Future Assumptions

1. Mission College will continue to expand both physically and programmatically. Physically, facilities expansion is being pursued in four directions: on campus development of new buildings (current construction), off campus at the East Campus site (current construction), off campus in the Tujunga community (discussion stage), and off campus on Hubbard Street (discussion stage). Programmatic expansion is taking place in both the academic transfer disciplines as well as in Career and Technical Education disciplines to meet the needs of our student body, our community and our work force.

   In regard to physical expansion, as sites are procured and buildings are developed, care must be taken to ensure that the educational needs of the facilities are addressed in all areas. Academic supports include classroom and office spaces, technology, and adequate storage for materials and equipment. Student Services support includes admissions, counseling, book store, food services, tutoring, etc. When full service support is neither viable nor possible, a presence of these services must be provided to ensure that students have access to the quality education and support that they would have on campus.

   Facilities expansion also requires that careful thought is given to “swing space” to ensure that access to programs is as seamless as possible during construction and transitions.

   Programmatically, as new programs are explored and proposed, care must be taken to ensure that the development of these programs is done thoughtfully in terms of impact on existing programs and offerings. Where possible, dialogues between and among current faculty and administrators must address implications including opportunities for collaboration. When appropriate, advisory boards and task forces should be developed with community members and students to gain important information and recommendations for effective development.

2. Budget: The current financial crisis has precipitated unprecedented cuts to the state’s educational budgets. The budget will continue to be impacted for the foreseeable future.

   Without doubt the budget will be the greatest challenge Los Angeles Mission College (LAMC) will face over the next several years, and it will impact virtually all facets of the school. The State of California began to run a serious budget deficit even before the Great Recession, and the recession has hit California particularly hard. The state has, thus far at least, chosen to address the deficit more via spending cuts than by tax increases; more by temporary measures such as bonds and other borrowing than by permanent fixes. Both our class availability and student support services have already been heavily affected by the decrease in funding. There is no reason to believe that these general trends will change, or that the budgetary picture will improve for several years to come.¹

   The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) 2009-2010 total budget fell by more than 8% from its last-year level, and the Unrestricted General Fund (the District’s principal operations budget) fell by 5%.² Categorical funds were hit hardest, and saw cuts averaging 40%.³ For LAMC the cuts meant that we began 2009-2010 with a roughly 6% ($2.4 million) reduction in unrestricted funding from the previous academic year.⁴ Even without adding the faculty and student support services needed for our new buildings, we project a deficit of about $1.5 million beginning the 2010-2011 academic year.⁵

3. Access to Community Colleges will, at least for the short term, decrease as the budget crisis continues to force colleges to adopt austerity measures—fee hikes, increased class sizes, decreased course offerings—and the recession swells the number of applications.
Economic downturns typically increase the number of applications to and enrollments in the Community College system, and the current recession has already impacted LAMC. Between 2006 (when the housing bubble burst) and 2008, LAMC’s total enrollment increased over 35%, and Resident FTES increased over 40%. We can expect demand for enrollment to continue to increase.

At the same time, the budget shortfall has already forced the Community College system to reduce class offerings and campus services by approximately 51%, and this will probably continue until the budget crisis is resolved. (Fiscal Condition Review, 2010) To offset this, the class sizes for faculty have been increasing at LAMC: average class size has grown from 26.5 students per class in 2006 to 40.9 per class in 2010. (Fiscal Condition Review, 2010)

But increasing class size can only do so much. Ultimately, we are faced with more applicants than the system can accommodate. Statewide, colleges were forced to decrease course offerings by 5% this year. Many Community Colleges already find themselves taking the unprecedented step of denying admission to large numbers of students. Furthermore, given the state’s fiscal problems, fee hikes are a very real possibility, and this would further limit access to the system, particularly for the poorest students. Finally, some experts believe that government grants and financial aid to students will also begin to decrease. As a result, access to the Community College system can be expected to become more and more restricted over the next few years.

The bottom line is that the number of people applying to attend the Community College system should increase over the next five years, but at the same time budgetary cutbacks will force colleges to decrease course offerings. The result will be in an increase in class size, increased competition for admission, and an overall decrease in access to the Community College system.

4. Demographics: The college will continue to serve a significant number of students who are: economically challenged, Hispanic, female, members of the 18-24 year-old population, and full-time or part-time workers; we can also expect, given the recession, an increase in students who are newly laid off or unemployed, and more students who are unable to attain access to courses at four-year universities.

Since 2005 (the date of our last Educational Master Plan), LAMC’s enrollment numbers have grown from about 7,500 to over 10,000, a growth of 33%. With that growth, however, we have also seen a number of changes to our student demographics.

- We have seen a substantial decrease in the percentage of students seeking vocational education and a corresponding increase in those seeking transfer to a four-year school. In fact, in 2005, we had roughly 25% more vocational students than students seeking transfer; in 2010 we have 35% more students seeking transfer than we have vocational students.
- There has been a small but significant increase in students carrying fewer than 6 units and a corresponding decrease in those carrying 12 or more. From this, we can conclude that our population of working students has increased.
- The average age of LAMC’s students has been declining since 1991, and that trend shows no indication of slowing.
- Even though we have seen a small rise in male students over the last two years (since the beginning of the recession) we continue to see a high ratio of female-to-male students.
- Although the percentage of Hispanic students has risen slightly over the last five years, LAMC has seen an even greater rise in the number of students whose primary language is English. This trend is particularly evident since the recession began, which may indicate that we are seeing more students enrolling here because they are facing decreased access to four-year universities (see assumption # 7 below).
5. Workforce development training will continue to be an important part of the school’s mission. Job growth in the U.S. through 2015 will not be evenly distributed across occupations and industries, with most jobs created in the next few years in areas such as Child-care, Health Care, Education, Administrative Support Services, and Scientific and Technical Services.

Both national projections from the U.S. Department of Labor and state and local projections from the California Employment Development Department project dramatic growth in several areas relevant to LAMC. Nationally, dramatic growth is projected for the following areas: health care; child care; education (especially K-12 teachers); and administrative, support, scientific, and technical services. On the national level, moderate growth is expected in food preparation and serving jobs, while in California and in Los Angeles, food service job opportunities are expected to grow slightly more slowly than the average.

NOTE: Do we want a bit here delineating “employable skills” (basic competency in reading, writing and computation; interpersonal communication; problem solving; collaboration; creative thinking, etc.)?

6. Basic skills, remedial, and pre-collegiate instruction will continue to be in high demand for incoming freshmen and returning students, particularly as the increased graduation requirements in math and English will dramatically increase demand in those areas. Spending cuts may particularly challenge Basic Skills education as funding for the Basic Skills Initiative declines.

Many of LAMC’s incoming and returning students require basic skills Math and English courses. Placement Test data from 2006-2009 indicates that more than 85% of those students tested require Basic Skills courses in English, and over 75% require Basic Skills courses in Math. These numbers have remained fairly steady for the four-year period. Furthermore, starting Fall 2009, the requirements to graduate with an A.A. or A.S. degree have increased from Math 115 (Beginning Algebra) to Math 125 (Intermediate Algebra), and from English 28 (Intermediate Reading and Composition) to English 101 (College Reading and Composition I). There is no doubt that these new requirements are going to affect a great number of our students here at Los Angeles Mission College, with the expected result being a sharp increase in demand for math and English Basic Skills courses.

These changes come at a particularly bad time since math and English tutoring have already faced extensive cuts due to the budget. Furthermore, the state’s 2009-2010 budget cut LACCD’s Basic Skills Initiative funding more than 33%. This will make providing adequate Basic Skills education a particularly challenging priority for LAMC for the foreseeable future.

7. Student Support Services such as Orientation, Counseling, Career Counseling, Financial Aid, EOP&S, DSP&S, Tutoring, and Student Workshops, remain a vital part of student success. However, steep cuts to categorical student services programs will endanger the effectiveness of and access to these services.

Because of the budget cuts, student services will face:

- Elimination of funds to purchase online assessment test units
- Elimination of funds to renew contracts/service agreements with vendors relating to assessment
- Elimination of student workers to help in the offices of students services
- Reduction of group orientations
- Reduction of funds in printing for assessment purposes
8. Transfer will continue to be an important part of the school’s mission, and shrinking access to higher education at the 4-year institution level will result in a dramatic increase in demand for transfer courses. Community Colleges will also see a relative increase in the population of students seeking to transfer to 4-year schools, and stiffer competition for transfer to those institutions.

The same budgetary constraints facing community colleges are also impacting the CSU and UC systems. Both systems have limited enrollment and dramatically increased student fees. There are several consequences: First, as admission to those schools becomes harder to attain, and classes there scarcer and more expensive, more and more students will be squeezed out of those systems and seek entrance instead to the Community College system. We should therefore expect an increase in applications to community colleges from those hoping to eventually transfer to universities and from “reverse transfers,” students pushed out of universities either by financial pressures or because they simply can’t get the classes they need.***

While the recession will likely increase demand for courses across the board at community colleges, these pressures can be expected to cause an even-greater increase in demand for transfer courses than for non-transfer (for example, vocational ed and certificate program) courses.

Finally, given the decreases in enrollment and courses offered by the state’s 4-year schools, transfers to that system from the Community Colleges will become more competitive, squeezing out the less-prepared students.

9. The demand for online education will continue to grow, and LAMC’s online-program growth already will necessitate a college-wide Substantive Change within the next few years.

For years, online education has been growing more rapidly than traditional higher education—nationally, online education grew 17% in 2008—and the trend is expected to continue. At the same time, faculty acceptance of online learning remains mixed at best: Many faculty members distrust the educational experience offered by online courses, and many others lack the abilities to prepare rich online courses for their students.*** Both faculty attitudes and education will present challenges if Mission’s online courses are expected to grow.

In addition, Mission needs to address the consequences of our growth thus far: Mission has passed the 50% threshold for some programs—that is, we already offer enough courses that a student can fulfill half of his degree requirements online—and therefore have decided to, per the accreditation standards for online education, complete a campus-wide Substantive Change.

The Substantive Change will require, and this will undoubtedly be LAMC’s greatest challenge in the coming few years, implementation of support services to accommodate online students’ needs (such as online counseling, tutoring, library services, financial aid). But beyond this, LAMC’s policies and procedures for online courses require both review and clearer definition within the college’s shared governance structure.

10. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessments will continue to be an important focus for all academic courses, programs, certificates, and degrees at Los Angeles Mission College. Assessing student learning for the purpose of systematic improvement is an institutional commitment and will become part of the culture. Outcomes will be published in the college catalog and will be accessible to all on the college Web site. As assessment evidence increases, it will become imperative to have an online assessment management system.

In the next five years, it will be mandatory that students demonstrate evidence of learning by outcome assessments rather than just by courses completed and grades earned in classes. To accomplish this, communication and collaboration of faculty within and across disciplines and student services will be
essential in the delivery and assessment of student learning. Faculty and staff must work together to define what learning outcomes are desired for students in their classes and programs, identify appropriate measures of that learning, participate in a collaborative assessment process, evaluate ways to enhance learning, and look for appropriate interventions to address learning gaps.

This collaborative effort to address learning gaps is seen by many as a “paradigm shift” in community college instruction and service delivery. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) have become a central part of the accreditation evaluation of program quality and are closely tied to other essential accreditation topics such as program review, planning, budgeting, and the allocation of resources. Beyond accreditation, student learning is central to our college’s mission, and the inquiry results of how well we are doing in all areas of student learning are and will be used to improve our courses and programs.

Accrediting organizations have increasingly rigorous requirements that institutions and programs assess how well they are achieving their goals for student learning. Within the next five years at LAMC:

- All student learning outcomes will be assessed and reported on a three-year cycle for courses, programs, and degrees.
- Results of assessment will be used for institution-wide dialogue resulting in improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices and decisions.

To meet accreditation standards, outcomes and their assessment will be made public. Establishing and maintaining a website will continue to be an important factor in making SLO efforts public and as a mechanism for keeping the campus as well as the community aware of progress in supporting student learning. Within the next five years, all program outcomes will be published in the College Catalog. The use of technology for SLO assessment is growing and becoming more sophisticated. It will be valuable for LAMC to have an online SLO assessment program. This online site will make it easier for faculty, students, and administrators to monitor progress of outcome assessment.

The teaching and learning environment has changed. Knowledge is expanding so rapidly that thorough content coverage is not feasible in most disciplines. The explosion of readily available information means that the ability to be able to find out what one needs to know has begun to replace knowledge itself as an educated person’s hallmark. In addition, students have become more and more diverse. There is increasing variety in many characteristics, such as writing and mathematics skills, English fluency, computer literacy, cultural background, world and work experiences, and learning styles. In today’s educational environment, as well as in the future, there will be expanded use of active learning pedagogies, such as collaborative and cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and community service learning. Development and assessment of outcomes on all levels will enable us to meet the educational needs of our increasingly diverse student body.

11. Technology will continue to grow at an increasingly rapid pace. This growth will increasingly challenge our students, our faculty, and our institution. This phenomenon can cause an increase in reverse transfers and dropout rates at the 4-year college level.

Technology skills become more important every year, and as technology continues to develop, the demand for skills involving computer, information, and media resources and technology will only increase. It is therefore incumbent on the college to provide access to and training in these technologies, for both students and faculty.

For students, specific skill requirements will vary from course to course and program to program, but in general the issue of computer literacy (the knowledge and ability to use computers and technology efficiently) will be at the forefront for many students at the college. Students who have the ability to search for classes, look up grades, and register online are already at an advantage over those who cannot. But more importantly, computer literacy is vital to success at transfer institutions and in the workplace environment.
For faculty, appropriate use of educational technology in the classroom, online, and in hybrid courses is vital for student retention and success. As we seek to introduce more educational technology campus-wide, faculty concerns with it merits, and faculty inexperience with that technology may be issues the school will have to address.

12. Accountability Requirements will Increase in the period 2010-2015 and will probably require more college resources.

Los Angeles Mission College must currently meet accountability requirements imposed from external agencies (Chancellor’s Office for the California Community Colleges, U.S. Department of Education). In addition, accreditation standards (WASC-ACCJC) also require accountability for internal planning, resource allocation, and budgeting purposes. It is likely that both external and internal accountability requirements will increase over time. State agencies have relied increasingly on information from the state MIS system for accountability reporting (ARCC). In addition, the federal IPEDS and Student-Right-To-Know systems are increasingly used for accountability purposes. To satisfy WASC-ACCJC accreditation standards, colleges must have local accountability systems such as those used for program review, student learning outcome reporting, unit and strategic planning, and general reporting/information delivery to college stakeholders.

District and state and federal accountability requirements are largely satisfied through the LACCD student information systems (SIS). However, information quality continues to be problematic because of the unevenness of data collection, submission, editing processes at both the local and statewide levels. Internal accountability systems have been developed at the college level, but are in need of modernization to meet increased demands for reporting and planning.

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is currently in the process of upgrading its student information system. A modern, well supported enterprise level SIS will be a significant step toward satisfying external accountability requirements. LACCD is planning to implement a new SIS in 2011. The implementation plan will also include a process to validate data integrity, which will also further the accountability process. The LACCD is also pursuing a strategy of developing locally customizable program review, SLO, planning and reporting systems. This effort began in 2009, and is scheduled to be completed in phases, beginning in 2010.

Even with the district-wide systems modernization, there will likely be increased resource needs to support accountability at both the District and college level. WASC-ACCJC accreditation standards emphasize the continuous nature of planning, evaluation, and documentation which would require an increased staffing commitment to this effort. And, even with an emphasis on self-service for data and information delivery, it is expected that staffing needs will increase in information support, coordination, and evaluation areas.