

A Vision for WCJC Campus Infrastructure in 2030

This document attempts to articulate the strategic vision for WCJC campus infrastructure and facilities based upon discussions held at the Board of Trustees' strategic workshop. Once coordination of the document with the board confirms that it captures in broad strokes the shared vision for board members, the envisioning committee will begin to flesh-out specific action items flowing from this vision and the mechanisms and timelines for measuring progress. These will, in turn, be presented to the whole Board before adoption and implementation.

The Purpose and Approach for Developing this Vision

This vision statement will be used to provide clear guidance and priorities from the board regarding the college's investments in facilities through 2030. This document is not a strategic plan and, in fact, assumes the administration's five-year strategic plan discussed at the workshop will be adopted and implemented. Although the *envisioning* process uses a ten-year time horizon, that does not mean the vision can be held static for ten years. The vision for campus growth and the priorities should be revisited every two years to three years to consider new information and developments and to evaluate whether we are, in fact, aligning our strategy and implemented actions with this vision.

The Purpose: The purpose of this vision is to develop a statement of the board's priorities in positioning the college for the future that can be used by the administration for planning. In other words, *it is a vision statement*, not a plan. This document imagines what the board thinks "success" for the college should look like in 2030 in terms of campus development, but it focuses on where we want to be, not how to get there. Planning actions will be addressed by the committee and the administration once most of the Board agrees on the vision.

Uncertainty Increases the Need for Board Priorities. While many factors are beyond our control, some realities that will shape our future are knowable. Funding sources, population growth (inside and outside the taxing district), shifting demand for certain types of courses and programs, etc. are not only *subject* to change but are, in fact, *constantly changing*. Frustration over the limits on our ability to predict how things will change over a period of ten years can lead to neglecting long-term goals and "muddling through" year to year. While some issues can *only* be tackled year to year, this process assumes that understanding the major forces affecting our environment in the long-term and adjusting to these new realities--even a little faster or a little earlier than we otherwise would have--will pay important dividends for the college.

Some of the uncertainties we face change the landscape for *all* community colleges and some are unique to WCJC. Developments like the pandemic, new governmental funding streams, or the changing face of on-line programs affect the entire sector. We will rely heavily on our associations and partners to help us keep-up with the adjustments these changes demand. This

envisioning process will focus on *keeping up with the uncertainties and changes that are unique to our college*, such as dramatically uneven growth in the service area.

Key Challenges and Opportunities:

Students will seek an even wider set of delivery options in the future, and this creates both opportunities and competitive challenges. The college does not have to be a "first mover" in responding to these needs, but the speed of adjusting the range, quantity and quality of our offerings will greatly affect future enrollment. Actively sensing challenges and opportunities associated with shifting demand or demographic trends adds value, however, only when we use that information to drive changes. *This vision for facilities is tied to all other strategic initiatives because the ability to adjust with agility requires appropriate and flexible facilities and robust and reliable technology, both of which require long-term planning.*

There is a significant "underlap" between WCJC's tax district and its service area, with the overwhelming population of the service area residing outside the tax district. The release of 2020 census data confirms that Fort Bend County, which already dwarfs the rest of the service area in population, is continuing to grow at a much faster rate. The economic dynamism of Fort Bend will create significantly increased demand for both academic transfer programs and vocational programs that fit the needs of an urban area. This document assumes that staying abreast of the needs of students and the business community in Fort Bend is not only a strategic priority for the students and communities we serve, but essential to protecting the integrity of the WCJC system of campuses in an increasingly competitive environment. Failure to meet this demand threatens programs on other campuses as the Houston metropolitan area reaches further into our service area and as the I-69 transportation corridor provides easier access by students in our service area to programs in the Houston area.

Finally, this document does not assume that areas of Fort Bend outside the WCJC tax district would choose to join the tax district if the question were put to their voters. While this might be possible and could be explored with individual districts. Failure to join the tax district does not mean that governmental entities could not assist in the development of facilities and programs, but that these would likely have to be funded as budget items rather than direct *ad valorem* taxing.

WCJC Campuses in 2030

WHARTON CAMPUS:

In 2030, the Wharton campus should remain the beating heart of the WCJC system.

The original vision of the college was to provide community college opportunities for the students of Wharton County, later expanded to surrounding rural and semi-rural areas. Unlike the rest of the service area, taxpayers in Wharton County and Needville have long supported this vision, and the college is as important to the health of these communities and to their student populations as it ever was. The fact that other parts of the service area are growing rapidly in no way diminishes the need for a vibrant community college servicing these areas.

The Wharton campus will not only continue to house the administrative offices for the college but will continue to exploit the significant investment that has been made in facilities at the campus to serve as the center for the arts and sports.

SUGARLAND:

Over the next ten years, we must secure, protect, enhance, and deepen our relationship with the University of Houston on the Sugarland campus.

The issue of whether to build facilities in Sugarland has arisen many times in recent years. While there would be advantages to having our own WCJC building in Sugarland, we do not now own land there. Committing to a building would first require deciding on whether to (1) build on the UH campus in a long-term lease arrangement with the University, (2) purchase separate land and build elsewhere, or (3) re-purpose an existing building. The first two options would require finding tens of millions in financing or grants.

Beyond the costs and the questions regarding financing the investment, the board is not convinced that building a WCJC building on either the UH campus or in a separate location would represent an improvement over the current situation. While we can never really "own" a building on the UH campus, leaving the UH campus has significant downsides. The downsides of greatest concern to the Board are losing the synergy between UH and WCJC programs and losing the attractiveness (to students) of attending classes on what they see as a four-year college campus.

As we consider this relationship, it is important to bear in mind that while there are mutual benefits to the relationship, having no building of our own makes us dependent on UH in a way that UH is not dependent of WCJC. Thus, we cannot take our current relationship and space allocation for granted. We need to solidify our long-term arrangement with UH where we can.

The Board needs to better understand how UH sees the benefits of the relationship and how they would prefer we use space on the Sugarland on campus.

In sum, the ideal situation for Sugarland in 2030 would be to continue to have a synergistic relationship with UH on their campus in which there is a good mutual understanding and a long-term commitment from UH that gives the WCJC administration the ability to adjust to new requirements and demand. If UH cannot commit to such an arrangement, of course, other options should be actively explored.

RICHMOND:

Richmond campus should be the primary focus of the college for new academic and vocational offerings through 2030, including acquiring or building new buildings, if necessary, to offer new programs and meet the growing population in Fort Bend and shifting demand.

The Board sees Richmond as the critical campus for staying ahead of growth in Fort Bend. The Richmond campus represents the intersection of three positive factors (1) land we own, (2) rapid and increasing growth and (3) a high and increasing demand for vocational training and certification in many fields, especially health care.

If this vision statement is adopted, the most important next step would be to gather facts and talk to important stakeholders to develop a plan to repurpose or develop new facilities in Richmond, particularly in vocational health care and other high demand areas.

BAY CITY:

The Bay City campus is a unique arrangement and a model for cooperation with an active city government, chamber of commerce, and local industry. We should be alert to (and actively engage) other potential industrial partners to assist in providing relevant equipment or programs. Lessons from Bay City could be applied in new areas as well.

As in Sugarland, we cannot take the relationships that have made the Bay City campus successful for granted. The college and the board need to actively work to understand the goals of these partners and take actions whenever required to ensure we are meeting them.