**What is the Need/Assessment?:**

There was concern expressed by several faculty across the Maricopa Community College District regarding access to MCCCD’s Student Conference because only 28.7% of conference proposal submissions were accepted in 2017. Additionally, 42% of Student Conference proposals submitted in 2017 had the same faculty sponsor. No feedback was provided to students who submitted nor was there an opportunity to learn from their experiences because of the lack of feedback. Concerned faculty from South Mountain and Paradise Valley conveyed messages that there was a lack of transparency in the submission process in 2017 and in the organization of the event that led them to question the integrity of the process along with future participation in MCCCD’s Student Conferences. Given that EMCC hosts the MCCCD Student Conference and that feedback from 2017 participants was extremely negative, this was an issue that needed to be addressed in the 2018 MCCCD Student Conference hosted by EMCC. There was a need for greater transparency, a feedback loop for students and faculty mentors, greater outreach to address concerns, and greater participation across the Maricopa Community College District.

**Describe the necessity for this change:**

With less than 1 out of 3 conference proposals being accepted in the 2017 MCCCD Student Conference, it was more difficult to be accepted to MCCCD’s Student Conference than some regional and national research conferences. If EMCC espouses a learning college philosophy, then it should be lived out in all of the student experiences, especially those that are academic in nature like the Student Conference. Additionally, the 2017 Student Conference led some faculty at different colleges to believe that this was an EMCC conference rather than a district wide conference because more than 4 out of 10 proposals came from the same EMCC faculty sponsor. Thus, the necessity for change was related to issues of equity and addressing the misperception that all MCCCD students did not have equal access to the MCCCD Student Conference.

**Describe what will be (or was) implemented to affect change:**

We built in a process for students to received feedback on their proposals and the opportunity for students to revise and resubmit proposal submissions. Students were given their scores once proposals were judged and had the opportunity to not only meet with their faculty sponsor. All students also had access to EMCC’s Honors Director for AY 2017-18, a trained researcher and expert in research methods, for individual and group meetings for directed guidance on proposals. Additionally, student and faculty who participated in the Student Conference 2018 received their judged rubrics with concrete feedback so that they could learn from the process. There was a lot of transparency in the process from the submission phase to the evaluation part of the Student Conference pipeline. Moreover, Honors staff increased their efforts to reach out to staff, faculty and students across the college district to inform them about the Student Conference 2018, changes from the previous year’s Student Conference, the added transparency and the opportunity to revise and resubmit proposals.

**Interpret, compare and describe the results of the change:**

There are multiple findings in this CATS. 1) There was a significant increase in acceptance rates for Student Conference proposals in 2017 (28.7%) to acceptance rates for Student Conference proposals in 2018, X^2 (1, N=184) = 24.40, p<.001. 2) We increased participation to 9 MCCCD colleges. We had never had so many different colleges participate in the time that EMCC has been hosting. 3) Feedback from evaluation forms for participants was very positive. Qualitative comments from faculty judges and mentors commented on the “high caliber of work” presented compared to previous MCCCD Student Conferences hosted by EMCC. 4) Student presenters commented that the rubrics were extremely useful to prepare a high quality poster or oral presentation. 5) Faculty mentors commented that they would be more likely to participate in forthcoming years because of the transparent nature of the experience and additional feedback loops that were absent from previous Student Conferences.

**After analyzing the information, what are the next steps?:**

We implore 2019 Student Conference organizers to 1) continue the practice of greater transparency by giving students and faculty mentors their scores and judged rubrics, 2) allow students to revise and resubmit their conference proposals, 3) continue to outreach and encourage other MCCCD colleges to participate in the Student Conference, 4) continue to provide feedback for students and their mentors at the proposal and presentation stages and, more importantly to 5) develop a way to ensure high inter-rater reliability for those judging the conference. Unfortunately, we are no longer involved in MCCCD’s Student Conference 2019, but hope that the changes that we implemented serve some value and that we are able to share what we learned from our experiences with future organizers.

**Abstract:**

MCCCD’s Student Research Conference which is hosted by EMCC had limited participation in spring 2017. More than 4 out of 10 proposals for the 2017 Student Conference came from one instructor’s students and the acceptance rate was extremely low (28.7%). The acceptance rate for MCCCD’s Student Conferences prior to 2017 was usually above 50%. Students that submitted proposals received no feedback for their submissions and were not informed as to why their proposals were not accepted. Faculty feedback across the different Maricopa colleges was extremely negative because of the low acceptance rate and the disorganization that faculty at other sister colleges reported in terms of the process and presentations for the 2017 Student Conference. This practice contradicts EMCC’s learning college philosophy that “we put learning first” and “engage learners in the process as full partners.” Additionally, it undermines our vision, mission and values that we “provide exceptional and creative learning experiences that prepare all learners.” As the faculty coordinator for the 2018 Student Conference and key administrative assistant, we revamped several components of the Student Conference for 2018 to allow greater access and equity in the process including the opportunity for students to revise and resubmit proposal submissions. In 2018, over 70% of proposals for the Student Conference were initially accepted compared to only 28.7% in 2017; and 100% of revised proposals were accepted. Additionally, we had the most participation across the college district with a record 9 out of 10 MCCCD schools that participated in some way including student participants, faculty mentors and/or faculty judges. Student participants and faculty mentors received a copy of their scores given that the Student Conference is a judged competition; thus, the lack of transparency from previous student conferences was addressed. Participants who attended the 2018 Student Conference reported that the quality and rigor of scholarship in the presentations definitely increased and they self-reported that this could be attributed to the feedback loop and opportunity to revise and resubmit.