TO: Alamo Colleges Family
FROM: Deb Morgan, District Director
       Change and Organizational Development
RE: Improving our Processes
DATE: November 5, 2010

Through process management and improvement, Senior Leaders in the Alamo Colleges are committed to creating an integrated system that will enable the achievement of the Alamo Colleges vision “To be the best in the nation.” In order to achieve the vision, Presidents and Vice Chancellors are conducting an analysis of how we design, manage, and improve key processes to deliver student and other stakeholder value to achieve organizational success and ensure long-term sustainability. During a September meeting dedicated to this topic, the Chancellor, Presidents, and Vice Chancellors compiled a list of all processes across the Alamo Colleges. As you examine this list called The Alamo Colleges Process Model consider that the items in the first domain identify processes that leaders across the Alamo Colleges are engaged in to provide strategic direction and to ensure effective governance. The second domain, called, “Value-Stream,” reflects processes through which we deliver direct services and instruction to our students. The processes listed on the second page reflect the work of the district operations to support delivery of instruction and student services by the Colleges. Each of these processes exist in support of our Mission of “Empowering our diverse communities for success.”

Recognizing an opportunity to achieve significant gains in both efficiency and effectiveness through the implementation of a systematic improvement methodology, two key processes have been identified by the Chancellor’s Executive Team as pilot projects. The two processes undergoing analysis and study are Distance Learning and Financial Aid. The pilot process improvement will be accomplished by a team of subject matter experts from across the Alamo Colleges.

Team members are charged to:

- Map and understand the current processes
- Identify student and/or other stakeholder requirements for the process
- Analyze the current processes and identify current gaps or opportunities to better meet student/stakeholder requirements (leveraging Banner Business Process Analysis Flowcharts as applicable)
- Identify and adopt “best practices” from other organizations who conduct similar processes
- Develop and implement an improved process based on the knowledge gained through analysis of collected data
- Identify measures to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the improved processes
- Identify targets (goals) for performance in each measure
The Distance Learning Process Improvement Team has already begun their work under the leadership of Dr. Eric Reno and Dr. Robert Aguero. The Financial Aid team will begin work in February, after Spring enrollment, under the leadership of Dr. Lina Silva and Dr. Ana “Cha” Guzman. Both teams are working with Baldrige expert, Jan Johnson, who will be facilitating the process methodology. Recommendations for the improvement of these processes are expected to be reviewed beginning in February, 2011. Eventually, all key process owners will be encouraged to utilize this improvement methodology.

The Chancellor’s Executive Team will continue to refine the Alamo Colleges Process Model and will identify those processes within the model that are “key.” Process owners will be defined for each of the “key” processes and they will use a systematic approach to define, measure, and improve each of the key processes. Many employees will participate as members of the process improvement teams in the coming months. Your participation on these teams will allow us to leverage your best thinking on how to improve the delivery of our instruction and services to students and to one another.

As we move towards a consistent methodology to improve our processes, I welcome your suggestions, your insight and your expertise. As Peter Senge says in his book titled The Fifth Discipline (1990, p. 12), “Systems thinking makes understandable the subtest aspect of the learning organization...At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind—from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something ‘out there’ to seeing how our own actions can create many of the problems we experience. A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they change it.”