

COLLEGE OF

MARIN

FIRE TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY MEETING

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 2021 10 -11:30 A.M.

Minutes

Attended:

Mark Brown, MWPA Executive Officer

Larry Pasero, Kentfield Fire

Scott Freedman, Novato Fire District - Battalion Chief of EMS

Matt Windrem, San Rafael Fire - BC of EMS and Training

Dave Glenn, Kentfield Fire, Battalion Chief, Training Officer Kentfield Fire and Central Marin Fire

Anna Pilloton, COM Director of School and Community Partnerships

Graham Groneman - Marin County Fire Department Battalion Chief -Training

Bill Tyler, Novato Fire Chief

Jason Weber, Marin County and Ross Valley Fire Chief

Bret McTigue - Battalion Chief Marin County Fire, EMS; Southern Marin Fire District Training Officer

Oscar Arenas, Captain Ross Valley Fire

Presented:

Alina Varona, Dean of Workforce and Career Education

Angela Olmanson, COM Allied Health Program Administrator

Heather Rahman, Workforce Development and Program Partnership Specialist

Doug Bawden, COM EMR Instructor

Scott Wood, EMT instructor and Fire technology coordinator

[Click here](#) to view the presentation which these notes parallel.

Welcome and Introductions - Alina Varona

Please refer to presentation slides 1 – 12.

College of Marin, the Career Education department and Alina are equity centered and equity focused thinking about where opportunity gaps lie and how our team and institution can disrupt areas of disparity and support communities through advancement in education and training.

EMT, Registered Dental Assisting, and Medical Assisting Sectors are now under Career Education department. Registered Nursing is separate from our department. Career Education is here to prepare students and individuals with the skills that they need for the future of work. We prepare students with skills for 21st century jobs, careers and the future of work. Through COVID-19 our enrollment has remained stable.

Advisory Members Check-in

Please refer to presentation slide 13.

Discussion topics: Staffing and Recruiting; Training & Professional Development; Community Partnership & Impacts; Policy, Legislation and Political Landscape; Needs and Priorities

The committee offered the following feedback:

Distance learning and Zoom gatherings offers benefits in answering to some equity issues.

Fire agencies are viewing things from an equity lens and we have a lot of work to do in that category.

With predominately white, male workforce they are looking in directions to develop opportunities and pathways for women and people of color.

The biggest area of growth, county wide, is investment in wildfire prevention as Measure C was passed by the voters.

It's an opportunity for more inclusion and break the cycle of systemic poverty and challenges.

EMT and paramedics are interested in a local paramedic program and believe it is a community need. Currently some are going to southern California where housing costs and temporary living issues are considerable.

Employees will need to take about 9 - 12 months leave to go receive the training. Cost of paying for their training and paying another employee for backfill adds to the bill to \$100,000s.

COM can offer a better training and keep folks closer to home.

The agencies are competing for a small quantity of high-quality firefighter paramedics.

To address the issue of preceptorships, the committee proposes to include the internship within COM where students would receive college credit and complement it with incentive funding to create a cadre of instructors for a paramedic program from local fire services. Those same instructors would provide the preceptorships. Incentives would create and elevate commitment levels.

MWPA (Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority) has partnered with COM for defensible (D)space evaluators and fire prevention in general. They are seeing more interest in wildfire prevention training. The other partnership has been with County Fire in creating a career pathway for the underserved/at-risk communities. MWPA has an extreme amount of work for vegetation management projects. However, the labor force is not available and demand is high.

The MWPA pilot program in community service for fire prevention has drawn a diversified candidate pool. Many are entry level job seekers, and some are genuinely wanting to create more fire prevention and then there are working folks looking to pivot in their careers. It's an 80- hour academy expanding from 40 hours in its third year. Working with local community colleges has helped grow diversity and create an uptick in candidates.

Wildland Fire - Angela O.

Please refer to presentation slide 14.

Background, Context, Opportunity

Fire Forward is interested in partnering with COM to create a bridge program to build up workforce.

Fire forward is a group which has been working with private land owners in prescribed fire projects. They look forward to programs which would keep the core courses in tack and minimize educational costs regarding to electives in mapping courses addressing Fire/EMT/Wildland Prevention/Defensible Space, etc.

Labor Market Information - Heather Rahman

Please refer to presentation slides 15 – 16.

Does this accurately reflect your experience in the field? The county? What gaps or missing pieces exist? How has the pandemic impacted hiring and recruitment, wages, retention?

Private industry doesn't pay what public fire services pay upon completion of cross training. The private sector pays significantly low which explains the low median wage. In the public sector, and on the low end for firefighters and paramedics, they can earn \$99,000 annually. Currently a firefighter paramedic can make \$108,000 - \$200,000 not including benefits. In the public sector, most employees are cross-trained and are not single role positions.

COVID Impact & Updates - Scott Wood

Please refer to presentation slides 17 – 18.

Enrollment/Student Demographics/Instruction and Changes

Enrollments have been steady through COVID-19 pandemic with 20 -25 seats filled per class. We just started a new EMR program in partnership with Novato High. However, we haven't used any virtual simulations. And in the Fall, College of Marin may not be back in-person and full swing. (DEMOGRAPHICS) EMT is only about 1/2 at compacity due to student drops. These students usually were the ones who did not meet initial requirements including pre-requisites, drug screening, immunization, etc. EMR students at SRJC have priority registration for EMT at SRJC which has impacted College of Marin. COM graduates usually 14 -15 students each semester.

There are four volunteer fire departments in West Marin. An EMR/EMT extension out near the coast could help. There's a need for flexible training opportunities.

Creating Pathways and Programs

Please refer to presentation slides 19 -22.

Alina pointed out the factors to consider in creating pathways and programs.

Online Associate's Degree

Please refer to presentation slides 23 – 25.

Angela provided a SWOC analysis toward building out an online Associate's degree plan. For an Associate's degree a student must earn 60 units total, and this is not flexible at all. Though it would be minimum 18 units for core classes, leaving 42 units for general ed and electives can be relative and at a minimum. This would be a lean degree.

Concerns included keeping all courses online, keeping the options flexible, reimbursement of costs, keeping cost and time investments reasonable to pursue the degree, customizing to meet the needs for student success, accommodating employed students who already have a Bachelor's degree, consider busy fire seasons, set realistic expectations.

Paramedic Program

Please refer to presentation slides 26 – 27.

Scott provided a SWOC analysis toward building out a paramedic program.

The committee proposes preceptorships could be incentivized as preceptor would have a contract such as an adjunct instructor. This would bring in more people to commit into becoming committed preceptors. A challenge is competing with Marin agencies already supporting other area colleges in this regard. How would we have the bandwidth to have enough space for 15 -20 students ready for preceptorship?

Wildland Firefighter

Please refer to presentation slides 28.

Due to time constraints, COM will follow through on this topic and possibly explore through a survey.

EMR Day Section

Please refer to presentation slides 29.

What does the need for an additional EMR class look like? Partnering with the high schools are critical as this is a pipeline to firefighting occupations. EMR pipelines to EMT nicely leaning into building equity and pathways for creating diversity in the workforce.

Additional Avenues for Growth

Please refer to presentation slide 30.

EMT in the Summer, probably wouldn't create a very diverse class because most cannot stop working for accelerated classes. Pilot with a West Marin program. For holding a summertime EMT program, maybe a West marine program would work best as a pilot program.

Summary and Next Steps

Please refer to presentation slides 31-32.

We will share slides, notes and a survey next week with everyone. We will hope to hold deeper discussions later to work through some of the sticking points. Our contact information is provided.

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.