Society
Summary of Trends And Findings

Trend 1: San Diego County is receiving an increasing number of refugees. Many of these refugees come from Iraq, and choose to settle in east San Diego County (particularly El Cajon), where there is a growing community of Chaldean Iraqis.

- Refugees are individuals who are unable to return to their country of origin because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. California has received over 688,000 refugees since 1975. The largest refugee groups are currently coming from Iran, Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, Iraq, and Africa. Prior to 1990, refugees were primarily from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in connection with the Vietnam Conflict (California Department of Social Services, 2010). Refugees are designated as such for one year, are then considered permanent residents for four years, and may then apply for citizenship (10News, 2010).

- Between 2005 and 2010, 41,220 refugees arrived in California. Almost 30% (12,310) of the new refugees in California in the past five years arrived in San Diego. The number of refugees arriving in San Diego annually grew from 796 in 2006 to 4,168 in 2009; 3,663 arrived in 2010. In the first quarter of the 2010-2011 fiscal year, 728 of the 1,538 refugee arrivals in California (47.3%) resettled in San Diego. A larger number of refugee arrivals are expected during the last-half of FY2010-11 (Nguyen, 2011). Chaldean Iraqis are the fastest-growing refugee community in San Diego, followed by Burmese refugees and Somalis (10News, 2010)

- More Iraqi refugees immigrated to California between 2007 and 2009 than to any other state. Over 70% of the more than 7000 Iraqi refugees arriving in California during those years chose to resettle in San Diego County. Most of them choose to resettle within the GCCCD boundaries: 71% (3,552) choose to resettle in El Cajon, 5.8% (289) chose to settle in Spring Valley, and another 3.3% (164) settled in La Mesa. El Cajon had more Iraqi immigrants than the rest of the state combined (Steckelberg, 2009).

- In California, the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program provides funds for employment, training, and support services, including English as a second language, job search assistance and on-the-job training. In FY 2010, 33% of San Diego refugees received targeted assistance, but schools in San Diego County did not apply for available Refugee School Impact Grants (Nguyen/2011).

- Iraqi refugees interviewed by the International Rescue Committee (2009) in Atlanta, Georgia and Phoenix, Arizona reported difficulty finding employment, making it impossible for them to support themselves. Many of the Iraqi refugees are traumatized, and need additional support in the areas of financial assistance, English lessons, employment counseling and access to health care (International Rescue Committee, 2009).

Trend 2: Technology is having immense impacts on the ways people interact and communicate, leading to a growing desire for more natural interactions.

- Smart phones, social networking and global connectivity are creating an ever-growing dependency on technology. As a result, people are starting to focus more on person, authentic interactions and connections to the natural world (JWT Intelligence, 2011).

- A merger of information technology with the arts and humanities is forming a new domain for information technology: Information Technology and Creative Practices ("ITCP"). ITCP to impact how people perceive, experience and use information technology. Forms and products of ITCP include architectural designs, computer animated films, music, computer games, Web-based text, and interactive art exhibits. Although ITCP groups tend to cluster geographically and benefit from proximity, they increasingly interact remotely electronically. ITCP's best-known products (such as video games) combine centralized research, development and marketing with large-scale open-source data-gathering and product distribution strategies. The academic environment is the seed-bed of ITCP innovation, but the multi-disciplinary nature of the activity presents a challenge in designing cooperative curricula (National Academy of Science, 2003).

Trend 3: Increasing focus on the value of the arts and humanities.

- Students of the liberal arts gain more critical reasoning skills than do other majors (Nel, 2011). The study of reading, writing and critical thinking is essential to students regardless of the degree or career path they choose; holistic, integrative thinking develops primarily through the Humanities, and provide career and professional advantages to those who have them (Walker, 2009). Liberal arts provide the ability to see and think in systems, enquire aggressively, act and think independently, see the bigger picture and deal effectively with complexity, ambiguity and contradictions -- important skills for business managers (Williams, 2010).

- In a movement away from "business-only" business programs, major universities are increasingly recognizing the value of integrating liberal arts and humanities with their programs to develop more well-rounded students. (Wallace, 2010). Business programs increasingly develop new curricula focusing on how to approach and analyze problems and issues from diverse perspectives and imagine new, creative ways to solve or resolve them without bias or predisposition. Drawing on the arts and humanities, "Design thinking" is the new business program buzzword for this process. Some business school leaders believe optimistically that students will make higher-level moral decisions after learning critical and creative thinking skills (Wallace, 2010) .

- There is a significant correlation between seeking cultural stimulation and being healthy in urban populations. Urbanites who often attend cultural events such as cinema, theater, art, and music are only 31% as likely to die of cancer as are people who attend rarely (Bygren et al., 2009).

- The changing demographics of aging are critical for business and government to consider in long-range planning. As science and technology advance, so do life spans, which will impact the economic balance within countries between older populations and the younger populations that are traditionally expected to support the elderly. While less developed countries remain skewed toward youth, the developed world may become increasingly aged and forced to import workers to do the jobs that require youth. This may cause increasing tension between young and old. This tension will create opportunities for artistic reflection and expression. Because older people may have more time to devote to the arts, they may be more likely to become active practitioners of the arts or audiences for art (Wilson, 2007).

Potential Impacts

1. GCCCD will need to emphasize hiring teachers and staff capable of facilitating newcomers' cultural and linguistic integration into the educational system, including services such as orientation and assessment, and adult student services. Faculty and staff may benefit from cultural orientation to better deal with Iraqis and others. The Colleges should emphasize teacher and staff cultural awareness and social sensitivity training, and will confront hard choices in trying to fund these activities.

2. GCCCD as a whole is challenged with teaching to large groups of students diverse in levels of English mastery. While jobs are a primary issue for refugees, language barriers will impact student achievement levels and goals. Districts must balance services to newcomers and to other residents.

3. District faculty and staff need training on aging issues to understand elder needs, perspectives and contributions; and to enhance cross-generational communication. Student achievement and learning should include awareness and acceptance of diversity not only in culture and ethnicity, but also in age, ability, sexual orientation, and gender.

4. Community colleges must try to keep pace with new technologies and trends so that their teachers and staff deliver information to students in modes the students not only understand, but can use outside of school.

5. Colleges need to support curricula and related activities that provide the necessary foundation for later specialization in ITCP, which can lead to a large variety of careers.

6. Critical thinking skills should be taught through both formal humanities courses, programs and services and informal interactions between students and others. Critical thinking skills need to be included in the equation when defining student achievement and learning; student success must shift away from mere program completion. Focus must shift from measuring student success solely on program completion to an approach that defines achievement and learning by the students' ability to think critically and creatively.

7. The Community Colleges may need to modify their business school curricula to balance nuts-and-bolts business courses with liberal arts, but a balance must be preserved to maintain core competencies and business objectives.