

# MESA STATE COLLEGE

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO ▶▶



## STRATEGIC PLAN

JANUARY 27, 2011

**MESA**  
S T A T E  
C O L L E G E



# **2010 STRATEGIC PLAN**



**JANUARY 27, 2011\***

**\* Approved by Mesa State College Board of Trustees**



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## INTRODUCTION

Mesa State College (MSC) is unique among Colorado public higher institutions in that, over the past half dozen years, the College has experienced an enrollment growth that places it first in the state for the past five years. This growth momentum—referred to as “Fast Forward”—is not limited, however, to student enrollment. Other, more subtle, but incremental changes have accompanied the increased headcount: development of new degree programs, integration of new technology into instruction and support services, enhancement of student services, a rebuilding of faculty due to retirements and the realigning of positions with higher demand programs, strengthened community and regional partnerships, and renovated campus facilities. These efforts have put the College on an upward trajectory that has made it increasingly competitive with its sister institutions, not only in Colorado, but in the Rocky Mountain region.

Further, this upward path has given it a new profile based on the caliber and reputation of its academic programs and the engagement with the region that have led many to believe that the College has quietly matured into a university. Based on a broadened array of academic programs, the caliber of the faculty, the quality of students, the integration of current technologies, and instructional facilities second to none, there is no question that the Mesa State in 2010 is a very different institution than it was just a half dozen years ago. In fall 2009—five years after Phase I of the strategic plan was adopted—it appeared that it was time to take a serious look at the 2004 strategic plan. Thus a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was convened by MSC’s President in spring 2010 to review the existing plan and recommend how it should be updated. The initial draft of this document reflected the proposed revisions from that group’s work. Subsequent revisions resulted from campus feedback and discussions between MSC staff and the College’s Trustees.

## SPRING 2010 METHODOLOGY

The 27-member Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of on-campus representatives from the faculty, administration, staff, and students as well as off-campus participants who are alumni, community leaders, and business owners (see Attachment A for a list of committee members). The group met three times, four hours per meeting, and members were provided with the College’s role and mission statement as well as a lengthy compilation of data/accomplishments related to the 2004 goals. The accomplishments served as a backdrop to Phase II of MSC’s strategic planning effort and were reviewed and discussed by the committee at some length. They are outlined in this draft, grouped by the 2004 goals. [Note: A more detailed description of the accomplishments is found in the “Progress Report on the Mesa State College 2004 Strategic Planning Goals, August 19, 2010.”]

Committee members also considered the results of the Moving Forward Survey conducted in April 2010 by MSC’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (Attachments B and C). As the SPC deliberated, a number of other elements also informed its work in developing Phase II of the plan: changes in the general higher education environment, and in MSC’s specifically, that present themselves as opportunities and threats; an overview of Mesa State’s strengths and weaknesses; and a revised draft to the College’s vision and values statements. The SPC discussed this document with the MSC Board of Trustees at its August 2010 meeting and shared it with the campus community for review and comment in Fall 2010. The Trustees will act on the Strategic Plan at its January 2011 meeting.

**PROGRESS TOWARD THE 2004 GOALS:  
A SUMMARY OF PHASE I PLANNING ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
<p>1. To raise the level of educational attainment in the 14-county region by supporting students with diverse levels of academic preparation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Significant investments in student recruitment, coupled with program and campus enhancements, have resulted in enrollment reaching a total headcount of 7,185 students in spring 2010. The College has experienced a student increase of 42.3% over the past decade, with nearly half of that gain occurring since 2005. Most striking is the 12.5% spike between fall 2008 and fall 2009.</li> <li>b. Two points of access to better accommodate students with varying levels of academic preparation were created when MSC raised its admissions index from 80 to 85 and converted its two-year technical division to Western Colorado Community College (WCCC) in 2005.</li> <li>c. MSC experienced a major shift upward in its entering students' academic profile over the past five years. In AY 2004 – 05, 23% of entering baccalaureate students achieved an index of 110, Colorado's highest base; 32% of MSC students applying in the AY 2009 – 10 scored that same index or higher.</li> <li>d. While many students are prepared to register for college-level classes upon matriculation, approximately half of MSC's entering first-year undergraduates enroll in at least one developmental course.</li> <li>e. The number of MSC students coming from the 14-county service region grew by 58.45%—from 3,067 to 4,859—over the past five years, the proportion from that same area has remained stable at <math>\pm 71\%</math>.</li> <li>f. In terms of race/ethnicity, students from underrepresented groups now comprise 16.3% of the total undergraduate headcount. The racial/ethnic diversity of first-time undergraduates has grown with each entering class, from 16.5% to 20.3% over the five years ending in fall 2009. Growth in the number of students from underrepresented groups has been significant, increasing to 1,119 in fall 2009, a gain of 46.7% between 2005 and 2009. The greatest increase—48.1%—was reported for Hispanic students over the five-year period for a total count of 684.</li> <li>g. Fall 2009 marked its first time in recent history that a Mesa State entering class was comprised of more males (52.3%) than females (47.7%), a near opposite breakdown from fall 2005.</li> <li>h. For fall 2009, the estimated number of first generation and high need students was 1,673, a level that has been essentially the same for the past five years.</li> <li>i. The number of students transferring into Mesa State has exceeded the number leaving the College for a number of years. For AY 2007 – 08, the most recent year for which statewide data are available, the College ranked sixth among the 12 four-year public institutions in the state for the number of entering transfer students (950).</li> <li>j. Because of the proximity of the Main MSC Campus to the Bishop Campus, primary home to Western Colorado Community College,</li> </ul>



Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
	<p>students frequently are enrolled at multiple sites. For example, of the 647 students who enrolled at the Bishop Campus in fall 2009, 35.7% of them took all of their coursework there, while the balance also enrolled on the Main Campus and/or in classes delivered via distance technologies.</p> <p>k. Montrose students are increasingly accessing education from multiple Mesa State sources. In fall 2007, 70.3% of the 246 Montrose students were enrolled solely on that campus. By fall 2009, only 52.3% of the 256 students were taking classes exclusively in Montrose.</p> <p>l. As of fall 2009, more than 300 students enrolled in classes delivered only online and do not require coming to any of Mesa State's Campuses. The share of exclusively online students has grown most within Mesa County (47.7% in fall 2007 to 59.1% in 2009) reflecting students enrolling for the convenience and/or flexibility that this delivery format offers.</p>
<p>2. To support activities that enhance student success.</p>	<p>a. Student persistence has rebounded to the current first-year retention rate of 63.1%. The retention rate of MSC students averages ten percentage points higher when one accounts for students who continued enrolling, but at another institution.</p> <p>b. Numerous initiatives were implemented to increase student success including an Early Alert System to intervene on behalf of first-time undergraduates who are not performing satisfactorily in coursework. Monthly contact by the Advising Center staff helps keep them on track with degree requirements and major selection, as well as provides motivation to balance pursuit of academic goals with personal responsibilities; significant increase in use of the Tutorial Learning Center (TLC), with tutoring contacts growing 160% between fall 2007 and 2009.</p> <p>c. Graduation rates have varied by as much as five percentage points, from a low of 27.8% to a high of 34.8%, for the six years between admission and degree completion. Reasons that extend the time to graduation range from finances to personal circumstances to a change of major to under-preparation for college-level work.</p> <p>d. The Office of Financial Aid has increased its awards from \$28.0 million in FY 2005 to \$36.4 million in FY 2009, with FY 2010 awards projected to be \$50.2 million.</p> <p>e. The number of students awarded some type of financial assistance increased from 4,187 in FY 2006 to 5,790 (est.) in FY 2010.</p> <p>f. In FY 2006, MSC awarded \$1 million in institutional aid; this amount more than doubled to \$2.5 million in FY 2010.</p> <p>g. The number of MSC Pell Grant recipients reflected a 44% increase in FY 2010.</p> <p>h. The Office of First Generation Students offers mentoring to approximately 300 students, some of whom find the adjustment to college life particularly challenging.</p>

Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
	<p>i. Mesa State also has implemented a series of on-campus activities to expand student engagement opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the array of courses through the Honors Program was broadened and a four-year course rotation will be in place by 2011;</li> <li>◆ internship opportunities are accessed by approximately 400 students annually, while another 300 undergraduates collaborate with faculty on research projects;</li> <li>◆ a new Student Showcase highlights undergraduate projects;</li> <li>◆ a faculty member now coordinates the International Student Exchange Program for MSC students enrolling abroad as well as those coming to MSC;</li> <li>◆ a Major Fair will be initiated in fall 2010 to assist students in considering various majors and encourage selection of one earlier in their academic career;</li> <li>◆ 2,061 MSC students engaged in community service and provided 307,560 hours of service, with these efforts being recognized through the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll;</li> <li>◆ the total number of student-athletes grew from 265 to 469, reflecting an increase in the number of competitive teams from 11 to 18 between FY 2004 and 2009;</li> <li>◆ expanded access to dining and recreation activities to increase interactions of commuter students with their residential peers;</li> <li>◆ restructured child care to extend hours during the days, nights, weekends, and during breaks to allow access for campus wellness and recreation activities;</li> <li>◆ targeted students through dozens of intramural and club sports, wellness classes, campus life activities and entertainment, and more than 80 clubs and organizations ranging from academic interests to cultural interests. Additionally, the Outdoor Program provides opportunities of a unique nature; and</li> <li>◆ enhanced activity by the Cultural Diversity Board, a student organization made up of different cultural clubs.</li> </ul> <p>j. Each academic program has developed a student learning outcomes assessment plan.</p> <p>k. Academic programs that have earned and/or maintain accreditation with the identified agency include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Athletic Training - Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training;</li> <li>◆ Emergency Medical Services - Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professions (final approval pending);</li> <li>◆ Music - National Association of Schools of Music;</li> <li>◆ Nursing (AAS/RN) - National League for Nursing;</li> </ul>

Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Nursing (BSN) - Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education;</li> <li>◆ Radiologic Technology - Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology; and</li> <li>◆ Teacher Education - National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.</li> </ul> <p>1. Pass rates for MSC graduates who were first-time test-takers on professional licensure examinations (e.g., nursing, radiologic technology, and teacher education) consistently have either met or exceeded state averages.</p>
<p>3. To focus on quality faculty who are great teachers with a passion for teaching.</p>	<p>a. Over the past five years, the College has made a major commitment to bring faculty salaries at all ranks to the averages of its peers. Averages for MSC faculty now meet or exceed peer averages at all ranks.</p> <p>b. As of fall 2009, nearly three-fourths of the faculty is doctoral-qualified, while 78% hold a terminal degree for their respective field. Two-thirds of the faculty members eligible to earn tenure have done so already, and nearly half have been promoted to Professor.</p> <p>c. More than 40% of the faculty are female, 8% come from an underrepresented group, and approximately 29% fall in the age ranges of 55 – 64 years.</p> <p>d. Multi-year results of the annual ACT Student Opinion Survey, wherein graduating seniors evaluate their experiences at MSC on ten dimensions, show that the averages for the College’s faculty clearly exceed the comparative data for other public colleges as well as a national sample of comparable institutions. In each case, not only does the MSC faculty score higher, but the difference between Mesa State and the benchmarks has grown in recent years.</p> <p>e. Beginning in spring 2007, the College implemented a merit-based evaluation system that builds on the annual faculty review and is weighted to support highly effective instructors.</p> <p>f. Workshops sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) are offered each semester by nationally-recognized experts who focus on teaching effectiveness, student learning outcomes assessment, or distance delivery of coursework.</p> <p>g. Other initiatives begun in support of faculty include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Offering training in instructional software such as WebCT, Turnitin, and Geographic Information Systems through CTL;</li> <li>◆ Allocating travel funds to each academic department for program faculty to distribute;</li> <li>◆ Delivering new faculty orientation—New to Mesa State—a two-day introduction to the College. New to Mesa State emphasizes information to ease new faculty members’ initial transition to Mesa State and enhance their likelihood of long-term success at the College;</li> <li>◆ Awarding an average of three sabbatical leaves annually; and</li> <li>◆ Adding staff support to the Office of Sponsored Programs</li> </ul>

Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
	<p>which has experienced a growth in grant activity from \$1.3 million in AY 2005 to \$2 million in AY 2009.</p> <p>h. The College established a Faculty Professional Development Fund in 2007, currently at \$40,000 annually, to support faculty instructional, creative, and scholarly activities. The fund annually supports an average of 25 faculty members.</p>
<p>4. To improve the quality and utilization of campus facilities.</p>	<p>a. The College has nearly doubled the campus' square footage since 2005, growing from 876,261 square feet to 1,644,971 square feet. Most noteworthy is that instructional space increased by 186,602 square feet (+ 41%) and does not include the \$14.2 million renewal of Houston Hall currently underway.</p> <p>b. The combined costs of the new facilities total \$182.8 million, with the funding sources shared by state capital outlay dollars (26%), proceeds from the sale of institutional bonds (60%), institutional funds (10%), and capital gifts (4%).</p> <p>c. Campus renovation projects have expanded the classrooms having current instructional technology from approximately 50% to a teaching environment where virtually every classroom has good technological access. Equally important, a campus technology standard has been developed for consistency across classrooms. To ensure that future technology needs can be addressed, the College has developed a comprehensive technology sustainability plan.</p>
<p>5. To review and prioritize academic programs.</p>	<p>a. Mesa State has added an extensive set of programs since 2004: 1 doctoral, 2 master's, 10 baccalaureate, and 3 associate degrees; 4 technical certificates; 6 minors; 12 concentrations; and a partnership program with the University of Colorado at Boulder.</p> <p>b. While the College is constantly reevaluating how to make the most efficient use of all resources, several formal processes have guided reallocations. The most thorough was the Academic Program Quality, Priorities, and Productivity review conducted during AY 2008 – 09.</p> <p>c. An in-depth process for reviewing academic programs occurs on a six-year cycle and involves a reviewer from outside the College. Each program's faculty prepares a self-study which, along with other College documents, is reviewed by a faculty reviewer from that discipline with no ties to Mesa State.</p>
<p>6. To more fully develop and implement the community college role of Mesa State College.</p>	<p>a. The Unified Technical Education Center (UTEC) formally changed its name to the Bishop Campus and became the primary location of Western Colorado Community College (WCCC) in 2005.</p> <p>b. WCCC developed a one-stop shop for students at the Bishop Campus enabling students to receive an application, apply for admission, be admitted, be advised, register for classes, pay tuition, and receive assistance with financial aid.</p> <p>c. Responsibility for the Developmental Education program was moved to WCCC in fall 2006 and more recently included an examination of how developmental education is delivered.</p>

Phase I Goal	Accomplishments/Progress Toward Goal
	<p>d. A Reading Lab is being piloted in summer 2010, and an ESL program is planned for fall 2010.</p> <p>e. WCCC has added 10 technical certificate and 2 associate of applied science degree programs since 2004.</p> <p>f. A second year high school med prep program, along with first responder and veterinarian assistant programs, were implemented, as well as a high school computer animation program.</p> <p>g. In summer 2009, the first Protocamp was offered, emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities. Protocamp was held again in summer 2010 and middle school and high school culinary camps were initiated.</p>
<p>7. To manage the college's resources efficiently.</p>	<p>a. Since 2005, the College has managed to achieve an annual average operating margin approaching 10%.</p> <p>b. Examples of steps taken to manage resources more efficiently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Resigned from the Colorado Higher Education Insurance Benefit Alliance (CHEIBA) in 2005 and secured health, life, and dental benefits independently. Cost avoidance is in the range of 15% annually or \$300,000.</li> <li>◆ Entered into a "Performance Contract" with Chevron to complete a facilities energy infrastructure audit and identify Energy Conservation Measures sufficient enough to pay for infrastructure improvements. Results identified approximately \$250,000 annually in energy conservation measures.</li> <li>◆ Solicited proposals in 2006 from professional providers interested in operating all existing food, beverage, and catering operations at the College. Reduced food service operational costs to the college by over \$300,000 annually.</li> <li>◆ Invested in a Health IQ program that creates financial incentives to employees in the form of lower co-pay of health insurance premiums in return for healthy lifestyle practices, reducing the College's annual health care premiums by \$40,000.</li> <li>◆ Launched a new Luminous Portal that allows integration of programs and yields long-term information technology and administrative efficiencies. The consolidated multiple license and support contracts in a single umbrella contract yields a projected savings of \$382,112 over ten years.</li> <li>◆ Streamlined fiscal, student, and academic administrative services in 2009 for savings of \$1.2 million.</li> </ul>

## ROLE AND MISSION

The context for the planning process begins with the College's role and mission. Revised in 2010, Mesa State College's role and mission is established by Colorado Revised Statutes 23-53-101:

There is hereby established a college at Grand Junction, to be known as Mesa state college, which shall be a general baccalaureate and specialized graduate institution with moderately selective admission standards. Mesa state college shall offer undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, teacher preparation, and business degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs. Mesa state college shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including vocational and technical programs. Mesa state college shall receive resident credit for two-year course offerings in its commission-approved service area. Mesa state college shall also serve as a regional education provider.

Additionally, the College's performance contract with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education articulates MSC's commitment to the State's four goals for higher education to:

- # 1: ensure widespread access to Colorado's public colleges and universities with particular focus on expanding the number of students who are prepared, and who apply and enroll, while maintaining and potentially increasing retention and graduation rates with particular emphasis on increasing the participation and success of underserved students.
- #2: improve academic competencies and provide learning experiences that (1) foster the development of skills and abilities that prepare students for the global economy; (2) prepare students for continuing, graduate or postgraduate professional studies; (3) ensure the transferability of general education courses; and (4) establish critical thinking and logic skills essential to full participation in a democratic society.
- #3: to provide for the efficient and effective stewardship of resources, be they tuition dollars, state or federal tax dollars, or other sources of funding.
- #4: to be a primary partner in educating a workforce that contributes to the economic development and growth of Colorado.

Given Mesa State's statutory language and performance contract commitments to the State of Colorado, how do they translate into practical reality for the institution? Mesa State College focuses on students as active partners in learning. Students, often first generation to college, access a faculty of teaching scholars and artists committed to exemplary instruction, and an engaged support staff with a strong customer-service orientation. The College delivers an academically rigorous, yet affordable, undergraduate education. It also has maintained a commitment to a liberal arts core for each of its certificate, associate, and baccalaureate programs. Undergraduate and graduate programs support preparation and/or advancement for professional careers or graduate school. In addition to outstanding teaching, the College's faculty members have strong commitments to scholarly and/or creative activities, advising, and service. As a public institution, Mesa State aligns with regional needs by enriching the intellectual, social, cultural, and economic life of Western Colorado and accomplishes its initiatives through an efficient and effective use of its resources.

## THE 2010 UPDATE TO MESA STATE'S STRATEGIC PLAN

### MOVING FORWARD SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS AND RESULTS

The Mesa State Moving Forward Survey was distributed online in April 2010. Invitations to complete the survey were sent via email to five of the College's stakeholder groups: current students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the business community. The number of respondents and response rates for each group are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 1. MOVING FORWARD SURVEY PARTICIPATION SUMMARY**

<b>Group</b>	<b># Surveyed</b>	<b># Responded</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Students	6,571	418	6%
Faculty	430	137	32%
Staff	300	111	37%
Alumni	1,568	275	18%
Business	1,359	405	30%

Each group was asked the same questions; demographics and complete results are found in Attachments B and C. Caution should be exercised in reviewing the results as none of the groups yielded responses that are statistically representative of students, faculty, staff, alumni, or the business community. The results, however, offer some insight about what the respondents think about the following questions and reinforce many of the factors cited above.

➤ **How important is it to you that Mesa State College:**

Of the items in this section of the survey, *Offers Baccalaureate degrees* received the highest rating of importance, with 97% of respondents rating it Important or Very Important. Similarly, 90% of respondents rated *Offers Masters degrees* as Important or Very Important. The item *Offers Doctoral degrees* received the lowest rating of importance as only 57% of respondents rated it Important or Very Important.

Among respondent groups, students were less likely to say it is important to *serve residents in the college's service region*. Students also gave lower importance to *offers technical certificates* than other groups, while rating *offers masters degrees* and *offers doctoral degrees* with higher importance than did other respondents. Compared to other groups, faculty gave lower ratings of importance to *offers associate degrees*, *offers masters degrees*, and *offers doctoral degrees*.

➤ **Select your level of agreement with the following statements:**

In this section of the survey, the item that respondents agreed with most strongly was *MSC has a positive impact on the region's economic and cultural development*, with 83% saying they Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement. *MSC delivers a quality educational experience* also received high ratings; 81% of respondents said they Agreed or Strongly Agreed. The items receiving the lowest ratings were *MSC makes classes accessible via a*

*variety of formats and times* and *MSC builds strong relationships with public and private partners in the region*, with 69% and 68% respectively saying they Agree or Strongly Agree.

Students gave lower ratings than any other respondent group on each of the six items in this section of the survey. Eighteen percent of student respondents said they Disagree or Strongly Disagree that *MSC makes classes accessible via a variety of formats and times*. Compared to other groups, faculty respondents gave the highest ratings to *MSC makes classes accessible via a variety of formats and times* and *MSC offers an affordable education*, while staff respondents rated *MSC has a positive impact on the region's economic and cultural development* and *MSC builds strong relationships with public and private partners in the region* the highest.

➤ **What limits the college from moving forward?**

In this section of the survey, *Funding for curriculum* was the item most often identified as a limit to Mesa State's moving forward, with 22% of respondents calling it a "strong limiting factor". *Sense of direction and focus* received the lowest rating as a limit to the college; 29% of respondents said that it was "not a limiting factor."

Among respondent groups, faculty were most likely to identify *Funding for curriculum* as a strong limiting factor. Faculty also rated *Public perceptions of higher education* and *Sense of direction and focus* as stronger limiting factors and rated *Funding for physical expansions* and *Relationships with businesses in the region* as less limiting than did other respondent groups. Students were more likely than other respondents to identify *Academic Programs* and *Relationship with student body* as limiting factors, while alumni rated *Funding for physical expansions* as more limiting than other respondents.

➤ **How should the college direct its focus during the next five years?**

The item receiving the highest importance rating in this section of the survey was *Maintaining affordability*, which was rated Important or Very Important by 91% of respondents. *Enhancing instructional quality* also received high ratings; 80% of respondents called it Important or Very Important. *Pursuing University status* had the lowest rating in this section, with 57% of respondents rating it Important or Very Important.

Compared to other groups, respondents from the business community gave higher ratings to *Strengthening partnerships with multiple institutions and community organizations*, *Adapting and reacting to market conditions*, and *Pursuing university status*. Students rated *Expanding certificate and degree programs* and *Maintaining affordability* higher than other respondent groups did. Faculty respondents gave higher ratings to *Enhancing instructional quality* and lower ratings to *Expanding certificate and degree programs* and *Maintaining affordability*, compared to other respondents. *Supporting a student oriented environment* was rated as more important by staff than other groups; staff rated *Pursuing University status* as less important.

➤ **How important should the following goals be for Mesa State College?**

Among the items in this section, *Recruit and retain quality faculty* received the highest rating of importance, with 92% of respondents saying it was Important or Very Important.



Other items rated as highly important were *Manage the college's resources effectively* and *Supporting activities that enhance student success*, with 87% and 86% calling them Important or Very Important, respectively. *More fully develop and implement the community college role* received the lowest importance rating; 50% of respondents said this item was Important or Very Important.

Respondents from the business community gave lower importance ratings to *Recruit and retain quality faculty* and higher ratings to *More fully develop and implement the community college* than did other respondent groups. Faculty rated *Recruit and retain quality faculty* as more important, and *Review and prioritize academic programs* as less important, compared to other respondents. Staff members were more likely than other respondent groups to rate *Manage the college's resources effectively* as important.

## **INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AND EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)**

Looking inwardly at Mesa State's accomplishments as they relate to the 2004 Strategic Plan offers one perspective, but the College does not operate in a vacuum. Its planning environment is complex and ever-changing. In order to best serve the public's interest, the College community must be mindful of external opportunities and threats as well as the institution's strengths and weaknesses. In addition to progress toward Phase I goals, discussions related to Phase II of MSC's Strategic Plan were informed by external and internal factors, an assessment frequently referred to as a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

This section summarizes the elements that the 2010 Strategic Planning Committee perceives will affect MSC's future direction. The lists that follow are not exhaustive nor are they prioritized unless so noted. Additionally, the committee considered the results of the Moving Forward survey conducted by MSC's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment in April 2010. Administered to five groups of internal and external stakeholders, the results summarized below lend insight to a broader range of perceptions about the College's future directions.

### **Institutional Strengths and Weaknesses**

Each of the College's strengths that has emerged through the Fast Forward phase should be protected and built upon as Mesa State moves to Phase II of its plan. Not surprisingly, the committee viewed the College's instructional environment as its greatest strength, capturing not only a student-centered faculty but also small classes, breadth of programs, and student performance on various assessments of learning. Overall, the increasingly positive reputation of the academic experience offered by the College led some committee members to conclude that it rivals that of many universities and Mesa State should pursue university status. More broadly, the SPC expects the College to fulfill a role for stimulating thought and discussion around regional, national, and international issues. By inviting distinguished speakers with different perspectives in the sciences, arts, business, politics, law, and public policy, Mesa State can contribute to the general education of students as well as faculty, staff, alumni, and community

members, thereby enriching MSC's academic environment and enhancing its reputation as a center for thought-provoking discussions.

Over the past few years, many individuals on- and off-campus have asked the MSC administration why Mesa State hasn't pursued university status? To them, the institution has matured to the point where it possesses many of the qualities more likely associated with a university than a college. Coupling the strength of its academic programs in general, the faculty more specifically, and all of the institution's gains outlined in this document, the strategic planning process is the appropriate context for a discussion of that possibility.

The second most common institution-wide strength cited was the newly renovated and expanded campus facilities which support effective instruction and engage students. Other strengths noted by the group were:

- Growing enrollments, reflecting the overall attractiveness of the institution;
- An administration that has managed the institution strategically and is effective in navigating the legislative process; and
- A "minority-friendly" environment on campus.

By contrast, the College is challenged by some weaknesses. While the accomplishments of Fast Forward are remarkable, progress has not been uniform across the College and the committee observed the following issues. The predominant weakness is the branding of the College. Whether it is the lack of widespread name recognition of Mesa State and Western Colorado Community College, ambiguity about the relationship of the two divisions, or perceptions of the institutions, the need to address this issue persists. Other limitations noted were:

- Potential burnout of faculty and staff;
- Low student participation in extracurricular activities;
- Apathy of the campus toward the College's external circumstances; and
- Limited alumni relationships.

### **External Opportunities and Threats**

Ideas for MSC opportunities appear almost limitless. The planning committee believes that the College can compete more aggressively for students statewide, especially if aided by stronger branding of MSC as it is maturing into a mid-sized institution with many of the characteristics associated with a university. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on highlighting and promoting the excellence of academic programs and faculty, student accomplishments, high quality facilities, and economic impact of the College.

Relationships between the College and the region also was a dominant theme that emerged, and ranged from a belief that the College can, and should, become a regional intellectual center to support new and expanded partnerships with businesses, school districts, and government agencies. Among other opportunities mentioned were:

- Engaging greater participation in the College by underrepresented students, faculty, staff, and community members as demographics shift both regionally and nationally;
- Expanding program opportunities at all degree levels;
- Targeting educational programs according to specific student group needs;

- Supporting the needs of first generation and non-traditional students; and
- Using resources from the business community available in the service region.

Threats to Mesa State impose limitations that temper what the College can realistically accomplish. After much discussion, the Strategic Planning Committee concluded that the most negative effect on Mesa State's future is Colorado's political climate, and by extension, its economic condition. Several key statistics document how much financial conditions have deteriorated over the past decade:

- In FY 1999, Colorado allocated 15.8% of its budget to higher education; by FY 2009, that proportion had declined to 9.7%.
- In FY 2001, the State's general fund accounted for 63.9% of MSC's revenues while tuition and fees contributed 36.1%. For FY 2011, the roles have been reversed, with the State funding 35.5% of the College's revenue and the balance (64.5%) from student tuition.

Beyond funding, postsecondary education competes with other priorities at both the state and federal levels, requiring the College to demonstrate its contribution to the larger public agenda. Oddly enough, these legislative calls for greater accountability of public higher education coincide with these declines in external support. Similarly, parental concerns about affordability are being voiced more loudly as families question the value of a college degree and view higher education as less accessible. These concerns over mounting tuition increases come at the same time they are being used to offset reduced state funding. With pressures from both key sources of College revenues growing, the institution's priorities will have to be constantly reevaluated in order for MSC to keep moving forward. Raising tuition too much could result in declining enrollments, yet the State seeks to cap tuition increases. Clearly the funding paradigm that has served higher education for so long has now shifted permanently.

Other threats identified by the planning committee included:

- Branding and other identity-related issues;
- Diversity of educational needs to be met throughout the service region;
- Increased competition for students and the ability of the College to sustain enrollment growth; and
- Lack of a multicultural perspective in a global society.

## **PROPOSED VISION STATEMENT FOR 2020**

It is the year 2020 and Mesa State has continued to mature into an institution of higher education that successfully prepares students from diverse backgrounds for lives of career and service anywhere in the world. Over the next decade, Mesa State College will seek to be the first choice institution for students, faculty, and staff.

To achieve this vision Mesa State will leverage:

- An adaptable, flexible approach to learning that allows students to choose from multiple and potentially integrated pathways to achieve certification, associates, bachelors, and graduate degrees.
- A highly qualified faculty that excels in teaching and interacting with students.
- A curriculum, often bridging liberal education and professional programs, that successfully prepares students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the areas of personal and social responsibility, civic engagement, ethics, and intercultural/ global learning.
- Continued investment in facilities and technology that expand, expedite, and enhance learning for every student.
- Community support from businesses, industries, alumni, and residents of the region.
- A wide array of academic programs that are improved on an on-going, continuous basis for quality and relevance to Western Colorado's needs in the context of an ever-changing world.
- An administration that uses human and natural resources wisely, embraces excellence, is committed to shared governance, and is focused on the future.

Mesa State in 2020 will be respected as a learning community that embraces diversity of students, faculty, staff, ideas, and degree levels, while maintaining a quality educational environment that focuses on serving its many constituents. As it assumes an expanded leadership role, MSC will expand its public engagement of the region's stakeholders by serving as the primary intellectual and cultural center and promoting the exchange of ideas that are of regional, national, and international importance.

## **PROPOSED VALUES STATEMENT**

Mesa State College values:

- high quality education in a student-centered environment;
- small class sizes and a high level of student/faculty interaction;
- a learning environment that develops and promotes the skills of inquiry, reflection, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, teamwork, and communication in students.
- student choice in academic programming that prepares future leaders to function as productive and responsible members of a global society;
- opportunities that engage students in applied learning;
- a faculty recognized for their professional expertise and quality of instruction;
- a staff committed to the highest quality of service to the College community;

- an attainable, accessible post-secondary experience for students in and outside of Western Colorado that emphasizes continuous improvement;
- a vibrant and varied campus setting that values diversity and diverse activities, and encourages involvement and interaction outside the classroom;
- a culture committed to integrity and academic and intellectual freedom;
- a community and region that supports the College in multiple ways;
- state-of-the-art facilities and technologies that enhance the learning environment; and
- a diversity of students, faculty, staff that promotes a balanced exchange of ideas.

## **PROPOSED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Goal: To raise the level of educational attainment in the 14-county region through the delivery of a wide array of quality programs that respond to regional needs at differing locations, formats, and times by developing
  - a. Mesa State College as the baccalaureate institution of choice for academically well-prepared students.

### Objectives:

- 1) By 2015, enrollment at MSC will achieve a financially sustainable level.
- 2) Raise the College's first-year retention and six-year graduation rates by three percentage points respectively over the planning period.
- 3) Prepare all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their careers, graduate education, and/or their community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's global economy through curricular enhancements that include, but not limited to:
  - a) Encouraging interdisciplinary learning in General Education courses.
  - b) Developing interdisciplinary learning as a fundamental component of the upper-division learning experience at Mesa State College.
- 4) Strengthen academic programs within available resources and student demand through accountability processes.
- 5) Align financial aid packaging strategies and funding with student success outcomes.
- b. Western Colorado Community College as an institution of access, affordability, and excellence that compliments Mesa State.

### Objectives:

- 1) Improve access through community awareness of course offerings and the alternative pathways to success for all students. By 2015, enrollment at WCCC will achieve a financially sustainable level.
- 2) Improve recruitment and retention rates by five percentage points respectively over the planning period through increased awareness in the five-county region for avenues for success for the individual student.
- 3) Strengthen integrated coursework in career and technical education to develop critical thinking and team-building skills through close ties with business and industry.

2. Goal: To implement a financial structure that results in a sustainable funding base for the institution.  
Objectives:
    - a. Reduce reliance on state support.
    - b. Maintain financial strength through prioritization of program development and offerings.
    - c. Pursue sustainable and eco-friendly technologies to reduce reliance on traditional and regulated utilities to meet energy needs.
    - d. Integrate continuous improvement practices into all support operations.
    - e. Pursue opportunities for external funding consistent with the College's priorities and its role and mission.
  
  3. Goal: To recruit, support, and retain excellent:
    - a. Faculty from diverse backgrounds who have teaching as their highest priority as well as a commitment to scholarly activity, advising, and service to the College and community.  
Objectives:
      - 1) Hire the College's first choice in faculty applicant pools in 100% of full-time faculty searches.
      - 2) Evaluate faculty appointment levels to ensure academic quality.
      - 3) Expand faculty professional development opportunities that are consistent with the College's role and mission and aligned with institutional priorities.
    - b. Administrative staff and classified staff from diverse backgrounds who are enthusiastic and share the vision and desire to improve the College and community.  
Objectives:
      - 1) Hire the College's first choice in staff applicant pools in all searches.
      - 2) Increase the number of employees from underrepresented groups and increase retention of all employees.
  
  4. Goal: To actively engage students of all backgrounds in on- and off-campus activities which broaden their educational experiences and enhance their successes.  
Objectives:
    - a. Involve first-time students in at least one extra-curricular student offering of the institution within their first two semesters.
    - b. Develop and improve relevant engagement opportunities for returning students, adult learners, and commuter students.
    - c. Develop student learning and/or development outcomes for all support programs offering enrichment services, leading to an increase in the senior NSSE composite score for supportive campus environment by five percentage points over the planning period.
    - d. Identify and coordinate ways in which to involve residents of the local community in supporting students and diversifying the experiences available to them.
  
  5. Goal: To expand the College's use of technology as it contributes to an exceptional student learning environment and broadened educational delivery.  
Objectives:
-

- a. Improve student and faculty access to innovative teaching and learning environments.
  - b. Improve student access to information and services.
  - c. Expand the campus standard for audiovisual presentation systems as emerging digital media display technologies mature.
  - d. Facilitate the region's access to educational opportunities by increasing the number of academic programs fully available through distance delivery formats to ten by 2013.
- 6) Goal: To strengthen Mesa State's brand perception and awareness to support and enhance the long term, stature, growth and competitive position of the institution.
- Objectives:
- a. Complete research on the potential change of name and status.
  - b. To raise the awareness and perception levels of the institution outside of Western Colorado (i.e., primary focus should be the Front Range of Colorado and select WUE Geo Metro Markets where the demographics, psychographics and student high school performance align with student success on campus).
  - c. To further enhance the perception and prestige of the institution (while at the same time leveraging its state of the art physical plant) by serving as the intellectual and cultural center for the region.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

If the College is successful in Phase II, it will not only mark an exciting new era in the life of the institution, but also an equally exciting new era in regional progress with Mesa State becoming an even greater driving force in Western Colorado. The stakes are high, the potential strong, and the challenges significant. The rewards, however, also are great if the College chooses to continue its movement of "Fast Forward!"





# **ATTACHMENTS**

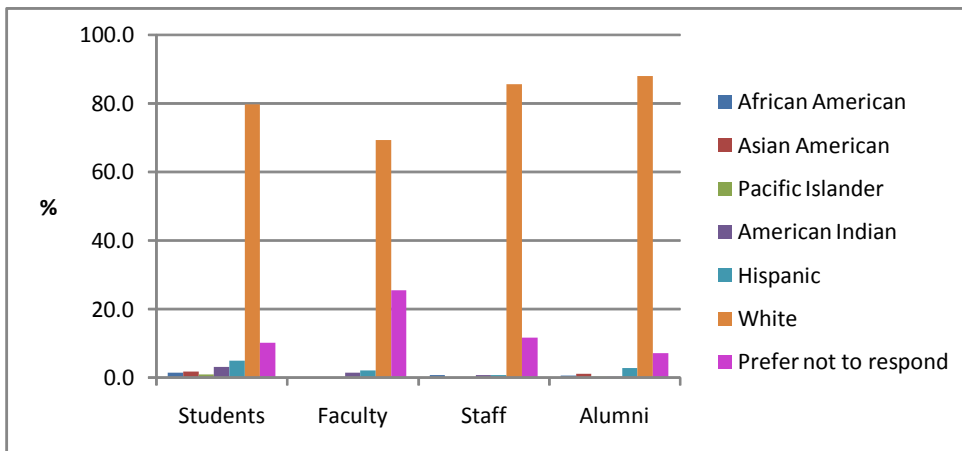
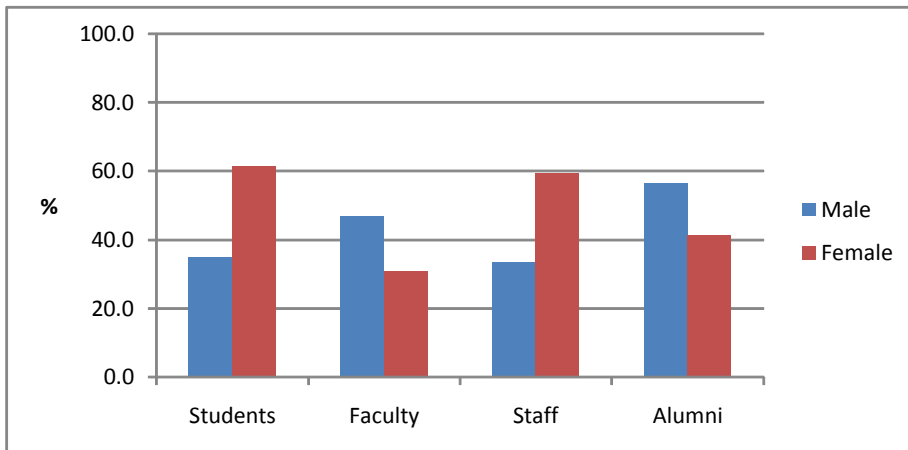
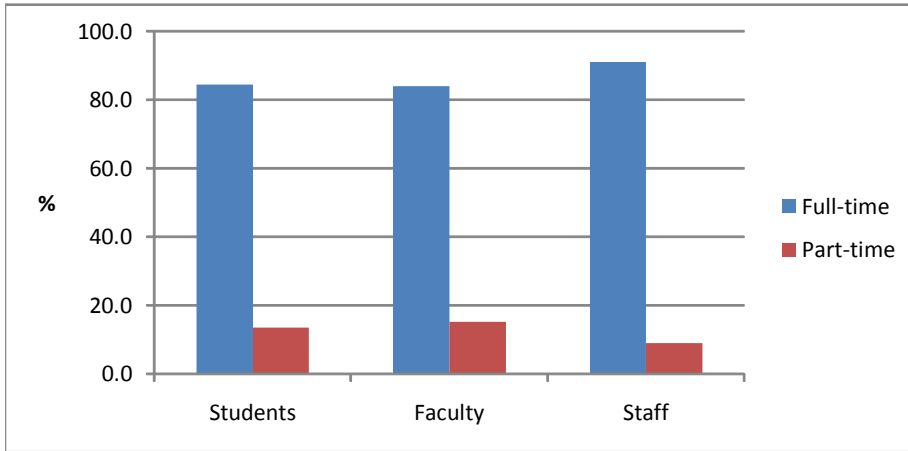


## **Attachment A: SPRING 2010 MESA STATE COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Kay	Alexander	Montrose Community Representative
Jeremy	Brown	MSC Exec Director, Communications and Information Technology
Harry	Butler	Mesa County School District 51 Board Member
Pat	Doyle	MSC Vice President, Finance and Administration
Steve	Elliott	CFO, Mesa Systems, Inc.
Terry	Farina	Grand Junction Attorney
Tim	Foster	MSC President
Rick	Fox	Facilities Services; President, MSC Classified Staff Council
Carol	Futhey	MSC Vice President, Academic Affairs
Glen	Gallegos	Community Representative
Kurt	Haas	MSC Associate Professor, English; Dept Head, Languages, Literature, & Mass Communication
Calvin	Hofer	MSC Professor, Music; Dept Head, Music
Georgann	Joufflas	MSC Instructor, Business
Nick	Lopez	MSC Associated Student Government President
Levi	Lucero	Community Representative
John	Marshall	MSC Vice President, Student Services
Steve	Meyer	President, Shaw Construction
Matt	Miles	Owner, Leadership Circle, LLC., Montrose
Tim	Moore	Director, Grand Junction Public Works and Planning
Diane	Schwenke	President/CEO Grand Junction Area Chamber
Jay	Seaton	Publisher, Grand Junction Daily Sentinel; Community Representative
Gayla	Slauson	Associate Professor, Computer Information Systems; MSC Faculty Senate President
Brigitte	Sundermann	MSC Vice President, Community College Affairs (Western Colorado Community College)
Mayela	Vallejos-Ramirez	MSC Associate Professor, Spanish
Derek	Wagner	MSC Director, Strategic Initiatives
Thomas	Walla	MSC Professor, Biological Sciences
Patti	Ward	MSC Professor, Radiologic Technology; MSC Faculty Senate Secretary

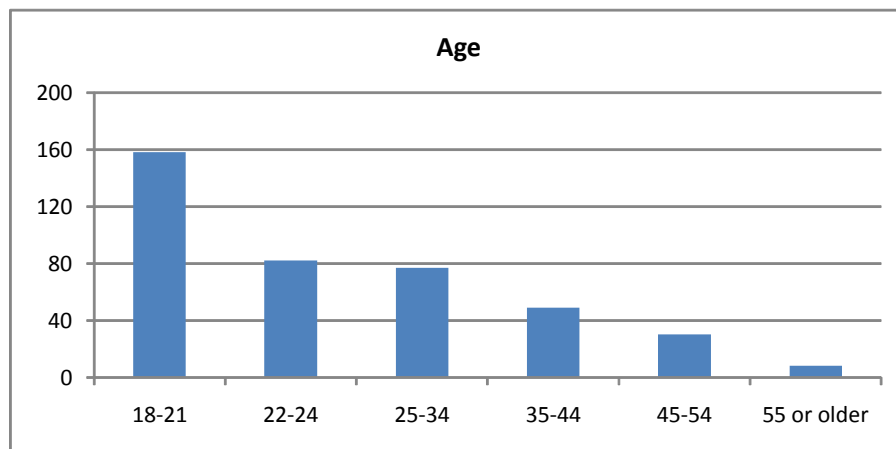
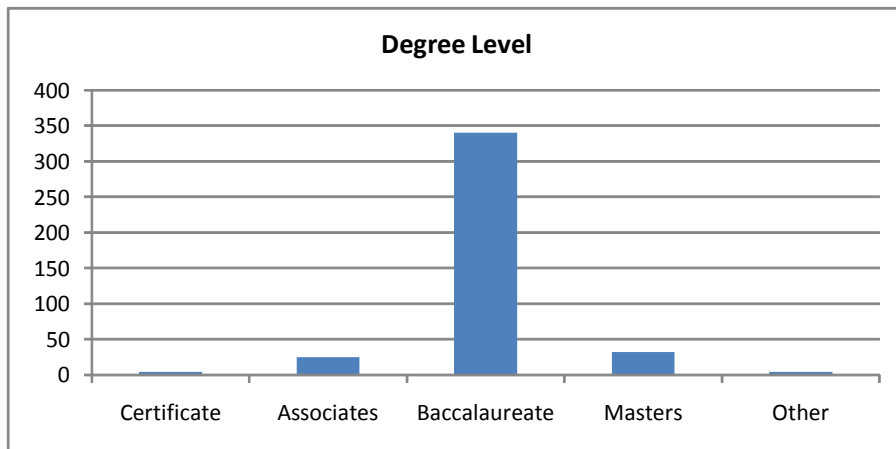
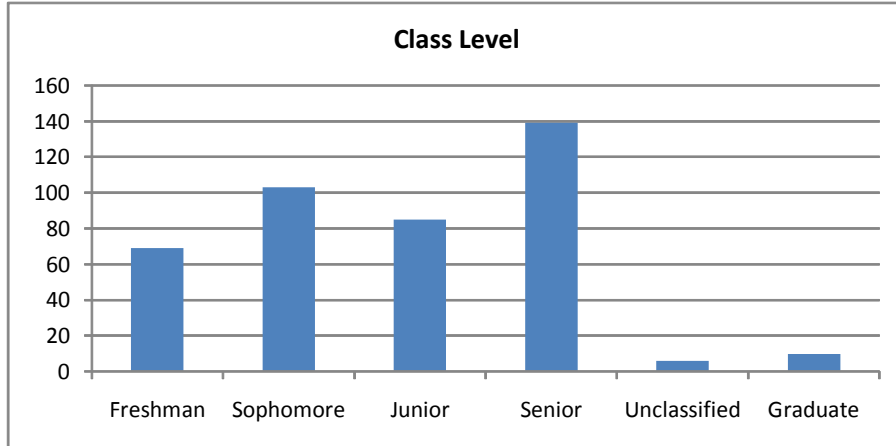
**Attachment B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Characteristics of MSC Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Respondents  
(N = 730; Response Rate = 34.0%)**



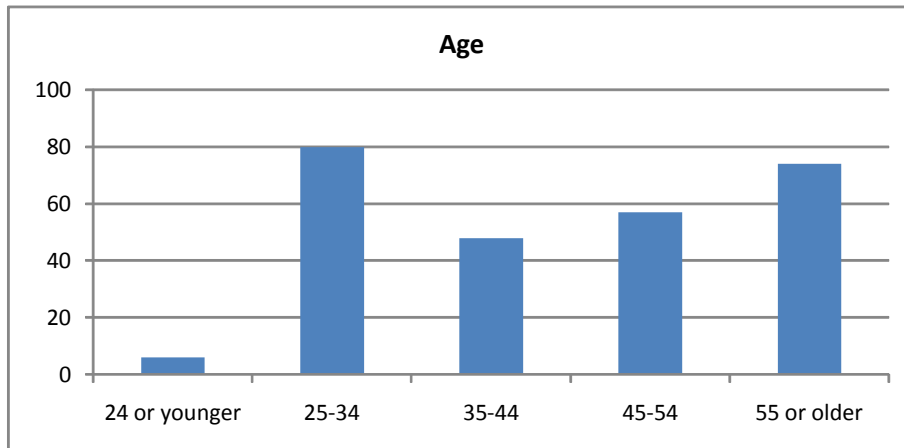
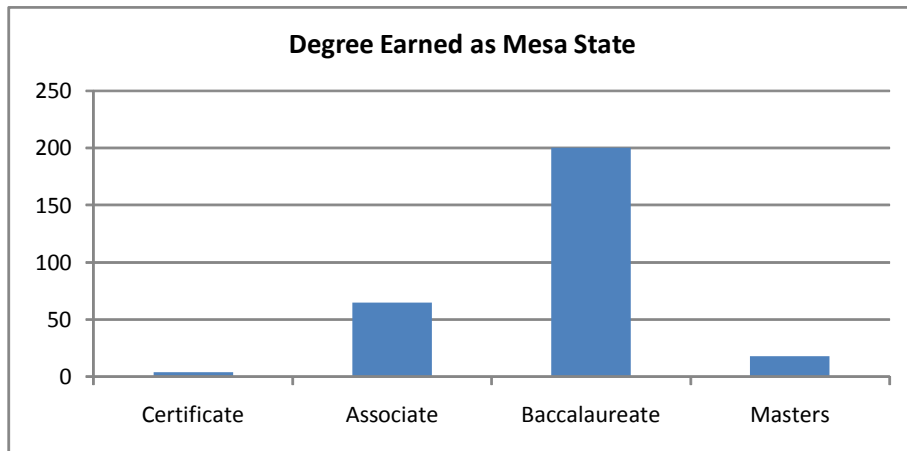
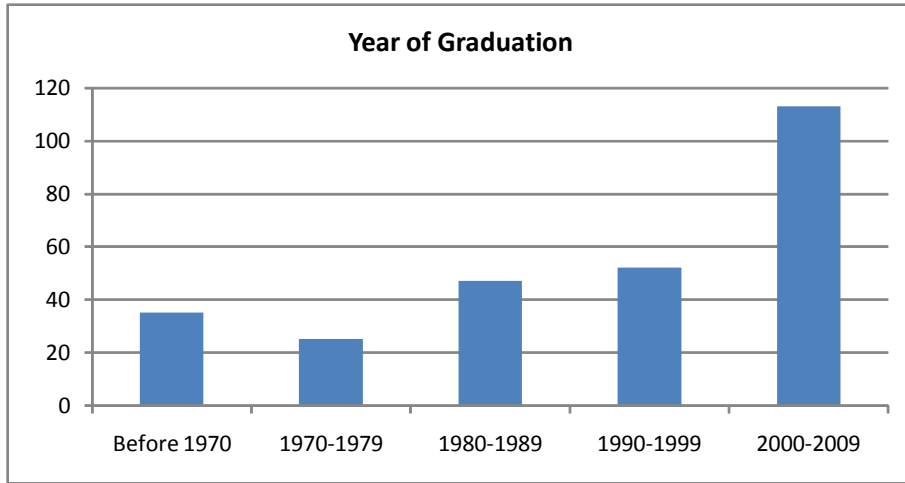
**Attachment B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Characteristics of MSC Student Respondents  
(N = 6,571; Response Rate = 6.3%)**



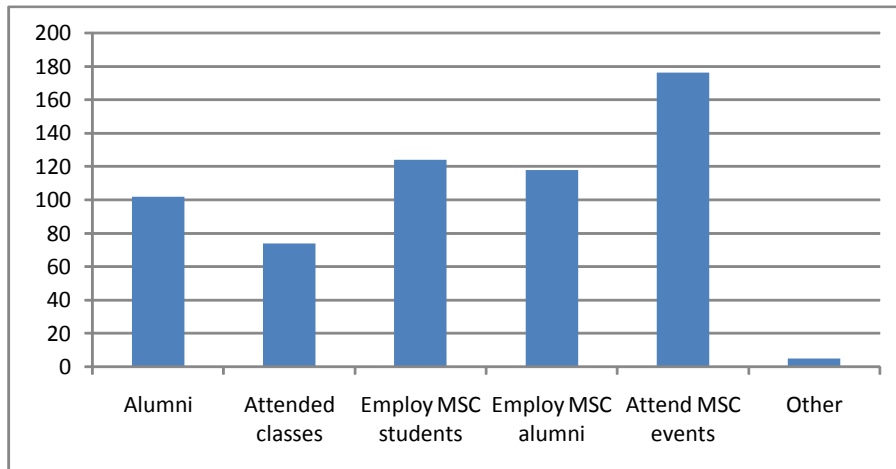
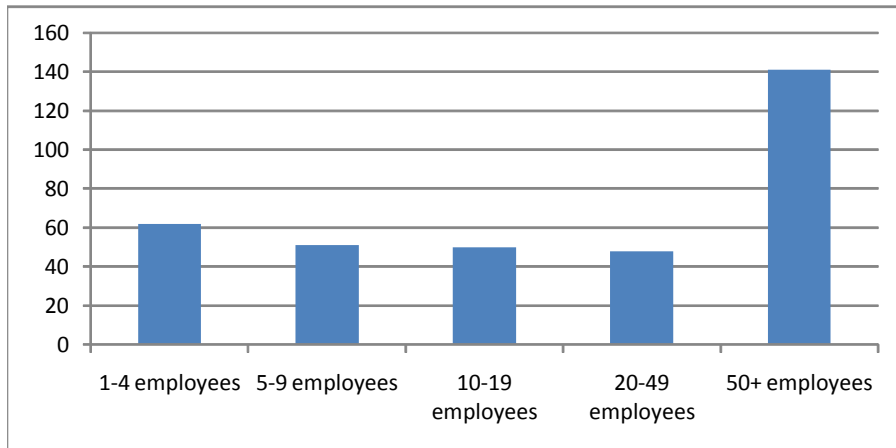
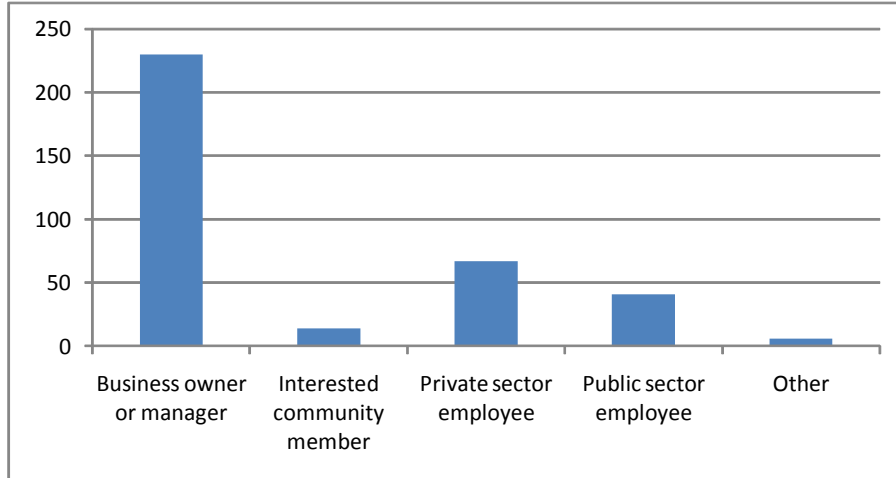
**Attachment B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Characteristics of Alumni (with email addresses) Respondents  
(N = 1,568; Response Rate = 17.5%)**



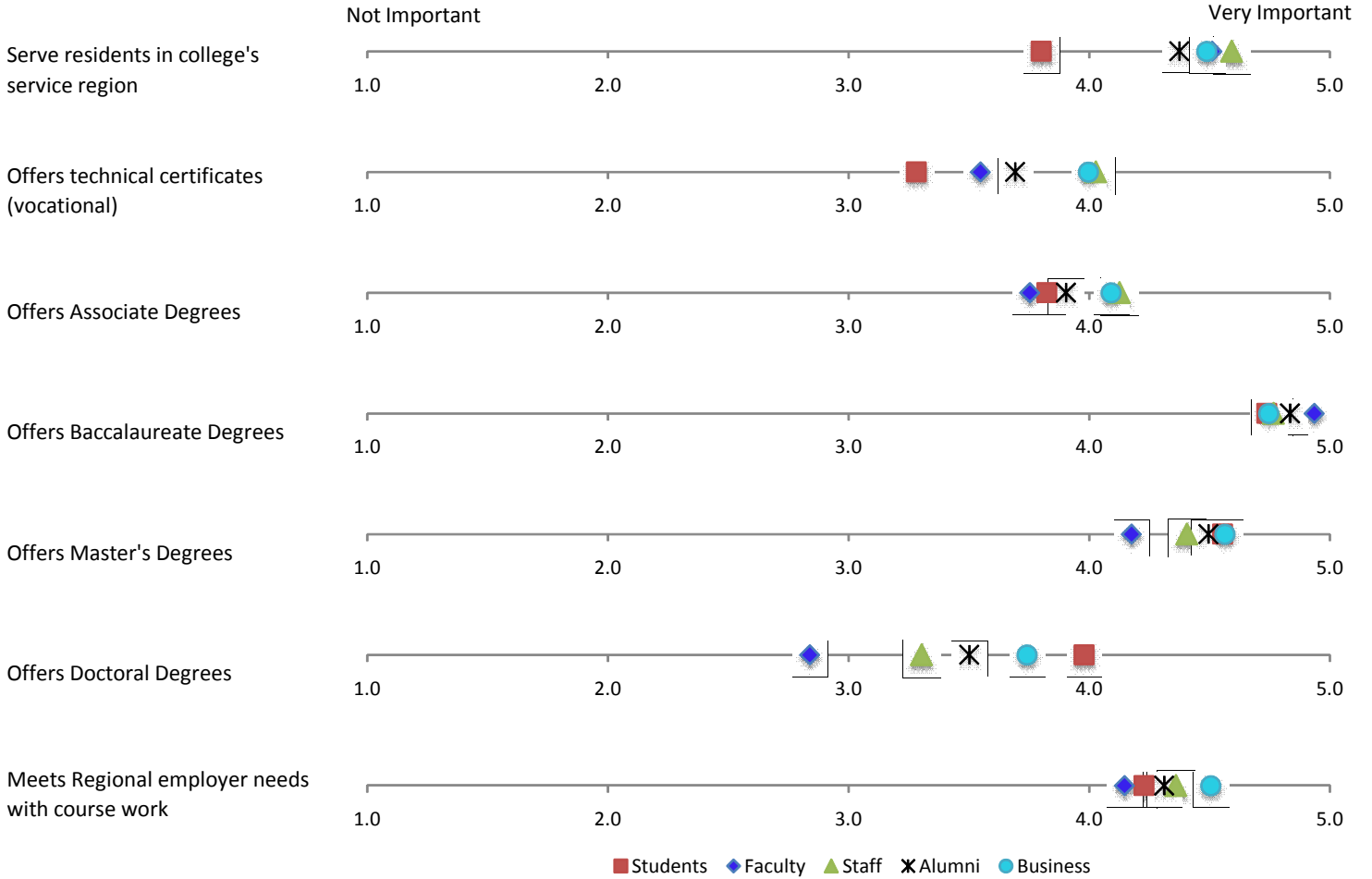
**Attachment B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Characteristics of Business Community Respondents  
(N = 1,359; Response Rate = 26.3%)**



### Attachment C. RESULTS OF MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010

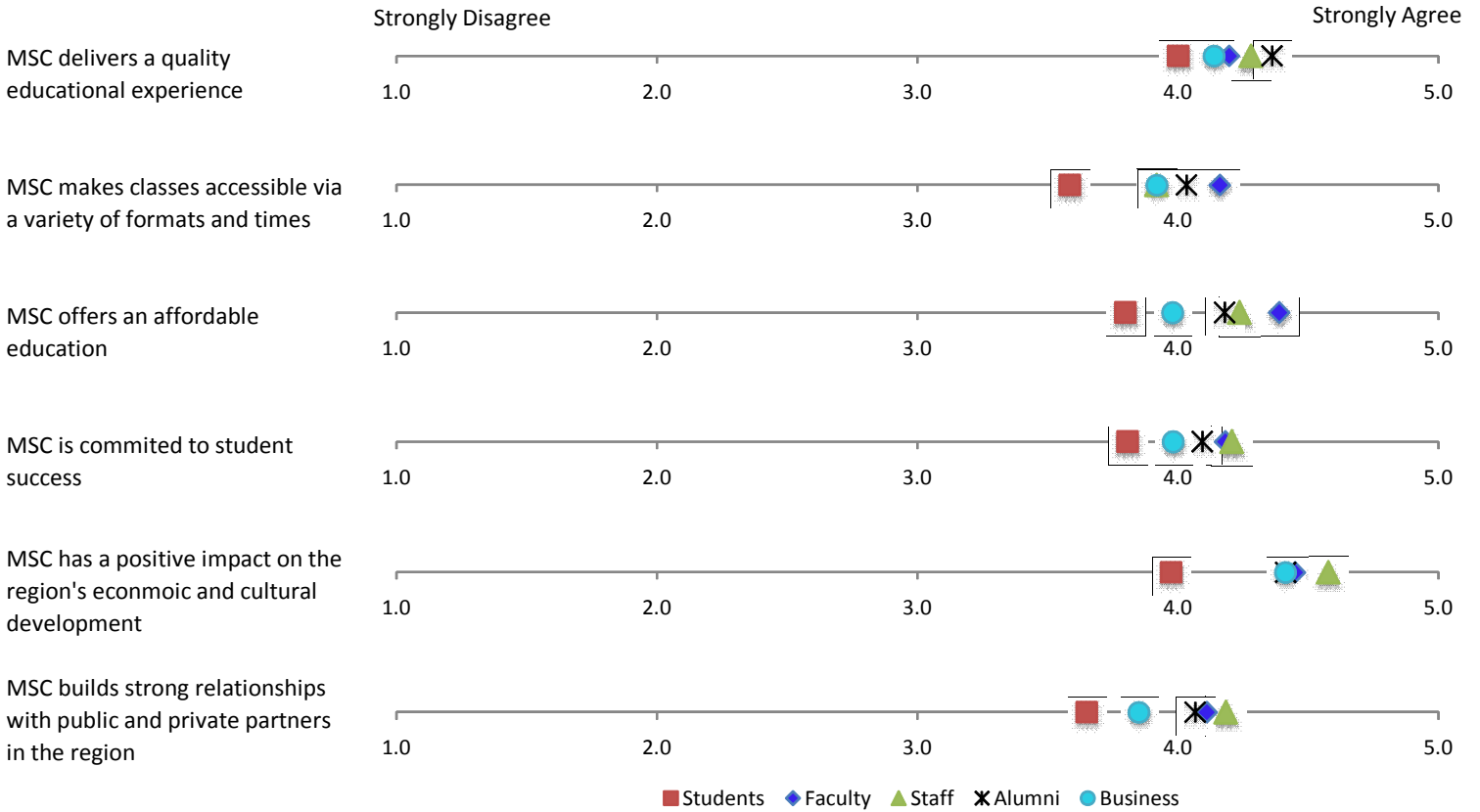
Question 1: How important is it you you that Mesa State College:





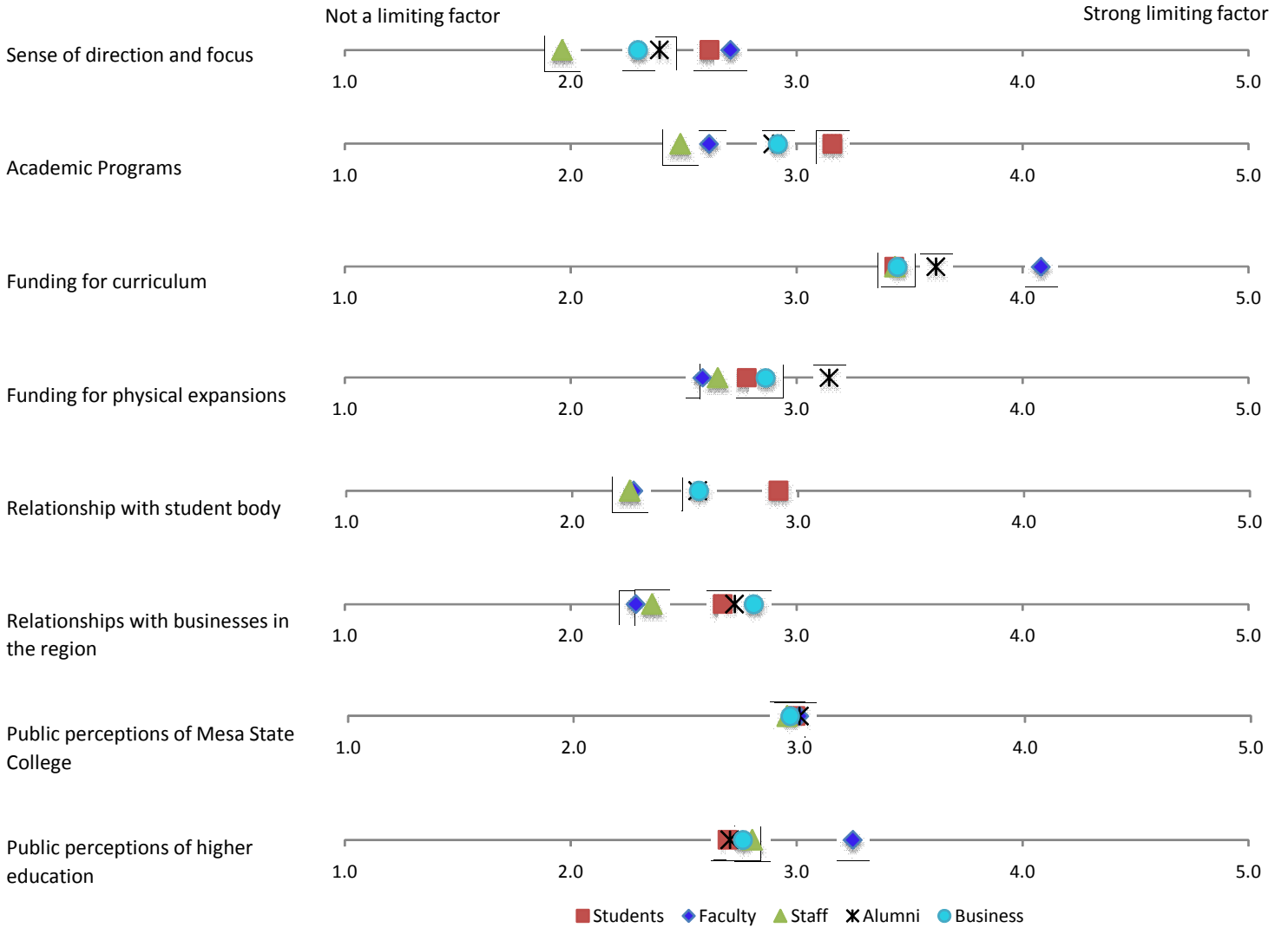
**Attachment C. RESULTS OF MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Question 2: Select your level of agreement with the following statements:**



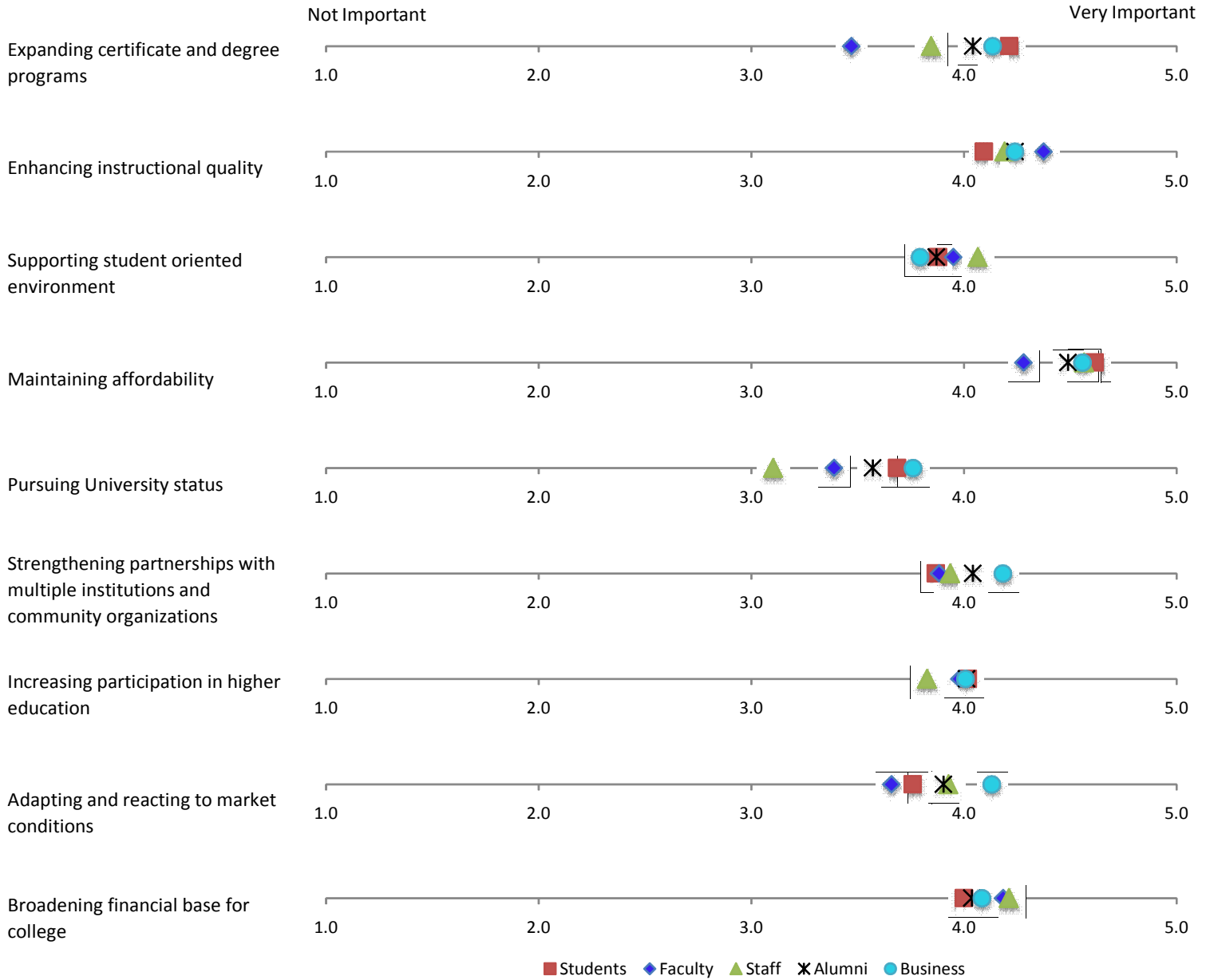
**Attachment C. RESULTS OF MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Question 3: What limits the college from moving forward?**



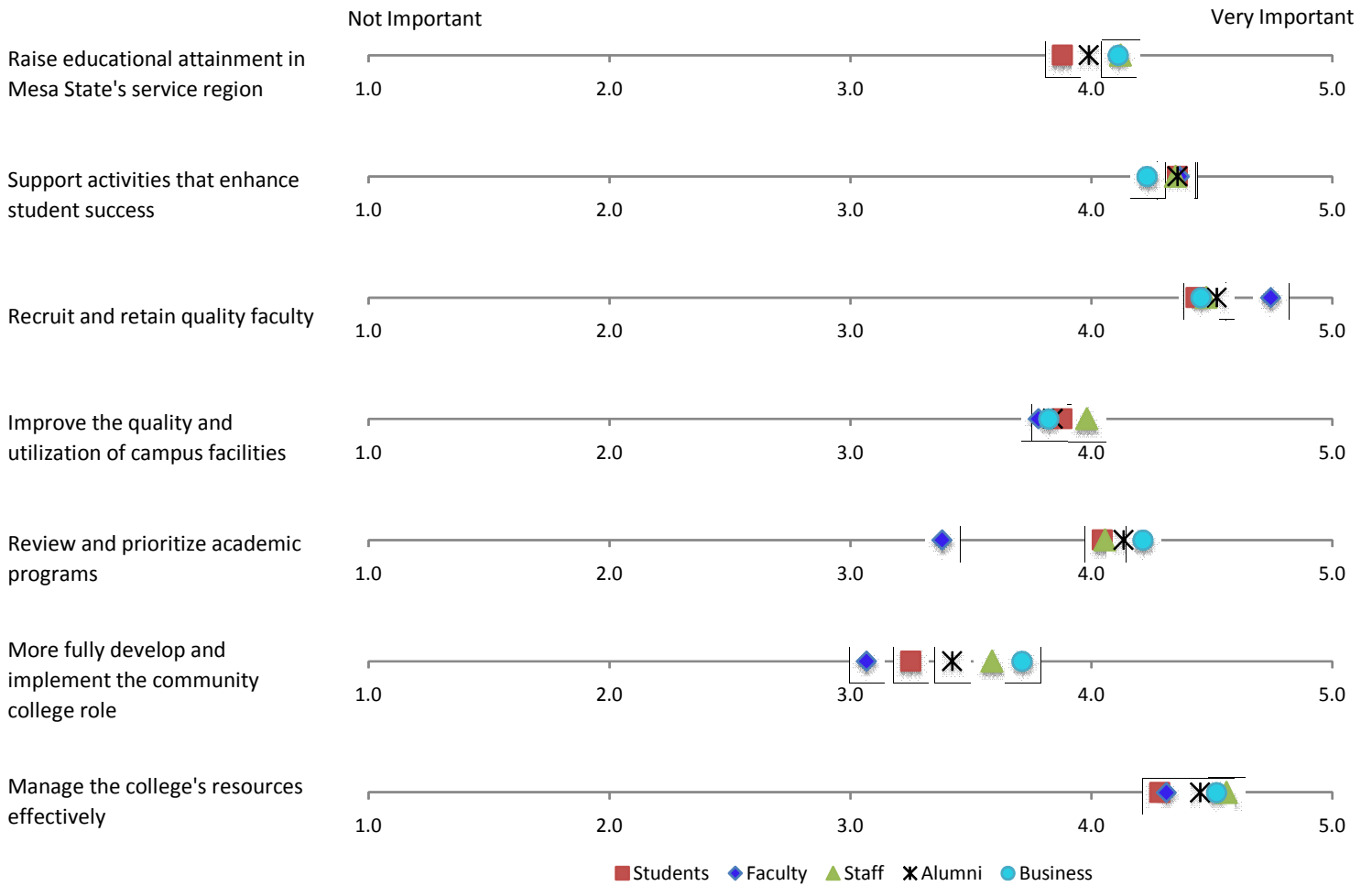
### Attachment C. RESULTS OF MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010

Question 4: How should the college direct its focus during the next five years?

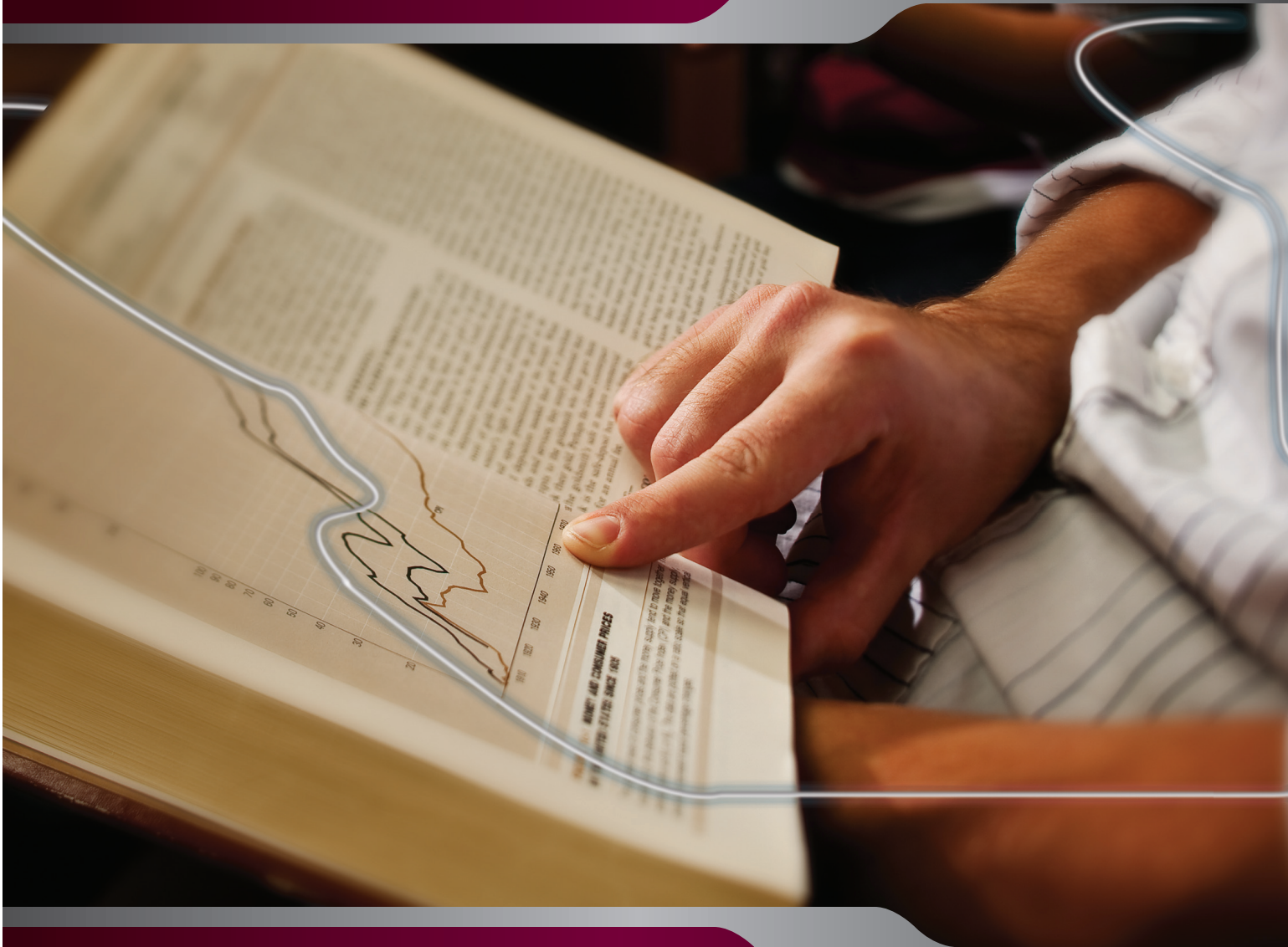


**Attachment C. RESULTS OF MOVING FORWARD SURVEY, SPRING 2010**

**Question 5: How important should the following goals be for Mesa State College?**







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