INTRODUCTION

A recent study conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project identified two important issues that affect teens and young adults. Respondents were divided nearly fifty percent each way regarding two important skills:

1) They do not suffer notable cognitive shortcomings while multitasking. In effect, they are more adept at finding answers to difficult questions because of their access to and collective intelligence of the internet.

2) They lack deep-thinking abilities and face-to-face social skills, and they depend too much on the internet and mobile devices to function (Anderson & Raine, 2012).

Both views describe circumstances that will have long-term impacts on higher education. Community colleges must respond to the strengths and challenges associated with a technology-prevalent economy through ongoing investigation, implementation, assessment, and refinement of distance education in a new learning paradigm.

Goals, procedures, and the operational structure for the MJC Distance Education (DE) plan were developed to address student need for effective, flexible learning in the 21st Century. This plan aligns with the MJC Technology Plan and the mission and vision of both the College and the Yosemite Community College District. MJC acknowledges the growth of distance education as well as the diverse needs of the students enrolled in DE courses requiring specific and ongoing development and assessment.

Development Approach and Methodology: Thorough research has been undertaken in order to develop an evidence-based DE plan for MJC. Two primary surveys were conducted in the last year: 1) a college-wide technology survey given to faculty and students; and 2) a state-wide telephone survey of community colleges system-wide to collect and analyze information about distance education staffing structures, services, and technical tools. Teams attended a variety of conferences and webinars to discover best practices in distance learning. Institutional and state-wide data related to DE student demographics, success and retention rates have been analyzed. The State Chancellor’s Office Distance Education Guidelines, Report, and DE Surveys (Student Survey and Program Survey) have informed and shaped this plan. Additionally, DE strategic plans from several colleges and universities with notable DE practices have been reviewed. A full list of sources is included in the references section at the end of this document.

Campus stakeholders from administration, student services, and a variety of academic disciplines engaged in multiple discussions to identify the priorities of an effective Distance Learning plan for the college. Workgroups developed the objectives and activities outlined in this plan, which will receive additional review and refinement from all College constituencies.