MEMORANDUM

October 12, 2020

TO: George Frasier and Marcie Sims, Co-Chairs, Green River College Strategic Planning Steering Committee for the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

FR: MIG, Inc.

RE: Summary of Equity-Centered Strategic Visioning and Planning Steering Committee Meeting #1, September 29, 2020

In attendance:

Steering Committee:

- George Frasier, Vice President of College Advancement, Co-Chair
- Marcie Sims, English Faculty, Co-Chair
- Marwa Almusawi, Director of ODEI
- Adam Beals, IP Advisor
- Shirley Bean, VP of Business Administrative Services / HR
- Deb Casey, VP of Student Affairs
- Tsai-En Cheng, Dean of Branch Locations
- Trustee Elaine Chu
- Dani Crivello-Chang, Dean of Campus Life
- Philip Denman, Senior Director of College Relations
- Fia Eliasson-Creek, Director of IE
- Rolita Ezeonu, VP of Instruction
- Quintana Erwin, student
- Jamie Fitzgerald, Transfer Dean
- Nancy Kremer, Chair of College Council
- Leslie Kessler, Chair of IC
- David Larsen, Dean of Enrollment and Completion
- Michela (Muhan) Li, Associated Student Government, Vice President
- Camella Morgan, Executive Director of IT / CIO
- Trustee Sharonne Navas
- Rob Olsen, Director of Facilities
- Kim Olson, IT Help Desk
- LeaAnn Simpson, Faculty BTAC
- Kyle Stevenson, Faculty History & Political Science (adjunct / associate)

- Wendy Stewart, VP of International Programs and Extended Learning
- Matt Swenson, Grants Director
- Su Hoon Tan, SA Director of Auxiliary Services Student Engagement
- Amanda Walsh, Faculty Transitional Studies and Wellness
- Allison Warner, Director of Career and Advising Services
- Sidney Weldele-Wallace, CTE Dean

MIG, Inc.: Daniel Iacofano, Kate Joncas, Jamillah Jordan, Maria Mayer, Noé Noyola

I. Welcome and Introductions

On September 29, 2020, Green River College (GRC or the College) hosted the first of eight planned meetings of the Equity-Centered Strategic Visioning and Planning Steering Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the members of the Steering Committee and process facilitators, MIG, Inc.; to provide an overview and discuss the strategic planning process purpose, expectations and desired outcomes, and proposed timeline and activities; to engage in discussion to better understand the context for the process; and to present and discuss the proposed approach for the Equity Visioning Forum.

The agenda and presentation provided for the meeting are included in Appendix A, "Meeting Materials."

To begin the meeting, Steering Committee Co-Chairs George Frasier and Marcie Sims welcomed all participants, briefly reviewed the agenda, and then asked everyone to introduce themselves by stating their name, what part of the College they represent, and a short statement of what they're feeling grateful for today.

II. Project Overview

Daniel Iacofano, MIG, Inc., lead facilitator for the strategic planning process, continued with an overview of the strategic planning process. He emphasized that MIG are serving as facilitators and guides for the process, but that the plan is not being created from the top-down—it will be entirely driven and created by the College community to shape a Plan unique to GRC. He explained the rationale for the strategic planning process: to respond to the dynamic and ever-changing needs of all the people served by the College; and to ensure engagement, creation and ownership of the Strategic Plan by the entire College community. He reviewed the changing demographics of GRC's service area and how one of GRC's major challenges is to close the existing opportunity gap for students drawn from these newly diversified populations, many of whom are first generation college students—ensuring equal access to a quality postsecondary education and the support necessary to help them succeed. The process has been laid out to reach and include everyone, with considerations of equity always at the center,

and will use a variety of methods to support the hard work and deep, productive conversations that will be necessary to create a plan that truly works for all. He defined the purpose of a strategic plan, and how an Action Plan and performance measures will be developed to implement Strategic Plan goals and assess success in reaching them. Finally, he explained that although the planning team will tap into other sources, the Steering Committee will ultimately define these measures of success, and getting some initial suggestions is one of the goals of this initial meeting. The Steering Committee will be the common through-line throughout the entire process, helping guide and move it forward along every step of the way.

Proposed Process and Activities

Jamillah Jordan, MIG, Equity Visioning Project Manager, showed a schedule graphic that lays out the structure of the planning process. The process is designed to be hands-on, dynamic, and highly interactive with both internal and external stakeholders, both on campus and in the broader community. The process will unfold in three phases. Phase 1, Understanding the Context, will include a variety of opportunities to provide input; development of a Communications Plan including a dedicated planning page on the College website; and research and data-gathering to inform an environmental scan, a review of best and promising practices to promote equity in higher education, and an assessment of GRC's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and desired results. Phase 2, Shaping the Vision for the Future, will include the Equity Visioning Forum on October 23; a Strategic Planning Charette in early December, which will provide an opportunity to engage with a broad array of stakeholders and help ensure that everyone feels ownership of the Plan; and creation of a Strategic Plan Framework and Working Groups to meet from January through March 2021, with topics built on input and ideas from the earlier phases of the process and from the Steering Committee. Phase 3, Developing the Strategic Plan, will involve an Administrative Draft Plan developed in April 2021; providing online opportunities for the entire College community to comment on the Draft Plan through May 2021; and incorporation of that input to create a Final Draft Plan, which will be vetted by the Board of Trustees, with a Final Strategic Plan expected to be complete by the end of August 2021. Jamillah expressed that the planning team is excited to leverage Committee members' best thinking and lift up their ideas to create a strong final document.

Expectations and Desired Outcomes

Steering Committee members provided the following suggestions regarding their expectations and desired outcomes for the process:

- It's important to gather voices that aren't at the table, including empowering students to share their thoughts. Consider innovative ways to gather information from the entire student body, including non-traditional students, English language learners, etc. to guide decisions that affect the students.

- The College is community and industry-oriented; hopefully we can connect with community members so that all within the service area understand and can contribute to this effort.
- Hopefully innovative solutions, different from what other colleges are trying, can be found to help move GRC forward.
- The Communications Plan will be very important. The College Council can assist in its role as a platform for all voices to be heard, especially those who don't know where else to go. It's crucial to allow all areas of the college to participate as they wish to, and reach out to invite and encourage the voices of those who may be more reluctant to come forward; seek methods to make this easier.
- Committee members would also appreciate an opportunity to provide feedback after meetings, once they've had a chance to review items and process their responses.

III. Understanding the Context

Breakout Group Discussions

Steering Committee members were split into three small breakout groups to discuss their responses to the following questions. These same questions are being posed to everyone to ensure that the process is consistent for all and all input can be meaningfully correlated.

1. How would you define and measure success for this planning effort?
2. What do you perceive as the greatest issues, strengths and challenges associated with developing the GRC Strategic Plan?
3. What are the key opportunities we can leverage in building the plan?
4. How can we further embed equity in the process and all aspects of our College?
5. Focus Group Input: What voices do we want to hear from and how can we connect with them?

Report-Outs

The three breakout groups provided brief reports summarizing the results of their discussions, as follows:

- *Group 1*:
  - Defining success for the planning effort:
    - Enables anyone connected with the College is able to do their best.
    - It's important to remember the intersectionality of equity, how it involves various identities in addition to race (gender, ability, etc.), and expands through all issues; equity must be all-inclusive.
    - Institutional data would demonstrate that students and faculty are more diverse and that completion rates are improving.
  - Issues and challenges:

- o Getting people to engage
- o Negotiating the divide between those who have a trust barrier from previous negative experience with College administration and those who are new to the College and excited about the process.
- o Trauma-informed practices are important in outreach. The planning team must understand how to help those who may have been traumatized by prior experiences feel safe to participate in the planning process.
  - ▪ Key strengths and opportunities:
    - o Opportunity to get more students involved. It's important to understand the full spectrum of student groups.
    - o Talk to alumni, juniors and seniors in K-12 feeder schools to understand what they think college is like, as well as what encourages students to choose, or discourages them from choosing, to attend Green River.
  - ▪ Embedding equity: The definition of equity must incorporate all definitions. Ask each department to talk about how they would operationalize on a daily basis to make equity a centerpiece of their work and consider how to maintain and sustain it.

- • *Group 2:*
  - ▪ Defining success for the planning effort:
    - o Maintain transparency in communication. Many feel "late to the party;" be intentional about including them early and often and on a continuing basis.
    - o Use language that's meaningful and clear for all at the College.
    - o The student body has become more diverse, in line with community demographics; faculty must evolve to match this diversity.
  - ▪ Issues and challenges:
    - o Consider how all can stay genuinely connected in a virtual world during and post-pandemic. This makes it even more challenging to be inclusive.
    - o Feeling "late to the conversation" is a recurring theme: ensure that all feel part of the process.
    - o The College culture and history has been shrouded by the lack of trust created during the previous administration, and this prevents earnest engagement. It will be a challenge to move forward and earn trust through transparency and communication. It will be necessary to shift from defensiveness and finger-pointing to a sense of working together.
  - ▪ Key strengths and opportunities:
    - o The College has a lot of long-time employees, which speaks to a strong identity and connection to the mission.

- o The ongoing conversation at the College around diversity, equity and inclusiveness represents over 25 years of work. Celebrate, uplift and build on that.
  - o The College is well-resourced and financially healthy, so can afford to invest resources in this effort.
  - o Many good supports for students have been added recently, such as the benefits hub and affinity groups which help encourage a sense of belonging.
  - ▪ Embedding equity:
    - o Must consider how to embed equity in a global, non-siloed way in breadth and depth.
    - o Alternative modes of providing input and accessing educational materials are essential.
    - o It's crucial to fully engage BIPOC and community groups.
    - o Consider how to address language and cultural barriers. Be proactive about being inclusive.
    - o Ensure that students and faculty at branch campuses have the same amount of support as those on the main campus, and that they are engaged in the planning process.
  - ▪ Focus group input: They have a long list which will be provided to the team separately. It includes Chambers of Commerce, the housing authority, representatives of all kinds of students, front-line staff, etc.

- Group 3:
  - ▪ Defining success for the planning effort:
    - o This group focused on the pragmatic. Consider how this document will look; it has to be dynamic, updatable, and easily used by different people in a variety of interfaces.
    - o The Plan must provide guidance for implementing it in our work.
    - o The Plan must be easily and regularly revisited to ensure there is congruency with activities actually taking place.
    - o Ensure that data is front and center so everyone feels it is driving the decision-making.
  - ▪ Issues and challenges:
    - o Planning fatigue—it will be challenging to keep people engaged and maintain momentum–especially students who are out of here in two years. How to communicate to everyone that this planning effort is about them and an important piece of their future?
    - o Responding to external pressures that are hard to predict, such as the political climate.

- o Creating "brave space" for difficult discussions. How do we challenge each other in a way that's respectful and constructive, and communicate to all that we want their feedback?
  - o Jargon is a challenge. Use clear language to ensure document can be understood by all.
- Key strengths and opportunities:
  - o There are already a lot of great initiatives on campus. How can those be taken to scale, and what should be prioritized? Note that if programs are not scalable and/or are not chosen to be prioritized, it could create conflict.
  - o There has been a lot of discussion about equity; it is already well imbued into the College dynamic.
  - o Leveraging this critical historical moment and building on the momentum of current movements for equity.
  - o Data is another key strength.
  - o The College's people are also fundamentally its strength. Many have been here a long time and hold significant institutional knowledge. However, that's also a challenge as many feel they've "been there, done that." We must consider how to engage people in a way that's new and exciting.
  - o The successful reaccreditation process just completed.
  - o There are a huge range of ideas for improvements under discussion.
- Embedding equity: add a social equity lens in everything we do. Ask the right questions and make sure it's front and center in every decision and all that is part of the college.
- Focus group input:
  - o Internal students, prospective or outside students, and the outside community.
  - o Black and brown males, Native American / Pacific Islanders communities and other underheard or underserved communities in the area.
  - o Include trusted voices, trusted mentors.
  - o Consider how we can keep bringing people into the discussion. Work with leaders of student affinity groups, IP and ASGRC students, various other constituent voices, and CBOs working with basic skills studies—particularly Spanish and Sikh communities near campus.

Full notes from the discussions, as recorded in a Google doc during the breakout groups, are included in Appendix B, "Meeting Results."

IV. Proposed Approach for Equity Visioning Forum

Jamillah presented the proposed approach for the Equity Visioning Forum to be held on October 23, 2020 from 12:30-3:30 p.m. on Zoom. She noted that this planning process

provides a unique opportunity to lift up ideas for further embedding equity in all areas of the College. She described some of the existing barriers to student completion and closing racial equity gaps at the College, and reviewed initial recommendations for equity-centered solutions. She reviewed the preliminary design for the Forum, which is planned to be interactive, hands-on and engaging, and help explore the various imperatives for a racial equity focus; discuss needs, challenges, strengths and opportunities; and identify initial recommendations to include in the Strategic Plan. An initial list of participant categories was provided; Steering Committee members were encouraged to add to it. Committee members provided the following input about the design of the Forum:

- Important to draw a larger group of stakeholders in to help develop a shared vocabulary for defining equity. The communications plan should include flyers and other methods to share common language and definitions so all are on the same page.
- It is very important to ensure that less-heard voices get an opportunity to provide input.
- It's great that the Forum is focused on student needs. Once we've created a definition of equity, ask the students what makes them feel that the College is or is not equitable, and what can be done to improve?
- Consider what resources can be provided in advance to prepare people to enter the "brave spaces" for difficult conversations. Provide basic guidelines and agreements to help make them feel safe.
  - Talk to existing equity groups on campus, e.g., Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI), Green River Diversity Council (GDEC), and Instructional Diversity Committee (IDC), about other resources that people can review (relatively quickly) beforehand. (Jamillah noted that an interview with the ODEI and GDEC teams will take place next week.)

V.   Next Steps

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will take place on Monday, October 19, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. The agenda includes discussion of the Environmental Scan and the Equity Forum. George and Marcie thanked all for their valuable contributions and attention throughout a long meeting, and requested assistance from Steering Committee members in identifying and inviting participants for internal, external and student focus groups, as well as sharing information about the process with colleagues.