its courses and programs. In a cycle of continuous improvement throughout the last accreditation period, the College has made major strides in its processes for collecting and reviewing data, including a focus on disaggregated outcome data. Faculty have assessed and mapped course learning outcomes (CLOs) to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). Support areas have mapped Support Service Learning Outcomes (SSLOs) to Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

Disaggregated outcome data is available on the Outcomes Assessment website. With the enhanced ability to review detailed learning outcome data, the College is ready to refine its processes that enable the analysis, improvement, and documentation of program changes, based on review of multiple data sets.

Addressing recommendations from its last Accreditation report, the College implemented a five-year cycle of learning assessment and program review. With the new standard of including disaggregated data in assessment, the College adopted a more robust program review platform, eLumen, and moved to a two-year cycle. Faculty are now able to measure and understand learning outcomes for diverse student groups on a cycle that aligns with curriculum review.

An important next step is to identify processes that incorporate this rich information to improve student learning. With deepened capacity for course assessment, evaluation, and improvement, the College aims to strengthen the processes by which individual and group analysis shape these changes. Evaluation processes that assess, analyze, and document program improvements based on student learning will be solidified to establish a comprehensive and consistent approach to institutional effectiveness. The College has identified a need to strengthen processes that lead to meaningful, relevant analysis of learning and documented improvement of courses and programs in a full cycle of integrated planning.

Desired Goals/Outcomes

For the Action Project of Holistic Support of Student Learning and Student Achievement, three goals are developed that lead to deep institutionalization of the process of evaluation. Each goal includes specific, targeted outcomes:

Goal One: Strengthen the processes that enable faculty to analyze, refine, and document improvement, based on learning outcomes

Outcomes:

1. Established baselines and targets for knowledge of assessment techniques
2. Increased understanding of learning outcomes design and measurement

Goal Two: Provide regular opportunity for substantive and sustained dialog about the refinement of curriculum and pedagogy to increase student learning

Outcomes:

3. Established processes for substantive discussion and evaluation of outcomes assessment leading to program improvement

Goal Three: Institutionalize the integration of outcomes data into planning, resource allocation, and evaluation processes

Outcomes:

4. Increased student learning based on program improvement

To accomplish the goals established for Action Project One, action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and necessary resources are outlined in the table below.

Work Plan Abbreviations:

IE: Institutional Effectiveness

OAW: Outcomes Assessment Workgroup

PDCC: Professional Development Coordinating Committee

PRW: Program Review Workgroup

RAC: Resource Allocation Council

Action Project One Work Plan

Action Project One: Holistic Support of Student Learning				
Goal	Action Steps	Time-line	Responsible Parties	Resources
Goal 1: Strengthen the processes that enable faculty to analyze, refine, and document improvement, based on learning outcomes	Conduct analysis of current level of knowledge of assessment techniques	Fall 2017	Office of IE; Assessment Coordinator	Time and effort
	Review and assess current outcomes reporting processes	Fall 2017	Office of IE; Assessment Coordinator	Time and effort
	Develop a timeline and process steps for deep review of all SLOs	Spring 2018	OAW	Outcomes of data and process analysis
	Plan professional development for: Designing SLOs with meaningful, real-world application Data reporting and analysis Program improvement from learning outcomes	Fall 2018	PDCC	Collaboration w/OAW; Outcomes of data and process analysis; Time & Effort
Goal 2: Provide regular opportunity for substantive and sustained dialog about the refinement of curriculum and pedagogy to increase student learning	Enhance mechanisms for all constituents (including adjunct faculty and students) to engage in dialog about outcomes assessment	Fall 2018	OAW; Academic Senate	Support for discussion events
	Establish a feedback process in program review for peers and administrators to provide comments	Spring 2019	PRW	Visual illustration of feedback process
	Conduct annual program review events to analyze and discuss attainment of ILOs	Fall 2019	PRW	Support for college wide program review event
Goal 3: Institutionalize the integration of outcomes data into planning, resource allocation, and evaluation	Document steps for embedding outcomes data and achievement data in planning, allocation, and evaluation processes	Fall 2018	Office of IE; PRW; OAW; RAC	Time and effort
	Implement, assess, and refine a cycle of integrated planning and evaluation, using learning data	Fall 2019	Office of IE; PRW; OAW; RAC	Formative Assessment; Time & effort
	Publish a timeline and processes for data-informed planning, resource allocation, and evaluation	Fall 2019	Office of IE; PRW; OAW; RAC	Visual illustration of integrated planning model

Action Project Two: Clear Educational Pathways to Improve Student Achievement

Identification of the Problem and Action Project

MJC administrators, faculty, and classified professionals are mindful that clear program choices and targeted student support are needed to help students reach their educational goals. Focused efforts on education planning for individual students and advising toward certificate and degree completion have been a priority in the last several years. Degree and certificate completion rates have increased in the last three years from 1,836 to 2,236, an increase of 400 awards (22% increase). The student population grew by only 360 students during that timeframe (1.5% increase). While progress in completion rates is noted, the College acknowledges there is still work to do to increase the number of students who complete degrees and/or transfer to four-year institutions. Forty-three percent of degree, certificate, and/or transfer-seeking students accomplished their educational goal within six years (2017 Student Success Scorecard). The College set an aspirational goal to increase its completion rate by ten percentage points by 2022 to 53%. In order to accomplish that goal, College constituents are committed to improving the programs and services available to students through the development of a guided pathways model.

The College has engaged in deep review of effective practices that would lead to improved student achievement. In the last eighteen months, MJC has thoroughly explored the model of guided pathways. Several presentations and dynamic discussions occurred about the traditional approach of menu-based options for students compared to clear, but more narrow pathways. Division deans collectively read and discussed *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015), and are now leading readings and discussions of the book with division faculty. Two summer faculty retreats included professional development and faculty discussion of the guided pathways model.

Development of a guided pathways model is a key objective in the newly drafted MJC Education Master Plan. College administrators, College Council, the Academic Senate, and the Board of Trustees have reviewed the ideas embedded in the model and officially declared their support.

Focused educational pathways may mean fewer but more clearly developed choices for students. Instructional faculty and counselors recognize the need to redesign student advising in order to address the challenges associated with meeting the needs of 24,000 students. A guided pathways model will require planning that involves difficult conversations. There is sincere commitment from the Institution that discussions throughout the development process will include broad opportunity for engagement from faculty.

The College recently attended the Achieving the Dream Conference in San Francisco (February, 2017). Twenty-five MJC stakeholders attended, including instructors, counselors, staff members, and administrators. The team focused on workshops about pathways, specifically, the effective use of data, and redesigning student advising. These campus leaders returned with a strengthened commitment to help the College understand the transformative possibilities of guided pathways.

MJC is dedicated to its community and the students who come to learn. They are the first priority. There is clear understanding that too many of the students who enroll never reach their stated educational goals. The College is committed to collegial, collaborative work to develop a pathways model that can be broadly supported by faculty and staff and that will improve student achievement. Over the last two years, the College has expanded capacity in its Student Services division, piloted new approaches in developmental education, and explored guided pathways through campus-wide reading and professional development. These experiences have greatly increased the institutional readiness to take on the work of redesigning ways to assist students in reaching their educational goals.

Desired Goals/Outcomes

For the Action Project of Establishing Clear Educational Pathways for Students, two goals are developed that lead to an institutionalized model of guided pathways. Each goal includes specific, targeted outcomes:

Goal One: Strengthen support networks for student advising (to include a team of specialists, counselors, and advisors)

Outcomes:

1. Established baselines and targets for student success and retention
2. Improved intervention for at-risk students
3. Increased student success and retention rates

Goal Two: Establish entry-level pathways (areas of focus or meta-majors) for students

Outcomes:

4. Published educational pathways with schedules and milestones
5. Increased number of students who declare clear educational choices
6. Increased student completion rates

The two goals established for Action Project Two are closely integrated. Activities for each goal will inform activities of the other. To accomplish the goals in Action Project Two, action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and necessary resources are outlined in the table below.

Work Plan Abbreviations:

IE: Institutional Effectiveness

PDCC: Professional Development Coordinating Committee

PW: Pathways Workgroup

SAW: Student Advising Workgroup

Action Project Two Work Plan

Action Project Two: Clear Educational Pathways to Improve Student Achievement				
Goal	Action Steps	Time-line	Responsible Parties	Resources
Goal 1: Strengthen support networks for student advising (to include a team of specialists, counselors, and advisors)	Analyze student numbers and needs according to individual program majors	Fall 2017	Office of IE	Student enrollment data
	Identify cohort groups of students that align with academic areas	Fall 2017	Dean of IE; Instructional deans; SAW	Program data
	Provide professional development to faculty advisors re: mentoring and student group advising	Summer 2018	PDCC; SAW; counselors	Student need and program data analysis
	Pilot early alert system with faculty, counselors, and specialists	Fall 2017	Counselors; specialists; small group of faculty	Training in Early Alert technology
	Pilot electronic education planner for students	Fall 2017	SAW; Counselors	Training in electronic Ed Plans
	Measure retention, success, and persistence for students in cohorts	Fall 2018, annually	Office of IE	Student outcomes data
Goal 2: Establish entry-level pathways (areas of focus or meta-majors) for students	Analyze program requirements, current division structures, and student course-taking patterns	Spring 2018	Dean of IE; Instructional deans	Enrollment management data; program requirements; division structures
	Develop recommendations for 5 to 7 general discipline areas of focus	Spring 2018	PW; Instructional deans	Time and effort
	Align programs with meta majors	Spring 2018	PW; deans	Time and effort
	Develop orientations and career exploration workshops for each meta-major	Fall 2019	PW; counselors; advisors	Funding for workshop materials
	Develop program plans and schedules for each pathway	Fall 2019	PW; advisors; counselors	Enrollment management software
	Measure retention, success, and persistence for students in pathways	Fall 2020, annually	Office of IE	Student outcomes data

Improvement of Student Learning and Achievement

The purpose of the Quality Focus Essay (QFE) is to outline targeted plans that will improve key elements of Modesto Junior College and increase student learning and achievement. Ideas for the QFE were developed through the process of self-study, and approved by the constituent-based Accreditation Council. The two Action Projects identified by the College provide support for existing institutional efforts to increase student learning and student achievement in specific ways.

First, the Action Projects will strengthen evaluation efforts that measure progress in meeting the College mission and priorities as outlined in the Strategic Directions and Education Master Plan. The increased use of learning and achievement data to drive planning and resource allocation efforts will assure evidence-based decision-making at all levels. As the College increases its reliance on analysis and evaluation of data, implementation of interventions and programs are more likely to improve student outcomes.

Second, increased opportunities for substantive dialog in using student learning and achievement data to inform the redesign of curriculum and advising structures will increase organizational learning and broaden the collaborative contributions of faculty, administrators, students, and classified professionals. These projects require expertise from many levels. The greater the engagement in data analysis and development processes, the greater the motivation, collaboration, and improvement of College structures that help increase student learning and achievement.

Finally, the focused purposes of each Action Plan will increase institutional capacity to:

- Understand and employ student learning and student achievement data in meaningful ways to establish a full cycle of integrated planning
- Establish clear educational pathways for students that include foundational areas of focus and support services at critical milestones

Evaluation of Action Projects

MJC will evaluate progress toward the goals of the QFE and the effectiveness of the developed action steps, timelines, and processes through formative and summative assessment. Evaluation will begin with documenting baseline student learning and achievement data as well as an analysis of internal structures and practices to understand how and where developed plans from the Action Projects will integrate with existing operations. The activities of the QFE will become essential components in institutional practices and the foundation of the College mid-term report.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will coordinate evaluation of the projects, measuring progress of action steps annually. The College will make adjustments and refinements, based on formative assessment, toward the accomplishment of each goal. Summative assessment will measure the identified outcomes of each Action Plan. The College will produce an annual progress report with recommended improvements to action step processes, including:

- Analysis of identified data to identify progress of formative measures
- Identification of integration with existing College processes and areas of change
- Progress summaries from workgroups regarding successes and challenges in plan implementation
- Outlined steps to address areas of improvement

The College President will communicate progress and evaluation of the Action Projects to College Council annually and as needed.

The two Action Project Outcomes will be measured in the following formative and summative ways:

Action Project One Evaluation Plan (Holistic Support of Student Learning)

Action Project One: Formative and Summative Measures by Outcome		
Outcome	Formative Measure	Summative Measure
Established baselines and targets for knowledge of assessment techniques	Methodology for baseline and target data is agreed on by Outcomes Assessment Workgroup	Definitions, baseline, and target data are published
Increased understanding of learning outcomes design and measurement	65% of faculty participate in professional development activities related to SLO development, analysis, and/or application to program improvement	65% of faculty who participate in professional development activities document SLO improvement, analysis, or program improvement
Established processes for substantive discussion and evaluation of outcomes assessment leading to program improvement	75% of faculty participate in program discussions, peer review, or program review parties 75% of administrators participate in peer review or program review parties	75% of programs complete the cycle of evaluation
Increased student learning based on program improvement	75% of programs that complete the cycle of evaluation implement program improvements	55% of programs that undergo a full cycle of evaluation document increased student learning

Action Project Two Evaluation Plan (Clear Educational Pathways)

Action Project Two: Formative and Summative Measures by Outcome		
Outcome	Formative Measure	Summative Measure
Established baselines and targets for student success and retention	Methodology for baseline and target data is agreed on by College Council	Baseline and target data are published Target data align with IEPI goals
Improved intervention for at-risk students	65% of students referred through Early Alert receive support services	Success rates for students referred through Early Alert increase by 3 percentage points
Increased student success and retention rates	75% of students are satisfied with student advising network	Success rates for students who participate in student advising activities increase by 3 percentage points
Published educational pathways with schedules & milestones	Pathways, program schedules, and milestone services are published and shared with students	65% of new students participate in a meta-major orientation
Increased number of students who declare clear educational choices	50% of new students enroll in a meta-major pathway	50% of students in meta-majors enroll in a guided program pathway
Increased student completion rates	65% of students who declare an educational pathway earn 15 credits	53% of students who earn 15 credits complete a certificate, degree, or transfer

Finally, the overarching purpose of the two Action Plans is to increase the applied understanding of the intersection of student learning and achievement evaluation. The College has invested in personnel, technology, and professional development to build capacity in data retrieval, data visualization, and data analysis. MJC is now ready to focus its efforts on evaluating data and applying analysis to program improvements. The Action Plans of Holistic Student Learning and Clear Educational Pathways will increase institutional capacity to improve student learning and its impact on student achievement.

Actionable Improvement Plans



In addition to the projects outlined in the QFE, the College identified several Actionable Improvement Plans (AIP) throughout the Self-Evaluation. These plans combine to establish the deep institutionalization of the process of evaluation. The table below outlines each AIP with a timeline and assigned responsibility. The plans are listed in chronological order of implementation.

Plan	Standard	Timeline	Responsible
Enhance technology training by developing a campus-wide plan for assessing training needs, coordinating targeted professional development through Professional Learning Network (PLN) and campus resources, and evaluating the effectiveness of training.	III.C.4	Spring 2018	College Technology Committee (CTC); PDCC
Strengthen the college system of engaging in, reporting on, and measuring how professional development supports the mission and priorities of the College.	III.A.14	Fall 2018	Professional Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC)
Design evaluation and communication guidelines to strengthen regular review and assessment of governance and decision-making structures.	IV.A.7	Fall 2018	EAV Workgroup; Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE)
Develop an evaluation process to strengthen the planning and implementation of processes, structures, and new projects, including improving the communication of evaluation results to campus stakeholders.	IV.A.1	Fall 2018	Office of IE; EAV Workgroup
Improve evaluation processes to: a) increase capacity to assess/analyze results b) institute a clear cycle of evaluation for College processes and structures c) improve the documentation of evaluation results and improvement plans	I.B.7	Spring 2019	<i>Engaging All Voices</i> (EAV) Workgroup; Office of IE
Build on the structures and processes outlined in the EMP to develop a comprehensive cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation.	I.B.9	Spring 2019	Office of IE
Build on the culture of understanding and discussing data to strengthen the institutionalization of evaluation processes that improve institutional performance.	IV.B.3	Spring 2019	Office of IE