Appendix L: SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) Survey Results

A key part of the Education Master Plan process was an online survey designed to capture perceptions of CCSF’s current and future strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. The survey opened in early January 2014, and closed at the end of March 2014. Six hundred eighty-one (681) responses were received. Responses were analyzed to identify recurring and salient comments. These were then grouped into major overarching categories, and the comments were then summarized to represent the most common themes.

**Strengths**

Strengths are the perceptions of the things that CCSF does well. The question to respondents was: *What is the one thing that you believe CCSF does the best?*

1. **Diversity and Equity**. There is a widely held sentiment at CCSF that diversity and equity are the foundation for the college, and clearly represent core values. The belief is that diversity permeates throughout the curriculum, services offered, and the attitude of the faculty, staff, administrators and students. Diversity is broadly interpreted as being inclusive, embracing and serving a diverse community (i.e., ethnic, socio-economic, age, and educational purpose), as well as offering a diverse array of programs, and courses, both credit and non-credit with a wide variety of services that support the diverse needs of the learners. It was also apparent that respondents are determined to respond to the diverse needs of the community, and to do so in a manner that is equitable, with a particular emphasis on serving underrepresented and disenfranchised populations in the hope of offering life-enhancing experiences.

2. **Instruction**. The great sentiment in this section of the survey was directly related to the quality of instruction. Many highly regard faculty for their subject matter expertise, professionalism, effective teaching methods, dedication to their students and to their profession, their passion for teaching and learning, and compassion for their students. There is widespread agreement about the high quality of teaching, and obvious appreciation by students for the opportunity to learn in such a supportive environment. Continued attention to Student Learning Outcomes work underway at the College will be pivotal to further understanding these impressions.

3. **Access and Opportunity**. Another theme found in this section of the survey was the perception that CCSF excels at providing excellent education at affordable costs to all Bay Area communities. Consequently, this provides opportunities to people who might
opportunities. Providing a range of non-credit ESL classes, and Career Technical Education programs for example, affords the community access to learning the necessary skills to survive, as well as pathways to new and different job or career opportunities. Many commented about the flexible schedule of classes (both day and evening) that makes education more accessible for most students who have jobs and other obligations. In addition, the college offers a variety of support services making college more accessible for students with a variety of needs e.g., those who are underprepared for college, those with special needs, those who are returning to retool for a new job path, and those who are looking for lifelong learning opportunities.

4. **Student-Centered.** This underlying theme of student-centeredness was particularly evident when referring to teaching and learning. The sentiment here is that students are first, and student success (defined in various ways) is what really matters. Most believe this to be the case and have adopted this attitude as they describe the commitment of faculty, staff and administrators who care about the quality of teaching and learning, maintaining a supportive environment for students and the community, as well as the importance of enhancing and transforming lives.

5. **Programs and Courses.** The CCSF learning community (students, faculty, staff, and administrators) is particularly proud of the vast array of programs and courses offered. The diversity of subjects, degrees, and job-training certificates, along with the breadth of noncredit courses (particularly ESL) that lead to future pathways in higher education, employment opportunities, and personal enrichment options, and that make a significant contribution to the college’s mission, and the socio-economic condition of the community.

**Opportunities**

Opportunities are those things that respondents believe that CCSF needs to improve. The question to respondents was: *what one thing do you believe is CCSF’s greatest opportunity for improvement?*

1. **Facilities.** The most frequent response was related to facilities. The most common suggestion was to improve the deteriorating condition of the buildings both internally and externally (particularly at the Ocean campus) and included comments about renovating, painting and cleaning (particularly the bathrooms), as well as improve the lighting, signage, and the campus grounds. Many felt the general condition of facilities to be an embarrassment not only for those who work at CCSF, but for the students, and believe that it may be detrimental to morale. Numerous comments were about completing the new Performance Arts building. There also was some concern regarding
the general safety on campus. A number of requests were also made for a campus smoking ban.

2. **Technology and Infrastructure.** Respondents believe that CCSF lacks the technology needed to function efficiently, teach effectively, and provide the experiences students need to compete in a high tech society. The academic support technology at most locations is lacking or nonexistent and needs upgrading (e.g., smart classrooms, computers, printers, digital media and audio visual equipment), so that students can learn the technology skills they need for the job market. In addition, the infrastructure poses persistent difficulties in extracting information out of the ERP Banner system across the College, which, in turn, prevents staff from performing key functions in an efficient and accurate manner (many transactions remain paper-based). Students also report difficulty with registration and other service functions that might otherwise be streamlined through the use of an improved technological infrastructure. More IT technical support is needed in all areas of the college.

3. **Customer and Support Services.** Students in particular voiced frustration with the poor customer service provided them in the student support services areas including, registration and other matriculation matters (e.g., transcript requests, graduation petition, and counseling). A recommendation made frequently by students was to improve telephone response time and to limit the routing of calls to a minimum. Other recommendations were to improve the way in which student requests are handled, and to generally serving students in a more courteous, more attentive manner. Suggestions were also made to provide support services at all campuses and in the evening (e.g., financial aid, bookstore and counseling) so all students may have access to these services.

4. **Communication and Outreach.** Many comments were made regarding communication and outreach. In particular, the website as the most out-facing marketing tool for CCSF needs substantial improvements in clarity, content, and navigation. Many requests were made for improving communication between faculty, staff and administrators, specifically, clearer, more transparent, and more frequent communication from the administration, and better working relationships among all constituent groups to help improve morale, restore respect, and keep everyone apprised particularly during these difficult times. A number of suggestions were also made for expand marketing efforts to increase enrollments and restore the colleges image throughout the community.

5. **Program Offerings and Student Success.** There were many and varied requests made for the addition of programs and courses (e.g., biotech, dance, and art), and many requested more online courses that would reach community members who are unable to attend class at a physical campus. Both faculty and students expressed concern about the restrictions that the repeatability law has imposed. Requests were made for offering more short-term courses and certificate programs, accelerated classes, learning
communities, clear noncredit to credit pathways, and a larger summer session, all to assist students in meeting their intended goals.

6. **Leadership and Management.** All respondents expressed mixed feelings and beliefs about the college leadership and management, but generally agreed that the college is in need of strong leadership that will lead them to their reaffirmation of accreditation. The general sentiment here is the desire to improve morale first and foremost, and restore respect and trust across all groups. There is a clear and strong interest in rebuilding a trusting environment where collaboration is the way of doing business. Requests for leadership to improve their communication to all college constituents by being more transparent, timely and frequent. Also, for leadership to better manage fiscal matters, be accountable for decisions, and plan strategically.

**Aspirations**

Aspirations include those items that can lead to a desired future for CCSF. Respondents were asked: *what do you believe to be the most important aspect or element of CCSF’s preferred future?*

1. **Excellence.** Most believe that a high quality education is the most important aspect of CCSF’s preferred future. This includes academic excellence through teaching, technology and support services. There is a strong desire to rebuild and restore the College’s reputation, and to strive to be the best. Certainly, there is also interest in a future with full accreditation and increased enrollments. There is also a desire for CCSF to return to its previous vibrancy, contributing to the strength of the community it serves through its diversity of academic and job training programs, support services, and opportunities for lifelong learning.

2. **Access and Success.** Members of the CCSF learning community (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administrators and the general community) believe the college should maintain a comprehensive balance of programs, both credit and non-credit, both academic (transfer, degree) and career technical training, as well as lifelong learning. There is a widely held belief that the College should serve the diverse needs of its community, particularly the underrepresented populations in an effort to help close the achievement gap. Moreover, the desired future for CCSF is to offer opportunities with well-defined pathways to an excellent education that is affordable to all, and meet the needs of the community and the demands of the labor market.

3. **Facilities and Technology.** This is a pervasive theme throughout the survey, and in this section of the survey, there is clear messaging about the dire need to improve the
interior and exterior conditions of the facilities, as well as upgrade the technology. Certainly, the desired future for most includes more state-of-the-art classrooms and academic support technology, as well as a more up-to-date and robust technology infrastructure for general college business operations. Additionally, faculty and staff training are viewed as critical to meeting the demands of a future with more ubiquitous technology.

4. **Inclusive and Collaborative Environment.** One of the more prevalent themes in this section was the desire to improve working relationships among faculty, staff and administrators. The desired future for most consisted of a more inclusive and harmonious environment that is led by effective leaders and managers who are open, honest and transparent. Also, included is an environment that embraces diversity and the challenge of transforming lives. In addition, the desired future for CCSF includes close connections and collaborative efforts with the community (high schools, businesses, neighborhood and community groups) that the College serves.

**Results**

Results are the ways in which CCSF’s desired future actions would be measured.

*Respondents were asked: what do you believe is the one best measure for determining how well goals and future aspirations are achieved?*

1. **Student Outcomes.** The CCSF learning community that responded to the survey (student, faculty, staff, administrators and the general community) agrees that in order to measure progress toward collegewide goals and future aspirations the college must examine student completion in a variety of ways, most of which are currently being measured, e.g., degrees, certificates, transfer, successful course completion, retention, persistence, successful progression through basic skills to college-level English and math, and employment after completing a program or course of study. Most also agreed that student success is a complex concept comprising multiple student goals, and thereby various outcomes. Consequently, the success of community college students needs to be defined and measured in multiple ways, including the aforementioned traditional and mostly indirect performance outcome indicators, as well as the more direct assessments of student learning outcomes at the program and course level, and the evaluation of program effectiveness through ongoing program reviews.

2. **Stakeholder Satisfaction and Perception.** There is widespread agreement on the importance of qualitative data and information (e.g., survey, focus groups, and interviews). Many believe that students should be asked more regularly about their satisfaction with the quality of their learning experience at CCSF. Most believe that the
value of education is as personal as it is varied in purpose and cannot be captured and reported via the traditional indirect measures (e.g., transfer, completion, awards). Instead, students should be given the opportunity to share their testimonies of how their educational experiences transformed or enhanced their lives. In addition to this, students and the community at large should be asked about their education and training needs. Employee surveys were also a strong recommendation, as a way of informing and helping manage the needs and the climate at CCSF.

3. **Enrollment Trends.** Tracking and analyzing the various enrollment trends (e.g., collegewide, program, high school graduates, and the SF adult population) was recommended as one of the key ways for measuring how well the college is meeting its intended goals and future aspirations. While most note that enrollment trends may in part be an artifact of various external factors that the college has no control over (e.g., employment, state allocation, and the economy), most agree that effective enrollment strategies translate into robust enrollments, and progress toward intended goals.

4. **Integrated Planning and Budgeting.** Numerous comments were made regarding the importance of maintaining a balanced budget, and planning strategically in order to do so. There is also the belief that healthy reserves and a balanced budget are good measures of how well the college is positioned to achieve its intended goals and future aspirations.

5. **Accreditation Reaffirmation.** Full reaffirmation was mentioned numerous times in this section of the survey as a measure of success and achievement toward collegewide goals and future aspirations.