



## **GCC Focus 2024 Strategic Plan Design Process**

*July 2020 - July 2021*

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**Working Committee:** Strategic Plan Design Team (SPDT)

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### **I. Purpose and Scope of this Process Document**

This document serves as the comprehensive record of the process used by GCC for the design and development of its 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, [Focus 2024](#).

Each section of the document includes a review of the project with increasing detail. An Executive Summary in *Section II* provides a brief overview of the strategic plan design process in narrative form. *Section III* lists the guiding principles in the design of the plan. *Section IV* offers a timeline of the process. Those interested in a more detailed treatment of lessons learned and proposed best practices may find *Section V* most helpful. Finally, *Section VI* provides a Glossary of key terms relevant to the process.

This document will serve as the chief repository for this project's notes and processes and is intended to be a guide for future strategic planning processes. Additional questions related to this process may be directed to [StrategicPlanning@gccaz.edu](mailto:StrategicPlanning@gccaz.edu).

## II. *Focus 2024* Project Executive Summary

GCC leadership initiated an update of the college strategic plan in summer 2020. Reaffirming [GCC's Vision, Mission and Values statements](#), they chose principles from the [Four Disciplines of Execution \(4DX\)](#) as a tool to guide the development and execution of the strategic plan. Two sister colleges, Estrella Mountain and GateWay Community Colleges, both adopted 4DX and had seen successes, so GCC decided to use those same principles to focus on fewer goals, and create a clear plan to execute those goals.

In August 2020, the College President and Vice Presidents, with the support of the Senior Associate Vice President over the Institutional Effectiveness office, initiated the project by identifying three Tri-Chairs for the Strategic Plan Design Team (SPDT). These Tri-Chairs included a Residential Faculty member (on 6 hours reassign time as Director of Strategic Planning), the Fiscal Director from Business Services, and the Project Manager from Institutional Effectiveness. The Tri-Chairs, in consultation with college leadership, identified and recruited 12 additional team members from across the college

In September 2020, the SPDT began outlining the project schedule and conducted an Environmental Scan adapted from the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) model. Twelve key stakeholder groups submitted survey feedback on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the college. Survey results were used to facilitate Listening Sessions to generate consensus statements from each group. At the end of the Listening Sessions, all consensus statements were compiled in a [Shareholder Feedback Report](#) that was then published on the [GCC Strategic Planning web page](#).

Key elements from the *Stakeholder Feedback Report* were synthesized into a list of proposed goals and themes for indicators to measure progress. This list was vetted by the College Leadership Team (CLT) and shared with the college in April 2021 as the [Alpha Draft](#) of the strategic plan. SPDT hosted several discussions with college stakeholders to refine the goals with quantitative metrics, per the 4DX model ("from X to Y by DATE"). The plan, including these metrics, was vetted again by CLT and distributed college-wide in May 2021 as the [Beta Draft](#). Members of the College community were invited to submit comments.

In June 2021, [Focus 2024](#), was published on GCC's Strategic Planning web page and distributed by the College President's Office. In July, college leadership began meeting with 4DX consultants to develop the next steps for strategy execution, in order to identify and implement the most critical goals for the coming year's focus.

### III. Principles Guiding the Design of *Focus 2024*

The Strategic Plan, and the process used to develop it, was designed following the following planning principles:

- (1) **Mission-Driven:** ensure that the activities of the College planning process align with the mission of GCC to “prepare students for further higher education, employment and advancement, and successful participation in a global society.”
- (2) **Vision-Focused:** support the realization of GCC’s Vision to “foster student success by providing innovative, quality learning experiences for all members of the community.”
- (3) **Guided by Core-Values:** planning efforts will be guided by the College’s six Core Values: *Learning, Quality, Integrity, Inclusiveness, Community, Future-Focused.*
- (4) **Holistic:** a comprehensive approach to student success, placing priority on the dimensions of our institution that are fundamental to the student experience.
- (5) **Integrated:** there will be a clear linkage between planning, budgeting, evaluation and assessment.
- (6) **Data-informed:** ensuring the use of data and evidence to inform decision-making and planning efforts. Institutional research will be an integral part of the College's planning and evaluation processes.
- (7) **Execution-focused:** incorporating key lead and lag performance measures through which progress and improvement can be monitored and evaluated.
- (8) **Inclusive:** including input from faculty, staff, administrators, students and community members through purposeful composition of the Strategic Plan Design Team (SPDT), and engaging diverse listening sessions to elicit their perspectives.

## IV. *Focus 2024* Project Timeline Overview

### **June - July 2020: Project Scope Established**

GCC leadership decided to update the college strategic plan, approved *Vision*, *Mission* and *Values* statements, and selected the 4DX strategy execution model as a conceptual framework for the project.

### **September - October 2020: Project Initiation**

Established Strategic Plan project leadership, including a Tri-Chair model, including a faculty member (on 6 hours reassign time as Director of Strategic Planning), the Director of Business Services, and the Project Manager from Institutional Effectiveness. The Strategic Plan Design Team was established, with members identified and recruited. The SPDT began initial meetings to discuss project outcomes, timeline and tasks.

### **October - November 2020: Environmental Scan, Phase I**

The SPDT identified twelve stakeholder groups, developed and administered Stakeholder Surveys, compiled responses, and established protocols for subsequent Listening Sessions.

### **November 2020 - January 2021: Environmental Scan, Phase 2**

The SPDT conducted stakeholder Listening Sessions, elicited consensus statements, and collected. The SPDT compiled all stakeholder survey and listening session summary data, most critically including consensus statements compiled from all listening sessions. This comprehensive *Stakeholder Feedback Report* was completed in **February** and shared with the college leadership for review.

### **February - March 2021: Strategic Plan *Alpha Draft***

The SPDT identified key themes in the stakeholder feedback and synthesized a short list of ten general goals/indicators (without quantified indicator metrics) to serve as a structured outline of the Strategic Plan. This *Alpha Draft* was reviewed by college leadership, then revised, approved and distributed to the college on **March 2, 2021**. The *Strategic Planning Stakeholder Feedback Report* was distributed with this draft as the primary source of data that informed the plan content.

### **March - May 2021: Strategic Plan *Beta Draft***

The SPDT developed the *Beta Draft* of the Strategic Plan that included the quantitative metrics, as adjusted for feedback provided on the *Alpha Draft* and informed by consultations with GCC's Institutional Effectiveness (IE) office and other key stakeholders, based on GCC context, industry standards, and best practices. This *Beta Draft* was reviewed, revised and approved by college leadership in April. The approved *Beta Draft* was shared college-wide for review and comment on **April 28, 2021**.

### **May - June 2021: Strategic Plan Final, Published Draft**

Feedback received on the *Beta Draft* was reviewed to determine whether goals/indicators should be amended. Minor changes were made to the *Beta Draft* and the SPDT finalized all goals and their quantified indicators in mid-May.

For the published *Final Draft*, the SPDT worked with the GCC Marketing Department to determine the layout and supporting content of the plan for publication. The marketing draft of the Strategic Plan (titled *Focus 2024*) was developed to include a Letter from the President, the strategic goals and indicators, contextual notes on the goals/indicators, and leadership of the project. This eight-page document was finalized in the **first week in June**. The strategic plan, named *Focus 2024*, was published on GCC Web Site in the **second week of June 2021**.

### **July - August 2021: Initiate implementation planning (*Build & Run Stages*)**

In collaboration with college leaders, the SPDT Tri-Chairs identified the key project phases for implementation of *Focus 2024*. GCC's College Leadership Team (including the SPDT Tri-Chairs) met with the 4DX consultant on July 15th to discuss these implementation phases including *Design, Build, and Run*. The college will follow a consultant-calibrated approach to implementation, with subsequent consultant sessions to provide in-service facilitation and training for the next steps in the project. Meanwhile, preliminary discussions are ongoing with various GCC stakeholders to set the stage for early success.

## **Future work anticipated on the Strategic Plan involving 4DX:**

### **August 2021: Executive Design Session**

The 4DX consultant will be facilitating an *Executive Design Session* (EDS) with college leadership to review *Focus 2024* for alignment with 4DX. Based on the EDS, one or more Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) may be prioritized requiring college-wide attention. The consultant will then facilitate a series of *Leadership Implementation Sessions* to introduce leaders across the College to 4DX, the WIGs the college is prioritizing and what 4DX will look like to them. GCC leadership will receive training on the 4DX Operating System. These sessions are anticipated to take place by the **end of August 2021**.

### **September - December 2021: Manager Implementation**

The 4DX consultant will facilitate the roll-out of 4DX to all people leaders to share what the process will entail and what they will need to provide as leaders of employees. These meetings will begin in **September**. The coaching model will be introduced and coaches will be identified and trained. Coaches will work with the college teams to develop their individual WIGs. These WIGs are anticipated to be drafted by December 2021.

### **January 2022: Run Stage of Implementation**

Beginning with the drafting of their team WIGs, and generally no later than January 2022, functional units will begin holding weekly WIG sessions and reporting on their progress using the 4DX operating system. Teams will track progress and adjust their approach as needed. There will be a structured approach if any team wishes to choose their WIG, as the 4DX consultants have emphasized constant attention towards their WIGs and leading indicators to avoid changing course frequently.

### **Fall 2022: Strategic Plan Annual Review (SPAR)**

College leadership will conduct a Strategic Plan Annual Review (SPAR) to evaluate progress on all goals within the strategic plan, and determine what is working well or what adjustments may need to be made. *Focus 2024* and/or the prioritized college WIGs may be amended at this time.

## V. Focus 2024 Project Lessons Learned

### *Phase 1. Initiation of Project and Defining Scope*

- a. Identify the need for a new Strategic Plan. (CLT, Summer 2020)
- b. Review and approval of college Vision, Mission and Values statements. (CLT, Summer 2020)
- c. Research & propose strategic planning model. (IE, Summer 2020)
- d. 4DX model approved (CLT, Summer 2020).

#### *Lessons learned in Development Phase 1:*

i. **Scope definition.** In collaboration with leadership, have a more well-defined timeline, expectations, and scope document to guide the work of SPDT. This could also have given the Tri-Chairs some more autonomy in completing our objectives.

ii. **Define data needs earlier.** Clearly define what data should inform the strategic plan at an earlier stage. Meetings with Institutional Research folks later in the process opened up additional conversations that would have been better to inform the process earlier. Exploring what data is available at the beginning and saying that will inform the plan would be beneficial.

### *Phase 2. Establishing the Project Team*

- a. Identification, recruitment and approval of three Tri-Chairs as project leaders. (President & SAVP, August 2020)
- b. Determination of preferred project team size and representative membership. (SAVP / Tri-Chairs, August 2020)
- c. Recruitment of SPDT members via email requests. (Tri-Chairs, August 2020)
- d. First SPDT full-team kickoff meeting. (August 2020)

#### *Lessons learned in Development Phase 2:*

- i. **Earlier SPDT team formation.** SPDT membership was newly formed in fall 2020, meaning that members recruited to serve on the SPDT





were being asked to take on additional responsibilities that were not already factored into their workloads. In future, it would help if faculty and staff commitments to serve on the committee were established by the end of the previous academic year, so the SPDT engagement could be considered more holistically.

This has been implemented for AY 2021-2022. At the end of spring 2021, SPDT staff membership was determined for the upcoming year semester. Additionally, the SPDT was added to the list of formal committee assignment options for faculty, with two new faculty opting to join the team. In this way, faculty and staff are now able plan their work in the coming year to accommodate their SPDT engagement more effectively.

One minor note: the SPDT committee assignments were left up to faculty to self-select, and may benefit in the future from additional discussions with prospective faculty members before committee assignments were finalized -- perhaps in mid-Spring -- in order to communicate the project scope and expectations before they commit to serving.

- ii. **SPDT training & engagement.** Because of tight time constraints in fall 2020, new SPDT members -- some of whom had no strategic planning experience -- were “thrown into the deep end” of strategic planning. In the future, it will be helpful if the first few SPDT meetings spend more time coaching on strategic planning principles, 4DX models, example strategic plans, etc. This scaffolding/coaching will be incorporated for the new SPDT in Fall 2021, aided by the existence of the newly developed Strategic Plan and clarified District mandates.

### *Phase 3. The Environmental Scan*

- a. Development of the Stakeholder Survey template (SPDT)
- b. Identification of Key Stakeholder Groups
- c. Adapting the Stakeholder Survey per Stakeholder Group
- d. Administration of Stakeholder Surveys
- e. Collation of Feedback into Comprehensive Feedback Report.





- f. Drafting Listening Session Outlines with Stakeholder Feedback
- g. Conducting Listening Sessions to develop Consensus Statements
- h. Analysis and Synthesis of Consensus Statements into Key Themes
- i. Reporting Key Themes of Environmental Scan to CLT for review.
- j. Refinement of Key Themes from the Environmental Scan based on CLT feedback.

### *Lessons learned in Development Phase 3*

**i. Greater non-exempt inclusiveness.** Include more non-exempt employees in the stakeholder listening sessions. The short timeframe available to get the plan completed meant that the team selected a smaller subset of stakeholder groups for this first cycle. As such, some groups tended to be weighted toward the supervisor/manager level. In future cycles, stakeholder groups should be expanded to include more non-exempt employees.

**ii. Data integration.** Need to integrate more data into planning efforts from sources such as Emsi, Burningglass, or other databases to inform our future goals.

**iii. More informal discussions.** Would like to host more in-person drop-in discussions or sessions open to the College community to discuss some of these topics. While the structured sessions were great, they do represent the selection bias in how we gathered our information to inform our plan.

**iv. Setting expectations of deliverables.** Know up front that the stakeholder feedback report was an expectation to be published from this group. While it came up along the way and we were able to get it done, I don't think we set out with the intent to publish that information.

### *Phase 4. Writing the Strategic Plan*

- a. Developing an *Alpha Draft* of the Strategic Plan based on the Key Themes identified in the *Environmental Scan*. (Goals and Indicators are in a preliminary, "theme" stage, with no measures stipulated at this stage.)



- b. Review of the *Alpha Draft* by CLT and revision based on their feedback.
- c. Distribution of the *Alpha Draft* to all stakeholders for comment.
- d. Revising the *Alpha Draft* based on stakeholder feedback.
- e. Identification of in-house Expert Consultants to review indicators and propose measures.
- f. Staging consultant reviews to craft and refine relevant and realistic “apex” measures for each Indicator in the Plan.
- g. Review of proposed measures with I.R. to determine that the measures are based on realistic trends and readily available data.
- h. Inclusion of proposed measures in the Strategic Plan is now considered the *Beta Draft*.
- i. Review of *Beta Draft* measures by CLT and implicated stakeholders, with revisions as needed.
- j. *Beta Draft* sent college-wide for comment period.
- k. All responses to Beta Draft receive a detailed follow-up to the satisfaction of commenters.
- l. *Beta Draft* converted to *Final Draft* of Strategic Plan (text). Reviewed by CLT.
- m. *Marketing Draft* developed based on the *Final Draft* of Strategic Plan text. (Marketing, SPDT Tri-Chairs, President’s Office, May-June 2021)
- n. *Marketing Draft* of the final Strategic Plan distributed college-wide from the Office of the President (June 8th, 2021).

*Lessons learned in Development Phase 4:*

**i. Stakeholder engagement efficiency.** Continue to find ways to bring folks along without spending too much time on the fine level details. There were several iterations of the plan that went to CLT, and we may have been able to loop them in earlier or demonstrated agile project management rather than waterfall in order to make CLT review more efficient.

**ii. Shift IR conversations earlier.** Meet with IR during the initiation and development phase rather than this one. Research should inform the plan, but this was likely too late in the process and one that slowed us down from our initial timeline.

## VI. Glossary of Key Terms

**4DX Operating System (4DX OS):** This is the proprietary software package -- licensed by the District -- that will be used to report and display data from each of the college's functional units during the *Run Stage* of 4DX implementation. The 4DX OS will be accessible by anyone at GCC with a responsibility to report data, and a few administrators will be identified at GCC to manage the software.

**Environmental Scan:** The process by which the Strategic Plan Design Team gathers information about the college's current and future Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), as well as stakeholder attitudes about these factors. The Environmental Scan consists of the following broad stages: (a) Identify key stakeholder groups, (b) develop, administer and compile stakeholder surveys adapted from a SWOT structure, (c) facilitate listening sessions with each stakeholder group to generate consensus statements, (d) compile stakeholder consensus statements into a comprehensive *Stakeholder Feedback Report*, and (e) synthesize this feedback into a set of key themes for consideration when developing the strategic plan.

**Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX):** A proprietary strategy execution framework developed by FranklinCovey to promote organizational focus on fewer, more important goals and accountability in executing them. The 4DX framework includes three key stages (*Design, Build* and *Run*).

- a. **Design Stage.** In this stage, college leadership identifies the WIGs that the college will focus on in the coming year and communicates those to the rest of the college leadership.
  - i. *Executive Design Session (EDS).* The EDS is normally a two-day, consultant-facilitated workshop in which the college's senior leadership would identify the top 3-4 Wildly Important Goals to be the institution's focus for the coming year. Each day is typically broken into three two-hour segments. In the case of GCC, given the significant pre-work done on Focus 2024, this will be reduced to only one day, to be scheduled for August 2021 where college leadership will narrow the goals of Focus 2024 to no more than 4 WIGs.
  - ii. *Leadership Implementation Session (LIS).* After the EDS identifies the college WIGs, the LIS is held among a broader subset of college leaders to present the college-wide WIGs to them and share what the 4DX process will look like and the support they will need to provide to facilitate the process. This session will be scheduled for late August 2021.
- b. **Build Stage.** In the Build Stage, the teams work with 4DX coaches to develop their WIGs in alignment with the college-wide WIGs.

- i. *Manager Implementation.* During this stage, the leaders of college teams work with their teams to develop WIGs in support of the college-wide WIGs. These Manager Implementation sessions will begin in September 2021 and continue through the Fall 2021 semester with the goal of having team WIGs and Lead Measures identified by December.
  - ii. *Coach Training.* In this step, which may occur simultaneously with Manager Implementation, the college will recruit coaches who will be trained by FranklinCovey consultants. The 4DX Coaches will be instrumental in facilitating the Build and Run stages.
- c. **Run Stage.** In this final stage of the 4DX framework, teams begin holding weekly WIG sessions to report on their individual commitments, and updating their data in the 4DX Operating System (4DX OS). This is scheduled to begin in January 2022.

**Lag Indicator and Measure:** Lag measures track the success of goals. These measures are called “lags” because by the time they are measured, the performance that drove them is already passed (i.e., the measurement of progress significantly lags behind the performance).

**Lead Indicator and Measure:** The measures that track the critical activities that drive, or lead to the lag measure. These are both predictive of goals, and are influenced or controlled directly by the team.

**Mission:** The formal statement that summarizes the aims and values of the college. This statement is approved by the Governing Board.

**Team:** A functional group of the college with responsibility to carry out a set of related tasks in support of the college’s strategic plan and a structure to support that effort. These may include departments, committees or other working groups as appropriate.

**Team WIG:** Team-level WIG that is a key driver of a college-level WIG. These should include clear, quantitative metrics to describe the current state, desired future state, and a date by which the college aims to meet the desired future state.

**Strategic Goal:** The most critical, longer-term, measurable objectives necessary to achieving the college’s mission and realizing its vision. These should be statements that include clear, quantitative metrics to describe the current state, desired future state, and a date by which the college aims to meet the desired future state.



**Strategic Plan:** An institution-wide document used to communicate with internal and external stakeholders the institution's goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals, and clearly defined measures of success. These goals should follow the mandates outlined in the college's Values, Mission and Vision. The time-frame of GCC's Strategic Plan, branded *Focus 2024*, is three years.

**Strategic Plan Annual Review (SPAR):** The annual review of the Strategic Plan -- conducted in the Fall semester -- to evaluate progress toward the Lead Indicators and Goals, celebrate successes, and identify any possible areas in which new developments may necessitate a revision of the Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Plan Design:** The process by which the Strategic Plan is developed from the information gathered in the Environmental Scan. This includes the following steps: (a) conduct Environmental Scan to synthesize Environmental Scan consensus statements into an *Alpha Draft* of strategic goals and lead indicators, (b) identify consultation groups for each goal and indicator statement, (c) hold consultations to refine and clarify the terms and metrics in each goal/indicator, (d) include consultants' feedback into a *Beta Draft* of the goals & indicators. (e) Based on feedback on the *Beta Draft*, make final adjustments to strategic goals and indicators to finalize the Strategic Plan. Subsequently, the Strategic Plan may also be incorporated into a *Marketing Draft* for publication and distribution.

**Strategic Plan Implementation:** The process by which the college's strategic plan will be carried out to ensure its successful completion. GCC has chosen to adopt the 4DX strategy execution framework to guide the implementation of *Focus 2024*. One note: although 4DX has a "Design Stage" explicitly included, it is not in reference to the design of the strategic plan (which in GCC's case is already designed). Rather, this refers to the design of the 4DX project to execute the strategy.

**Strategic Planning Process:** The two broad stages of the strategic planning initiative at GCC includes (1) the initial development of the Strategic Plan (*SP Design*) and then (2) the college-wide implementation of the Strategic Plan (*SP Implementation*). When applying 4DX principles to a particular subset of Wildly Important Goals (WIGs), the *SP Implementation* elements will then be structured around three separate stages: *Design, Build* and *Run*. (See the glossary entry on the *Four Disciplines of Execution*).

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT):** A theoretical framework used early in the strategic planning process -- as part of the environmental scan -- to determine key factors which may affect the institution's ability to fulfill its mission, and which therefore guide the development of the strategic plan. In GCC's environmental scan, conducted in 2020-2021, the SWOT framework was used to develop the stakeholder surveys. The results of these SWOT-adapted surveys then guided the listening sessions which generated the stakeholder

consensus statements on proposed strategic goals for the college (see *Stakeholder Feedback Report*).

**Values:** These represent the organization's principles that guide behaviors, decisions, and actions in its operations.

**Vision:** A future-oriented statement that represents the ideal nature of the college in its future state.

**WIG Session:** The weekly team meeting in which team members report on progress toward the commitments they made in support of the team's WIG. Typically, this meeting is very brief: perhaps no more than thirty minutes.

**Wildly Important Goal (WIG):** A term of art in the 4DX framework referring to the most important institutional goal(s) chosen for 4DX treatment. While the Strategic Plan may set forth multiple goals and indicators, the college's executive leadership selects 3-4 of these for institution-wide focus in the coming year. These then become the WIGs toward which all teams of the college will work.