SBC Student Input (Spring 10)

Introduction
The current study was a part of an effort to collect more information about Gavilan College instructional and support service expansion in San Benito County. In order to understand the opinions of students, a series of focus groups were conducted with student currently enrolled (Spring 10) at the Hollister site.

Method
A total of five courses were sampled. Instructors from a list of 12 courses were contacted and the first five who responded were scheduled. The courses included two evening courses and three day courses. Two courses were taught by full time and three by part time instructors. One course was from the CTE division. All courses were collegiate courses, except one, a basic skills English course. Approximately, 80 students participated.

A series of prompts were posed to students, who responded individually and as a group. The discussions took approximately 15 minutes each.

Results (listed by the frequency in which they were suggested)

Why are you taking this course at the Hollister Site?
- Convenience, no parking fees, transportations costs,
- Availability to children in childcare or at home,
- No time to commute due to work,
- Don’t drive or have access to a car,
- Commute to and from Salinas, an additional commute would be difficult.

What additional courses would you like to see offered in Hollister?
- Any science courses, lab credits,
- More GE options,
- PE courses, current offerings crowded and only ½ unit,
- Fine Arts,
- Administration of Justice courses,
- More math,
- Higher level Math courses,
- Higher level English courses,
- Have more courses especially at night,
- Computer science,
- Business courses,
- Block scheduling so students can put together an entire day of courses,
- Anything.
Other needs
- Tutoring,
- Computer Science lab,
- No study space,
- Book reserve program,
- A space for students to hang out,
- More of a college environment, “It feels like we are going to school in a parking lot”.

Programs
- Nursing, ultrasound, blood drawing,
- Administration of Justice,
- Cosmetology,
- Special needs students/child development, sign language,
- Automotive,
- Green industry,
- Sports therapy,
- Fine arts,
- GECA –like program,
- Agriculture,
- Veterinarian–tech,
- Culinary art.

Discussion
Prior to a consideration of the results, it must be noted that the current focus group discussions represented a small sample of the total Hollister student population. While a concerted effort was made to select courses that represented the total courses on dimensions of instructor status, start time, division and discipline, it must be recognized that students in the courses not selected may have different opinions than those in the current study. Moreover, students’ suggestions of courses that are needed may not translate into actual enrollment.

The findings suggest that most students who currently take courses at the Hollister site find its convenience and low transportations-associated costs important. Another salient issue mentioned by several students was that parents of young children appreciated being close to their children who are either at home or in childcare. Several other students highlighted the advantage of free parking at the Hollister site.

Most all students strongly emphasized the need for more classes in Hollister. Some of the most popular suggestions were any science, fine arts, and physical education courses. Students reported that without these options it is difficult to piece together a transfer pattern of courses. Several students suggested scheduling courses so a student seeking a GE pattern could take courses all day without traveling to the Main campus.

Several students also suggested that more upper-level English and Math courses be offered. Other students suggested that more Administration of Justice, Computer Science, and Business courses were needed.
Students also had suggestions as to additional services needed at the current or future Hollister site. Tutoring was consistently requested by students. One student suggested a book reserve program. Many students commented on the lack of a College feel of the current facility. Students suggested that any new facility should have an area for students to congregate.

As far as future programs, students had a variety of suggestions including many technical programs such as: Nursing, Cosmetology, Automotive, Agriculture, Green Industry, Child Development, and Administration of Justice. Others suggested that there be a high school program like the Gilroy Early College Academy.

In sum, once asked current students provided impassioned suggestions. In many students opinions, the current offerings and facilities are inadequate. Many had specific suggestions which can guide course and program offerings.