SAN MARINO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
ACADEMICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES
November 5, 2014

Call to Order: Chair Brinton Young called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM in the College and Career Center at San Marino High School.

Members present: Brinton Young (Chair), Tom Armbruster, Doug Berry, Alex Cherniss, Shelley Enger, Julia Greer, Louise Hindle, Jason Kurtenbach, Lisa Link, Gary McGuigan, Ananth Natarajan, Chris Norgaard, Yu Wen Taylor, Larry Wong

 Minutes approved by consensus. – yes

1) Welcome; Board of Education focus areas for AAC – B.Young, C.Norgaard, L.Link & A.Cherniss

Areas of Focus presented by A.Cherniss (see attached) on behalf of the board. Followed by wide-ranging discussion.

Opening comments and observation from committee:
- Have we achieved what AAC set out to achieve regarding liberalization of AP access?

Points made:
- Always review data available and impact, expansion and of provisions and access (D.Berry)
- Need to keep engaging in qualitative analysis to counter misinformation about access to colleges (B.Young).

Upon S.Enger's request, focus areas then contextualized, explained and discussed in turn.

Focus Area 1: **AAC to help enlist parents and other community professionals to discuss their criteria when evaluating job applicants. In turn – what are the implications for our districts' educational goals?**
- Item discussed in more detail later on during the meeting and led by A.Natarajan and J.Greer. Request made by Yu-Wen Taylor for open commitment from administration in her endeavors to support community outreach initiative.
- Suggesting that we contact AAC alumni to attend occasional AAC meetings to talk through and track success narratives (C.Norgaard)

Focus Area 2: **AAC to assist with recommendations on expanded course offerings; K-12 (example given as Computer Science)**

- Discussion followed on ideas and initiatives so far: led by A.Cherniss. Examples given – partnerships with The Huntington Library and interest in becoming involved in The Huntington's mission to train teachers in CCSS, Arts & Humanities. Potential for Blended Learning model, for example. Second example is to expand course offerings via Caltech. Latter still seeking UC approval, but will aim to build on Caltech's current STEM offerings. Overall aim for the district is to incorporate expanded course offerings not only for SMHS students, but for HMS students and, in time, to roll the program down to elementary level.
- SMHS Computer Science Program discussed – D.Berry. Aim to offer C++ next academic year. Planning for progressive computer science class. Offer to share resources and course materials developed previously- T.Armbuster.
   Questions asked about course materials and level of complexity to date - A.Natarajan and comparison with PCC offerings, S.Enger.

*Focus Area 3***: AAC to assist in endeavors with community outreach regarding college preparation strategy**

- Context and genesis fleshed out by B.Young. Aims being to offer community with broader range of informational presentations, combining qualitative and quantitative and forging greater understanding of 'balanced' approach to number of APs a student should take – for example.
- Increase community's understandings of process and choices – including increased knowledge of Liberal Arts College options as well as pathways for graduate school
- Request made by Yu-Wen Taylor for opportunity to work with SMHS Principal and counselors in order to formulate a model of resource management and build meaningfully on existing channels of success.

*Focus Area 4***: AAC to support with data collection on programs utilized by other high-performing schools nationally**

- Discussion focused on what constitutes a high-performing school- how do we know? What are the key indicators/measurements? Examples of schools given by those present. More information needed as well as normalized studies, beyond the anecdotal.
- Discussion also about what SMUSD should strive to be better at specifically. Suggestions given in Computer Science and Humanities; suggestion also to look at other districts with similar organizational structures.
- Suggestion made to make contacts with college admissions officers for guidance.

2) What we look for when we hire, teach and place- qualities for success– Committee and participants.

Agenda item led, upon request, by J.Greer and A.Natarajan with context being, what's the end-game as San Marino students prepare for professional life?

Points made:

- Undergraduate and graduate life is about survival skills. Students need to be prepared to respond to challenges and they need to be confident. They need to be adaptable, dynamic and demonstrate excellent problem solving skills.
- Point made that there is no magic formula for access to Caltech or any other high performing school. Future employees more inclined to place graduates who have been challenged and who can demonstrate that they can handle failure.
- Other skills admired and encouraged include: collaboration; responsiveness; open-mindedness; perseverance and readiness to ask questions and acknowledge where there are gaps in their knowledge.
- If applying for internships, students should be prepared to demonstrate genuine intellectual curiosity
- Discussion about integration of projects/project based learning opportunities in SMHS life. This would help develop problem solving skills.
- Offer made by J.Greer to assist with formulation of challenging project work with SMHS cohort.
- Further requests made for support of 'outside' regular curriculum too, such as the merits of 'Speech and Debate' for all.

3) HMS Update – J.Kurtenbach

Responded to and acknowledged that all that was just discussed in terms of project work, problem solving etc is underway and being integrated at HMS. In addition, it should and could be integrated in every class. Example given of DBQ (Document Based Questions) and other curricular initiatives focusing on team-work, seeking evidence and arguing a case. Challenge continues to be community/parents understanding/value placed on such exercises, as well as for participation grades.

4) SMHS Update – D.Berry

College Application Report data presented (copy attached). Key achievements: 184 applications submitted; high number of students attending college prep workshops. Increased internship opportunities. Positive participation rates for SMUSD Tech Academy.

> ➢ Next Meeting to be decided.
> **Meeting Adjournment: Brinton adjourned the meeting 9.04pm**