WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW ABOUT PCC’S CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY?
2015 In-service Breakout Session

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How would you describe PCC’s connection to the community at large? Who are our communities?

• The college serves as a neighbor to the communities at all of its sites.
• There is an importance to building relationships with businesses; our students, and the businesses, will prosper from this effort long-term.
• Stay local and focus on our immediate neighborhoods— we can see real impact here.
• We’re also very good at taking programs into the community and seeing them take root and grow.
• Communities we cater to: high school students, those looking for career advancement, community organizations, volunteer organizations and more. These audiences can utilize PCC facilities, too. This creates lifelong learning opportunities and relationships.
• All of the communities PCC serve have multiple ways in which they use PCC and how they value us. For instance, other audiences are high school students with dual credit, community education, veterans, small business development centers, the online community. For this last group, we need to improve the structure of resources we offer.
• But is this a good model? To do everything for everyone? Are we offering too much?
• PCC is already a community. And if, because of our size, we don’t know everything about PCC, how can the greater community at large understand us?
• If we, as the PCC community, better understand who we are, we’ll be better ambassadors.
• Seniors (as in senior citizens) are an audience we need to keep in mind.
• People come to PCC for multiple reasons: affordability, quality of education, a greater variety of courses that can be taken, resources and support systems, etc.
• We are training the future workforce – so why is business not reciprocating to the degree that we need them to?
• We need to do a better job at active listening with the community at large. And then we need to be prepared to act upon recommendations. This takes bravery, courage.
How do you think the PCC-community connection is different from other colleges and universities?

- We are truly in the community – PCC is everywhere, in all its many sites.
- PCC is more welcoming than other institutions.
- PCC does well because it finds the individual and meets his/her needs at the point at which the student benefits.
- Because we serve such a large district, we’re already different than many other educational institutions. Unlike many universities with one main location, PCC is in a variety of locations. We are a multitude of campuses and centers.
- Because we’re so large, there’s no specific focus for us, or any one main hub. We have an awesome basketball team – but does the team resonate for everyone? Sports can be a unifier, especially to attract alumni. Can we build something for our alumni, to create that energy that draws them in? How do we create community on our campuses when we don’t have a built-in community, like with dormitories?
- PCC creates a safe place for our students, many of whom are coming from home environments that aren’t necessarily “safe spaces.” We enable them to feel at home.
- PCC offers small classes. This is a great selling point – plus we have great teachers.
- People come to PCC with different goals and for different reasons. Lifelong learners, high schools students, degree seekers, et. al. – they all need attention.
- We’re churning out good students to employers, but we need to improve their college readiness upon arrival. We also need guidance for our younger students, those in college for the first time (traditional college-going students); we need to advise them about budget and financial responsibility so they avoid debt.
- PCC has a level of accountability and takes this responsibility seriously.

How would you describe PCC’s reputation in our community? What are we known for?

- PCC enjoys a good reputation, especially with its health care professionals programs. The larger health care organizations – and larger companies overall – know they’ll be able to make great hires with PCC students who have been taught great skills here.
- The key is to find the balance between our students and their needs and the communities we serve and their needs.
- Do we give out college information in a way that’s easy and helpful? For example, we used to have telephone operators but no longer. We’re trying to strike that balance between live employee and computers and technology that is most efficient and helpful. But we need to be mindful of the entire community we serve – so that all of our students can access information they need and that they can understand.
- Community education—great program for variety of ages: children, young adults, elders.
What are your thoughts on PCC’s community-relations efforts? What do we do well now and upon what can we improve?

• Marketing has really amped up its efforts. We hear a lot about our students and that’s important, but we should also hear that about our employees – I’d love to hear more about what our staff members are doing, working on, etc.

• We see PCC everywhere – on buses, billboards, etc. But what is the full breadth of what PCC offers? ESOL, Community Education, etc. We need to see this reflected in marketing efforts.

• Too much marketing attention is focused on high school graduates. CLIMB Center doesn’t get exposure, nor do the “boomers.”

• Standardize information between campuses, centers. Make it seamless.

• PCC’s marketing outreach has grown tremendously over the years, but we only have four people reaching out to all high schools for the whole college. We also have a very small communications team responsible for many things beyond advertising.

• Improve the website, make it flashy so it catches the eye. Market Community Education classes – this reflects the breadth and scope of what PCC offers. A lot of our students are here not because they need another degree; rather, they’re here to brush-up their skills, improve their tools – make this a little more present.

• We need more connections with workplaces in the local area. With these kinds of partnerships, we (faculty) can work what employers would like to see more of into our curriculum. What do employers want/need? How are we incorporating this feedback into General Education classes? We need to offer students a more holistic education – one that makes sense for the big picture beyond PCC.

• Our grassroots community relations is very good. We could improve on generating more publicity surrounding the invited speakers we have coming to our campuses. We could improve on our crisis communications, as well as social media outreach.

• Don’t forget our senior citizen population base – it’s growing, and we need ongoing outreach with them.