



## **MEMORANDUM**

November 18, 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 Visioning Forum, October 23, 2020

### **I. Introduction**

In June 2020, Green River College (GRC or the College) launched a collaborative and inclusive strategic planning process to ensure the college delivers on its mission, as well as its commitment to opportunity and equitable student success. The Equity-Centered Strategic Plan process represents an important time in the College's history that will have a significant impact on reaching the College's goal of closing equity gaps in student access, retention, and completion.

As part of the strategic planning process, Green River College hosted the Equity Visioning Forum (Forum) on October 23, 2020. The purpose was to discuss and brainstorm specific ideas that will advance the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism at GRC. Over 200 individuals including students, staff, faculty, and administration participated in the Equity Visioning Forum.

A digital recording of the Forum can be [viewed here](#). The agenda and presentation provided for the meeting are included in Appendix A.

### **II. Meeting Format**

The Equity Visioning Forum was three-hour, college-wide event that brought together students, faculty, staff, classified professionals, Steering Committee members and other

college partners to share input and inform the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. This interactive event was conducted virtually using the Zoom platform.

Participants reviewed the approach and timeline for the planning process, key findings from the stakeholder interviews, Steering Committee meetings and other engagement activities, and the emerging Equity Framework. In addition, participants engaged in small group breakouts facilitated by MIG, Inc (Consultant Team) and GRC faculty and staff to do the following:

- **Review draft definition of equity** for Green River College and propose modifications as desired;
- **Address the opportunity statement** for the assigned group and identify specific actions, processes, policies, and programs; and,
- **Identify how success would be measured** and what metrics and tracking mechanisms would be used for each proposed action, including qualitative and quantitative measures.

Following the breakout discussions, a reporter from each group shared the key themes and results from their conversation with the full group. Steering Committee Co-Chairs George Frasier and Marcie Sims of GRC closed the Equity Visioning Forum by sharing how participants can stay involved and the next steps in the planning process.

### **III. Breakout Discussion Groups: Key Findings**

In the months leading up to the Forum, a draft definition of equity had emerged from discussions with the Board of Trustees, the Steering Committee, and through interviews and focus groups with members of the campus community. In addition, six key areas of opportunity to embed equity at the College have been identified. The draft definition of equity and these six areas of opportunity provided the organizing framework for the forum. A synopsis of the input generated during these group discussions and written comments provided by participants are summarized and presented below:

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## **Draft Definition of Equity**

*Every single person obtains what they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their educational goals.*

## **Suggested Modifications**

### **Suggested revisions to the current equity definition.**

- Every single ~~person~~ **individual** obtains what they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their **personal**, educational **and career** goals.
- Every single person **receives the support and services** they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their ~~educational~~ goals.
- Every single person obtains what they need at Green River College **when they need it** to be successful in meeting their educational goals.
- Every single person obtains what they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their educational **and life** goals **in a supportive environment**.
- Every single person obtains ~~why~~ they need at Green River College to meet their educational goals **and to be successful in their life**.
- Every ~~single~~ person obtains what they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their educational goals.
- Every ~~single~~ person obtains what they need at Green River College to be successful in meeting their educational goals **and their personal growth and development**.

### **Proposals to replace with an entirely different equity definition**

- Every single person receives or has access to success regardless of their circumstances or what they walk in the door with.
- Empower every person to achieve their goals by utilizing their strengths and the support of the Green River College community.
- The college community, faculty, staff, and the community coming together to empower each other to help the students accomplish their goals.
- We meet the students where they are at in order to get them to where they want to go

- To foster an environment where thorough collaboration people empower one another to obtain what they seek at Green River College to be successful in meeting their goals.
- We want to understand what you are about to be able to meet your unique version of success together.
- Facilitate environments that foster collaboration for people to empower one another and to be successful in meeting their goals.
- Every person is provided personal opportunity and equitable support from Green River College in pursuit of their academic success and life goals
- Every single person obtains what they need at Green River College to maximize your potential and be successful in meeting your educational, career, and personal goals.

## Other Considerations for Modifying the Definition

### Our equity statement needs to be more aspirational, exciting, and motivating

- What are we working toward with this? What do we want to achieve for students and employees? We need this statement to be a rallying cry, a "Big, hairy, audacious" goal.
- Everett CC, Statement on Five Dimensions of Equity--not just participation but also inclusion (<https://www.everettcc.edu/administration/president/5-dimensions-equity>)
- We added "maximizing potential" to make it less about just getting a product in a transactional way.
- Broad definition may be too broad – it doesn't drive action or inspiration
- This definition is more transactional than transformational. Is it getting to the heart of what we want to accomplish?

### Concern expressed that faculty and staff appear to be left out of the definition; and it is not clear what "community" encompasses

- Need clarification as to whether this applies to staff, faculty, etc.
- The statement should be inclusive of staff, faculty, and community in addition to students
- Green River community? Does this mean everyone one who has contact with GRC? Not sure this addresses equity
- "Every single person" - what does that mean? does that mean staff and community? If it's for every community member it could be professional and educational.
- What do you think of the broad idea of "every person" versus identifying specific groups?

**Statement is seen as too vague and broad; lacks directness, need a more rigorous statement with more specific intentionality; and does not strike the right tone**

- It has no teeth. Needs more directness and specificity with intentionality.
- Statement is too vague. Does not say anything about equity and inclusion.
- Needs more explicit language (Does not acknowledge that Black Lives Matter). This definition has undertones of All Lives Matter because it is too general.
- Provide an overarching statement and then list specific bullet items for specific groups
- Not a fan of 30 thousand foot (view); tone seems too political/institutional and feels out of touch

**Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) 2019 Vision Statement repeatedly cited as a good example:**

*Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.*

**The statement needs to take more direct aim at the problem of institutional, systemic racism and the need for social justice.**

- Should include a statement of anti-racism, a commitment to social justice, and a challenge to institutional inequality.
- When defining equity, there needs to be a critical dimension related to the work of dismantling structural racism and an accountability dimension related to achieving proportional outcomes.
- “Equity and equity-mindedness accept that it is whiteness—not the achievement gap—that produces and sustains racial inequality in higher education. The authentic exercise of equity and equity-mindedness requires explicit attention to structural inequality and institutionalized racism and demands system-changing responses.” (Estela Mara Bensimon, 2018)
- To make sure that the definition of equity strives to identify and eliminate barriers that students have in an attempt to meet their educational goals.
- There should be a specific mention of social justice, but we are uncertain how to phrase it specifically. As now written, it reads more “non-racist”, and not “anti-racist”

**The equity statement is too narrowly focused on the pursuit of educational goals to the exclusion of other critical, personal dimensions for students and the college overall.**

- Its more about the experience than just getting an education.
- To be successful into their career as well as education – (add) something that encompasses (that broader goal)
- We need to ensure that GRC has an environment where the student feels a sense of belonging and safety

- Do we want to be so narrow? Perhaps include educators providing life skills, making well-rounded, personal goals
- Learning from diverse backgrounds through opportunities the college brings, not just the education
- Future-ready
- How this can maybe connect or dovetail with the colleges learning outcomes
- Expanding on educational goals

**Need to consider the implications of the terminology the statement is now using; revise to more carefully convey our message, while also making it more student friendly in tone**

- "Obtain" puts it on the student; maybe use "provide" or "given" instead.
- "The word "obtain" contains some problematic connotations. It implies that students are incomplete without (this). It isn't honoring everything that is being brought to the table by the individual students.
- What does the college PROVIDE rather than what the student has to OBTAIN?
- As written, it somewhat seems that "they" get from "GRC" rather than "GRC" provides for "they". I'm thinking about the direction of equity, which should go both ways, not just what every single person "gets" from GRC. How does GRC offer that equity?
- Where does the ownership belong to on this definition? Does it belong to the students to adapt to the definition? Or do the workers adapt to the students?
- Language that is more student friendly
- We changed some instances of "their" to "your" to convey a friendlier voice.

**Communicate what equity means to us and that how it is achieved will vary depending on the different need and goals of our students**

- Should recognize that different students need different treatment to access the same opportunities.
- Equity means to be as fair as possible to everyone
- Who has the responsibility to provide the info on top of the students obtaining it?
- Our department is focused on preparing students to enter their field
- Student - everyone is able to feel comfortable to advocate for their needs and have resources accessible to them to be successful
- Needs to consider the human condition students have experienced before coming into the college.

## **Theme A: Closing the Opportunity Gap**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

People have a variety of educational needs and goals. The community that surrounds Green River College is very diverse, and many potential students will need a broad range of support services to be successful. And while programs are in place to address specific needs of low-income students, students of color, and other underserved groups, an educational gap - and subsequently, an opportunity gap - persists within these groups. For a variety of reasons, students from within these groups are less likely to achieve success in meeting their educational goals.

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- *What types of assets, life experiences, and attributes can these students add to the curriculum and learning environment?*
- *What services, programs, and curriculum are needed to close the opportunity gap for students of color and other underserved students?*
- *What programs need to be included in the curriculum to match available jobs and career opportunities?*
- *How can educational programs be more responsive to individual student needs?*
- *What non-academic support structures can be developed to enable all students to reach their educational goals?*
- *How can the College monitor the progress of all students, and intervene if problems arise?*
- *Does the College measure student progress and/or academic achievement in a way that may be perceived as biased and/or racist? If so, what can we do to affect change?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme A**

**A shift in mindset and attitudes is needed.**

- Before we change processes and procedures within the college, we need to change our own mindset; how we approach our work
- Be thoughtful in how we frame our questions; do not approach this work with a deficit mindset
- Recognize that all our students are equally capable of being successful should appropriate supports be in place based on their individual circumstance and need
- Recognize that non-traditional students bring with them life experiences that can add a rich perspective to classroom conversations.
- Honor the cultural differences we have on campus

**Recognize there is a difference between equality and equity and the distinction has implications for how we function as an educational institution**

- Our current mission is more about equality than equity. How do we best convey that distinction and get it across to others?
- The terms equality and equity are often used interchangeably; but they differ in important ways. Equality is typically defined as treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities. Meanwhile, equity refers to proportional representation (by race, class, gender, etc.) -Winston-Salem State University
- Equity is a two-way flow. A chance for the students to talk back to the institution. We need to adapt to the students who enroll at the institution.
- How do we define what equity means when not all of us have the same goals for being at Green River?
- Students get a great education at GRC but we do not do a good job with equity.

**Identify and address not only visible barriers to student success but also the hidden ones which are the most challenging.**

- What intentional and unintentional barriers has the college created that hinders student's success?
- Our systems were not designed to support everyone. Offer support but also examine the barriers.
- At the state level and college, division level, how do we decolonize the curriculum when it takes tremendous time and resources to build a course from scratch.
- By removing the colonial education part, we take away a barrier that will unlock the assets of our students.
- Design onboarding for new and training for returning faculty members – adjunct, full-time, and tenured – that focuses on cultural competency and implicit bias.
- Not all subject matter experts necessarily know how to teach to diverse learning styles.

**Critical to develop relationships with our students, treat them as the individuals they are, and listen to what they are telling us.**

- Ask students, what it is that we are not doing right.
- Develop relationships where students can feel like they have been seen and heard.
- How can we best collect information from students to determine what sorts of things are getting in their way and to identify the resources do they need to be successful?
- To close the opportunity gap do not target individual students based on the groups they belong to. Let the students decide what they need.
- To empower students, figure out how to help them long term and not just rush in to fix today's problem; have a transformational rather than a short-term transactional focus

**There is an overemphasis on testing to the detriment of student learning; the current grading system does not serve the real educational needs of students**



- There are too many standardized tests
- Students are attracted to majors that do not depend on testing, have to curve heavily to make sure these students stay and be successful.
- Lot of pressure, tests are high stakes, but what you test on may not be necessary to be successful in the real world.
- Students are very anxious about tests, education's ultimate goal is to help students in the workplace, time management and everyday practical skills are more important than tests.
- Grade on the basis of competency not on a curve.

**The financial aid process is a barrier for students who need financial assistance the most.**

- We need to show students, that regardless of race or where they come from, GRC can help them get the financial assistance they may need.
- Many students will not ask for financial help, they need to be asked privately, encouraged to apply.
- Financial aid - we see them in the end by of the process, when they may not be eligible, and everything is condensed to a form.
- How can we make it more real? How can students tell their own story, how much are students going to share their problems in a form; forms are very limiting.
- College educated white parents help their children with financial resource knowledge. How do we broaden that knowledge to other students who have not had that advantage?

**Language barriers**

- What about the language barrier? Those students are also being left behind.
- Language (diversity) is also an asset for the campus.
- Immigrant students have language barriers. Students do not even know how to get into college.

**Proactively reach out to and help students who may be struggling with multiple barriers, both inside and outside the college.**

- Reach out to students and be friendly, be accommodating, they all have struggles, share with them campus resources. May even be homeless.
- Cannot assume that we know what students need; ask them and match with resources; working in the front line, can see their personal barriers, may even need food,
- Some students (cultural) have to take care of their siblings and parents. What are we doing for these students?
- Early morning testing can be a challenge for students when transportation is a barrier, or for those experiencing food insecurity and may not have had breakfast.
- Instructor has to know how to connect with the student so the student can connect with the teacher

## **Many students are unfamiliar with the college and its resources and do not know how to access the help and information they need**

- Students are confused about where they can get information. Students get lost on the main campus. It is overwhelming for new students and the welcome center is gone.
- Students have a hard time finding services, or even simply knowing about the benefits hub and services that are currently in place
- Not knowing where they should go to get guidance, students do not receive the resources that they will need to be successful.
- Students should be able to walk in through one door rather than be shuffled from building to building.
- So many students don't know how things work at a college. Offer not just study skills, but insider knowledge.

## **Suggest revisions to the language and terminology used in the “closing the opportunity gap” statement; current draft seems to place burden on students rather than the college**

- "Variety of reasons" is poorly stated. How do we come to a consensus on what those reasons are: technology skills? higher ed historically anti-black? We need consensus before we can address them.
- "We know certain type has problems," puts responsibility on the student rather than focusing on our system's shortfalls
- Avoid deficit language in our statements. How do we name barriers yet remain positive?
- "Variety of reasons" what are some specifics? Insider vs Outsider. Hidden curriculum. Obvious ones like language of syllabus template. Hidden one such as late work policies in class of how "higher ed works". Explicit and implicit policies.

## **Website and technology barriers**

- Website is not easy to navigate – hard for students to find classes they want or need. If you do not know where to look, or don't know the right “key words”, you will not find it.
- How do we reach students who really need help using technology? They often drop from the technology courses
- How do we get SOC or low opportunity students to come to GRC when they do not have access to technology or know where to go or how to access?
- Make the webpages within the website appropriate for its purpose. Recognize there is tension between being informational vs. engaging
- Structure the website based on how students seek information or what they want to know.

## **Early intervention is essential**

- We have programs in place but there is still a gap between them and students who need help.
- An early alert program can help by enabling us to be responsive to struggling student and connecting them to support systems they can access.
- Need go beyond referral by actually connecting the student to the people who can help them, which requires reaching out to the student

## **Cohorts and mentor groups provide the structure and support many students need**

- We know that cohorts work but we must do more to make sure that all students are plugged into a college success class that includes all the services available to them.
- The cohort program should last longer than one quarter.
- Cohorts are effective but we must find a way so students do not have to pay for the course.
- Certain groups of students have very targeted support like BAS, RS. Most students do not have access to these kinds of targeted services that meet their needs.
- Cohorts are like a small family where everyone knows each other, they can see who to ask help from, and have access to advisors.

## **Robust advising is needed but we need the right model for doing so.**

- Help students identify their purpose for going to college. Help them identify why they are taking required classes; help students define their purpose here, their "why"
- What model are we using for student advising? What kind of training is there for faculty to help advise students?
- How can we create more points of contact during the education pathway to make sure students receive advice when it most needed?
- Community health workers have a model that works. They are the connection between cultures. Their model might work for us.
- When providing advice, we need get to the root cause vs. just treating the symptoms. It is the "teach a person to fish" mentality.

## **Examine and revise policies to facilitate student success instead of erecting barriers; learn from others and apply those lessons here.**

- Create a new process that requires a DEI review of updated policies.
- Determine what types of policies feel punitive to our very diverse students. It will take a lot of dismantling and that is something we should advocate for.
- We can change the GRC driven policies. Others, i.e., other policies such as financial aid, are at the state level, and we should actively advocate for those changes
- Provide more employee development opportunities; including anti-racist work and how to add more contextualized learning in classrooms.

- Survey other colleges to learn what policy/process changes have worked for their students; use these lessons to determine the approaches we should take.

**Recognize and help students with the many external barriers that they encounter: childcare, food insecurity, health care, housing, and transportation**

- Access to high quality childcare is a big issue for our students. Main barrier to attending class.
- Students in our community need access to health care.
- Housing is an issue and the need for stable housing.
- Safety and security in housing and utilities and food insecurities. Some students do not have access to electricity, so how can they even charge their laptops.
- Transportation is an issue. We don't offer any kind of student discount for public transportation.
- Not all students can access the resources the college provides during the times that we provide them; campus resources need to be available on nights and weekends.
- Look at the intersectionality between race and other characteristics (food and housing insecurities) and pull that apart.

## **Theme B: Increasing Faculty and Staff Diversity**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

It is important students of color and other members of underserved groups see staff that are reflective of their communities. A diverse faculty and staff will increase the educational richness of the institution. At Green River College, the racial diversity of faculty and staff is not generally reflective to African American and Latino students.

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- *How would the curriculum, faculty, and student population as a whole benefit from a more diverse and representative faculty and staff?*
- *How can we recruit and retain a diverse and representative faculty and staff?*
- *How would you define and measure successful faculty and staff diversity?*
- *What can the curriculum include to better reflect the cultural diversity of the broader community?*
- *What adaptations can the College make to integrate culturally diverse but professional expertise voices into its curriculum?*
- *Do the College recruitment and hiring policies contain inherently racist or what could be perceived as racist processes? If so, what can be done to dismantle them?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme B**

#### **Highlight the advantages of increasing faculty and staff diversity**

- Institutional willingness to challenge the status quo increases.
- Educational outcomes are improved when students see themselves reflected in faculty and staff.
- Student motivation and confidence grows from seeing faculty and staff who share aspects of their background and/or identity.
- Seeing BIPOC folks in position of power benefits the entire college community; white students, faculty, and staff as well as BIPOC students, faculty, and staff.

#### **Assess whether GRC's culture and hiring practices contain inherently racist elements**

- Acknowledge the tendency to mirror our own values and experiences in who is hired.
- Engage in a larger discussion about the concept of "fit" which is seen as "code" for unspoken, hidden discrimination in the hiring process.
- Rethink who "owns" a position, i.e. who defines what the needs are for a position.

- Regard positions as belonging to the whole college to allow broader input into job announcements.
- Avoid last minute hires based on referrals as these tend to perpetuate current faculty demographics.

### **Overhaul the hiring process and consider best practices**

- Utilize the DEHPD (Diversity and Equity in Hiring and Professional Development) 17-step framework for best practices in hiring.
- Rethink the credentials listed in required and preferred qualifications by examining them through the lens of racial equity
- Remake how internal applicants are handled by examining the process through an equity lens
- Rewrite job descriptions to avoid creating barriers for people of color who may not have worked as long in a particular capacity.
- Reconsider where to post job announcements to diversify the applicant pool; applicant pools shift dramatically depending on how positions are advertised.
- Allow for remote, virtual interviews
- Involve a wider group beyond the immediate committee in the faculty hiring process, including students.
- Slow down all aspects of hiring to be more reflective of equity goals
- Recognize that a long two-to-three-month application process can be a barrier to entry.

### **Establish transparent, standardized, equity-based hiring practices that are clear and easily understood**

- Develop as part of a larger college wide push for transparency, standardization, and predictability.
- Enforce rules and standard hiring practices to increase accountability and prevent rogue recruitment decisions.

### **Require routine diversity training for all faculty and staff**

- Educate everyone so the burden does not fall on a subset of faculty and staff
- All members of a hiring committee should receive diversity training and be required to take training in compliance for legal purposes

### **Identity metrics for success**

- Demographic composition of faculty and staff should reflect the diversity of the student body and of the service area.
- Proportionality should consider intersectionality with regards to race and gender

## **Make a firm determination that this time will be different**

- Acknowledge that past efforts to “walk the walk” and not just “talk the talk” on equity and hiring have not succeeded.
- Ask ourselves why this time will be different; identify the source of the problem.
- Recognize, disrupt, and alter our own complicity in repeating oppressive patterns and behaviors.
- Challenge oppression systematically by unmasking and naming the underlying beliefs that yield structures of domination.
- Avoid making comments and using words that seem negative or punitive
- Find positive ways to move forward so employees who are not of color do not feel unwelcome or even fearful

## **Theme C: Creating a Welcoming Environment**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

Green River College's main campus is a beautiful and scenic academic setting. The people that new students see as well as the colors, language, symbols, landscaping, architecture, public art, and every element of the College's physical environment conveys both intentional and unintentional meanings. For students that don't have an academic tradition in their family or that are the first in their family to attend college, that setting can be often daunting and intimidating. A campus that feels welcoming to everyone will support every student and better prepare them for their educational journey.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- *How can the College strengthen its reputation as a welcoming college campus, specifically for students whose race/ethnicity is less common at the College?*
- *How would the college benefit from improving its identity and reputation as place where students of color thrive?*
- *What signals are students seeing that may inadvertently be perceived as racist or negative in some way, making them feel unwelcome?*
- *How do students react upon meeting College staff, viewing the website, reading various materials, and/or signing up for programs and activities?*
- *What ideas exist for creating a more welcoming environment for students who are first generation students, whose first language may not be English?*
- *How can the College's symbols, branding, and wayfinding signage better create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for students of color?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme C**

#### **Provide bolder, friendly, welcoming signage that is easily accessible to all students**

- Include translations in all the languages spoken in the community served by GRC
- "Welcome to Green River" should be prominently displayed

#### **Create a Black Lives Matter statement and feature it prominently**

- Use the GRC website to clearly state this is an anti-racism institution and that Black Lives Matter

#### **Draft acknowledgement statements that recognize and honor the people who originally inhabited the land on which our campuses are located**

- Use signage and wayfinding throughout each campus to communicate these land acknowledgements.



- Go beyond land acknowledgements by taking steps to substantively help the tribes who were displaced.

### **Allocate resources to improve buildings that serve under-represented students and associated programs**

- The RLC building serves many of our refugee and immigrant students but is in disrepair,
- Unintentionally conveys a message these students are not a priority.

### **The first few week's matter? Bring services to students to facilitate ease of access**

- Create full-support one-stop-shop centers in various locations on first few days.
- Establish a Welcome Center in a central/physical location
- Utilize student ambassadors to create more personalized connections on campus for new and first-time students.
- Provide more training and inclusive on boarding so faculty and staff are better able to respond to and serve student needs.
- Establish a campus-wide buddy system

### **Ensure the campus physical environment conveys a welcoming message to all members of the college community**

- Ask students what specific elements of landscaping and architecture they find intimidating.
- Request faculty and student input on how to create a more welcoming physical environment.
- Create students service spaces, student branded spaces, and faculty community space which they feel is their "collaboration" space.
- Make the edge of the campus more welcoming.
- Rebrand security booths as campus guides. Though security guards are very friendly the optics conveys the message you are entering an unsafe space.

### **Make the campus easier to navigate**

- Use signage on the ground to help students find where services located, including signage on each building listing the services at that location
- Offer a phone app to help student find their way across the campus; use QR codes
- Too many acronyms on campus; like learning another language; simplify office names
- Provide wayfinding signage to help students get from the parking lots to the rest of the campus.
- Provide students with a virtual self-guided tour of the campus, including an equity component that starts with a land acknowledgment

### **Make college resources fully accessible and safe at all hours**

- Ensure that all lights are working at night especially in campus parking lots
- Enable the bookstore, coffee, and food services to stay open later in the evening and on weekends and on all campuses.

### **Create a campus environment that reflects and highlights the people we serve**

- Exhibit art on campus representing the different cultures within the GRC community
- Display pictures of students of all races and ethnicities
- Develop a reflective curriculum that acknowledges our diverse histories and cultures
- Place posters that showcase diverse alumni and highlights their experiences.

### **Allow students to lead on their academic journey**

- Trust that they know what is best for themselves
- The opportunity statement seems to be targeted toward a certain social class;(which can) mislead advisors to suggest “easier” programs for these students.,
- Although the campus can be intimidating for new students, allow them to attend college based on what they want; professionalism can get in the way of the students journey.

## **Theme D: Connecting to Community**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

Reaching and recruiting the most underserved students from the College's service district and the surrounding areas is challenging. Often, a viable approach mentioned is for the College to engage directly with the community to understand the needs and concerns of the potential students and the broader community. Community members and local community-based organizations want to connect with the College on a personal level, but those relationships have not always been fully developed. Community connections could open new opportunities to enrich College programs and provide valuable points of entry for all students.

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- *What is the best way for the College to establish and nurture connections directly with underserved communities and neighborhoods?*
- *How can the College learn from, integrate, and benefit from the perspective of disenfranchised and low-income communities?*
- *How can the College become more recognizable as an institution that works to address specific issues of communities of color and underrepresented communities?*
- *What communication channels should the College develop or link to in order to better inform community members and prospective students about how its programs and opportunities can serve diverse communities of color?*
- *How can we showcase the campus as a venue, a program expert and a resource for partnerships and programs?*
- *How is Green River College perceived by communities of color and the organizations that represent them?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme D**

**Create an advisory committee comprised of community members where their input and the perspectives of their communities can inform the college**

- Analogous to professional advisory councils established by CTE programs which are required to have clear connections with local employers.
- Engage local CBOs; reach out to those community-based organizations whose goals, missions, and community needs intersect with our own.
- Enlist representatives of these agencies to serve on the advisory committee rather than assume we can create and sustain similar community relationship on our own.

- Invite community members to be part of formal mentoring opportunities on campus.

### **Define which students are being underserved**

- Ask whether GRC is able to assist students it recruits and what needs to change to help these students.
- Be very intentional with representing their perspective on the community advisory board.
- Ensure the advisory committee is a diverse group that truly reflects the demographics of our students.
- Recognize that underserved students feel safer on the smaller campuses; these campuses are in areas that they are familiar with and are better served by transportation
- Create a hub on campus for underrepresented communities, e.g., French-speaking African communities.
- Recognize that “othering” of students is another form of bias that can inhibit the success of underrepresented and undeserved students.

### **Connect students to local businesses and industries**

- Train local underserved people to work at local jobs
- Develop a local business job data base; use this data to inform college programming
- Modify the yearup.org model to serve the needs of local businesses rather than large corporations
- Implement the badge system/model where students earn badges that are meaningful to and certified by local industries.
- Recruit local businesses that commit to hiring students trained through the local Year Up program and/or have earned industry certified badges.
- Develop internship opportunities with local business and CBOs.

### **Identify gaps in the community that the college can help fill**

- Do we even know what we don't know about the needs of these communities?
- Create GRC ambassadors to engage with their communities; hear directly from them on how GRC can be more helpful and welcoming
- Determine how we can utilize the YMCA or the local churches and housing communities that are close to GRC.
- Establish a Community Resource Center from the college that is free for the community to use.
- Make it easier for the community to hold events on campus at a low cost or free.
- Use our music studio, radio station, and school newspaper not only to reach out to the community but to share with the community

## Recognize that we are part of the global community

- The basic definition of the charge of the “community” college is to serve the community but this definition is de facto changing.
- We are serving students who are part of a global community

## **Theme E: Making the Connection Between the College and Local Business and Industry**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

Regional and local businesses and industries want to connect with the College but cannot always determine how to establish clear and sustainable working partnerships amidst myriad academic departments and support programs. Skilled workers are needed for a variety of businesses and industries, including logistics, cybersecurity, aerospace, health care, and many more. To be successful, students need flexibility and a range of options for pursuing these career / technical pathways.

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- *What can the College do to better identify and connect with business and industry in our region?*
- *What types of career and technical programs are needed to help students of color acquire immediate, well-paying jobs?*
- *How can the College connect with local residents and local community-based organizations to inform them about training and capacity-building opportunities?*
- *How can the College connect students from diverse and low-income communities to the full range of educational opportunities, including career/technical degrees and certificate programs as well as to transfer programs leading to four-year degrees?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme E**

#### **Create a single point of contact, both internal and external facing**

- Replace departmental silos with a coordinated process for connecting to and working with local businesses and industries
- Establish a central office on campus dedicated to serving businesses that can also function as a centralized hub for information sharing.
- Staff the center with a business liaison or ambassador to call and connect with businesses
- Incorporate a job/career hub in the business center; staffed with representatives from each college division
- Help businesses navigate through the college by connecting them with the most appropriate department or program for their industry.

## **Create a college culture that encourages connecting with the outside community**

- Develop a culture of intentional relationship building
- Put “community” back into community college; our culture should change to enable us to become an integral part of the community instead of being the “college on the hill”

## **Support faculty and staff efforts to build community relationships**

- Provide faculty with the time to engage with the community
- Legitimize release time for faculty; faculty with a full load of 5 classes cannot also attend and host to job fairs
- Provide faculty, staff, and students with funds to pay service club dues.

## **Explore multiple avenues for connecting with local businesses and industry**

- Connect with HR departments at local businesses to look for coop opportunities such as online professional development and internships
- Conduct more internal and external job fairs
- Develop a communications plan to inform business and industry of GRC program offerings

## **Create robust alumni networks with industry and business partners**

- Identify GRC alumni at local businesses
- Invite successful alumni to come to campus to speak to students; enabling students to see that their degree is worth completing.
- Collect testimonials.

## **Maximize business and industry advisory boards that already exist**

- They currently serve GRC’s individual departments
- Connect them to the college as a whole

## **Design the GRC website to be more business friendly**

- Simplify the process for posting jobs on the GRC website
- Redesign the website so businesses are able to connect with specific departments.

## **Conduct community outreach, especially to underrepresented communities and the local community centers and organizations that serve these communities**

- Collect testimonials from GRC students to share with the community
- Inform high school guidance counselors of GRC programs and resources
- Reach out to parents in K-12.
- Conduct K-12 fair on campus for both parents and kids on weekends or evenings; with interpreters

- Work with local prisons to provide classes
- Participate in community-wide alliances like The Road Map Project to support educational efforts from K-12 through college to career.

**Before students graduate, make sure we are doing what is necessary to get them ready for work**

- Enable students to see the reality of what a career may look like.
- Establish a mentor program to help students develop business skills and establish network connections
- Offer a job shadow program so students can better envision a day in the life of people who work in the careers in which they are interested
- Change self-limiting student attitudes by expanding their expectations about the types of work they could be doing in the future; enable them to envision all their possibilities.
- Enable students to see the connections between their college courses and the careers for which they are preparing.

**Provide students with multiple post-secondary educational paths**

- Provide students with access to skills training in specific fields through CTE programs; will maximize their future employability with a living wage salary due to the specialized knowledge acquired
- Work with businesses in forming short-term training programs or certifications that convert to credits so students have multiple points of entry in pursuit of their career and educational goals.
- Use Guided Pathways to provide students with a systematic process for making informed choices about the courses and programs they are taking to reach their career and educational goals in the most time effective manner possible.
- Retain remedial and pre-college courses for adult learners who have been out of the educational system for many years and for some new immigrants.



## **Theme F: Strengthening the Identity of Green River College**

### **Opportunity Statement:**

Local community members have expressed difficulty in identifying a “brand” or identity for Green River College. What makes Green River College different and the clear “college of choice” compared with other institutions?

### **Discussion Prompts:**

- *What do you believe is the current identity or brand of the College?*
- *What can the College do to better express the College’s equity goals?*
- *What do you perceive as the College’s strengths, distinctive competencies, and high-profile programs?*
- *How would you identify, build, and communicate an identity that expresses academic rigor while simultaneously demonstrating a commitment to cultural diversity and racial inclusion?*
- *Who are the best messengers and ambassadors for conveying this identity and direction?*

### **Actions, Processes, Policies and Programs to Close the Opportunity Gap – Theme F**

**Our college is in a transitional state which poses brand/identity opportunities and challenges for GRC**

- Transitioning from the traditional two-year community college model to a school with more robust offerings, including 4-year degrees
- Transitioning as a community and working through how to foreground equity in our offerings.
- Exploring the ways these changes impact how we relate to each other.
- Being in transition gives the college the flexibility to shift operations to meet new student needs that have not been actively addressed previously.

**Our branding should reflect and convey our strengths and distinctive qualities**

- Offers a high-quality education, faculty, and staff
- Well-resourced and our offerings are available at an affordable price
- GRC is well known within its service area and with a great reputation

- Our physical space and natural environment provide students with a campus experience that commuter-focused schools cannot replicate

**Our legacy of making people of all identifies feel included and welcome should be visible in all our branding efforts**

- Recognize the long-standing ties many of our faculty, staff, and students have with the college
- Visual representations throughout the college, on campus buildings, and our website should accurately represent the diversity of our college community.
- Everyone should be able to see themselves at GRC.

**Focus on our stories to communicate the unique elements of GRC's identity in a personal and authentic way**

- Encourage students who have had a great experience at GRC to become brand ambassadors who share their success stories
- Highlight the testimonials of students and successful alumni on the GRC website

**Convey a sense of community, family, equity, and place on all public-facing materials**

- Make sure the website features an accurate visual representation of our community
- Create a mural on the outside of the Student Union building to help create a welcoming, open space.
- Use website and social media to convey a coherent equity-focused message.
- Provide a feedback mechanism that can be used by all members of the college community to offer input to our designers
- Emphasize that GRC is a safe space both physically and emotionally for all members of the college community.

## **IV. Next Steps**

The perspectives of students, faculty, staff, community members and employers across the College's service area are vital to this process. All college stakeholders are invited to take a brief survey to inform the development of the Strategic Plan. The survey can be accessed here:

- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WP7TXW8>

The Strategic Planning Charette on December 7, 2020 is the next college-wide event to discuss the planning progress to date, key findings from the focus groups, survey and other engagement activities, as well as the emerging Strategic Plan Framework.