

Tompkins Cortland Community College
2015-2020 Strategic Priorities
Action Plan Update/Progress Report
July 2016

Introduction

This is the second of our regular periodic reports updating progress of the groups working on the Action Plan and related critical questions. This memo will provide an end-of-year update from the working committees and identify their priorities for next semester's work. In October, we will update the progress that has been made on the goals established last Fall. You can find all memos and updates at http://tc3.edu/about_tc3/institutional_planning.asp.

GOALS

I include our goals here to keep them in front of our thinking and planning. The most recent updates can be found in last March's memo in Section III of the Strategic Evidence Library at http://www.tc3.edu/campus_info/institutional_planning.asp. Our next updates will be provided in early October.

I. Challenge Goal - Increase completion rates by 50% by 2025

- Completion rates for first time full time students after 4 years (the national IPEDS measure).
 - Our goal is to increase this rate from 25.5% to 38% by 2025.
- Completion rates for all students new to TC3 (full-time or part-time) after 6 years and who earned at least 12 credits (VFA/SAM).
 - Our goal is to increase this rate from 41% for the Fall 2008 cohort (as of 2014) to 60% for the 2019 cohort (as of 2025).

II. Intermediate Goals

Goal - Increase success rates for basic skills courses to the 75th percentile in the National Community College Benchmarking Project

Goal - Increase, over the next three years, the Fall-to-Fall retention of FTFT students from our current 51% (Fall 2014 to Fall 2015) to 61% (Fall 2018 to Fall 2019), the SUNY community college average.

Goal - Increase new student FTE enrollment by at least 1% every year.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY ACTION/OPPORTUNITY GROUP PROGRESS REPORTS:

I. THE FIRST SEMESTER MATTERS

Transition/Entry-level processes (Update from Khaki Wunderlich and Blixxy Taetzsch)

How can we best design our entry-level processes (from recruitment to first semester enrollment) to provide guidance thorough the many necessary complex processes, leading students onto a path most likely to lead to success and completion, while not restricting choice?

Significant changes were made in the entering student process for the Fall 2016 class. Placement testing was separated from advisement processes and offered at multiple locations (including NYC) and times, decreasing

the need to complete lengthy processes all in a single day. At placement testing appointments, students completed a survey to provide information allowing advisors to create a personalized academic and advisement plan before students returned for their advisement meeting. The initial advisement meeting is now better able to focus on understanding the relationship between academics and career, and less on the mechanics of registration. Feedback from students and advisors has been very positive. Processes will continue to be refined and increase integration of academic and career planning in the transition process.

The new housing discount for students who declare their intent to live on campus by July 1 appears to have been successful. The number of contracts received by the deadline exceeds last year's total on that date by 40%. This discount allows our lowest income students to no longer have a gap between their total financial aid and expenses.

Recruitment is actively underway for students to participate in our current transition-focused programs -- Pathways, Network Peer Mentor, and Vector Scholars programs. A new residential living learning community will be piloted this Fall providing transition resources for our least academically prepared students, combining a pre-semester bridge program with paired RDNG 99 and PSYC 101 classes.

Work has begun with Full Measure Education to develop mobile and web-based planning and communication platform for students. Bringing together career, academic, and financial planning into a single tool, students (from inquiry to graduation) will more easily understand their path and "stay on track" by "seeing" their progress toward personalized outcomes. Analytics will allow the college and advisors to see when a student is "falling off" or straying from their plan, providing the opportunity to intervene before failure.

Our next steps are to continue integrating communications from the various entering processes to better help new students navigate all aspects of the process while also increasing the integration of career information into the student's planning process.

Basic Skills/first semester courses (Update from John Conners)

What processes will most efficiently and effectively identify our students' basic academic skills and need for pre-college intervention?

What curricular models can best meet the needs of our current students and increase success rates in basic skills first semester courses, while decreasing the time spent in non-program applicable courses?

In January, Carl Penziul and I convened one-hour faculty meetings for groups of about 15 people, including full-time and adjunct faculty and academic support personnel. There were also two separate, additional meetings for basic skills faculty with a focus on their specific teaching interests. Out of these meetings came a list of eight major themes and a decision to work through these themes with two continuing groups of colleagues (consisting of faculty, administrators, and academic support personnel), one to focus on in-class matters and the other to focus on related issues.

The results of the early work of these groups is an array of several pilot projects – some already underway before Spring 2016 and others to begin in 2016-2017 – that, if successful, will be scaled up and made more permanent. The most successful pilot project that has been in effect for several semesters is the offering of ENGL 098, an initiative that allows students who are not required to enroll in RDNG 099 to take an accelerated one-semester approach to completing ENGL 099 and 100 through extensive class work and significant academic support. We are now at the point of offering several sections per semester, involving a large number of faculty members; in fact, ENGL 098 has essentially become a permanent part of our academic offerings.

We are planning five major pilot projects for 2016-2017:

- INTD 49 – This five-credit interdisciplinary course combines the curricula of our current ENGL 99 and RDNG 99 courses, decreasing the time needed for remediation while better helping students understand the relationship and interdependence of reading and writing skills. The course was first piloted this past Spring and two sections will be offered in Fall.
- We will pilot a new RDNG 99/PSYC 101 residential learning community this Fall in collaboration with the Network Peer Mentor program. Students will engage in a pre-semester program, reside together on a single floor, and participate in peer mentor and other programming throughout the first semester. The structure and collaboration is intended to increase transition skills and academic success for some of our least academically prepared students.
- We are participating in a Lumina grant through SUNY building our capacity to offer a Quantway math instruction. Quantway is a heavily contextualized developmental math curriculum developed by the Carnegie Foundation and currently offered across the country. The curriculum is intended to “reduce the time required to earn college credit while improving the content and pedagogy of developmental mathematics.” Students placed into MATH 95 and who can satisfy academic program requirements with a statistics class will now be able to complete their math requirements in two semesters (Quantway and MATH 200). Results across the country are very positive, both in terms of decreasing time in remediation and student success. Several faculty are currently being trained in the curriculum and we will begin offering sections of the course in Spring 2017. You can find more information about the program at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/in-action/carnegie-math-pathways/>.
- English summer redesign work – Several English faculty members are working throughout this summer to develop new curricular models and pilot projects to continue increasing success for students in the writing basic skills sequence.
- This Fall we will test the effect of class size on success in basic writing courses. A few English faculty members will teach multiple sections of ENGL 100 with one section enrolling two-thirds the usual class size. We will assess the experiences and results, then determine if we will expand the number of lower-enrollment sections in the future.

You can read more about the themes and barriers identified in Section III of the Strategic Evidence Library at http://tc3.edu/about_tc3/institutional_planning.asp.

Residential students (Update from Amy Trueman)

How can we better leverage the opportunity for support provided by students living on campus?

As we have met over the course of the semester, one theme has emerged - we need to develop/portray/communicate that the residence halls are one with the mission of the college; that students are living there in order to be successful college students.

Two strategies have been discussed at length, one of which has been the subject of a survey. That one involves greater practical services being provided in the residence halls. The results are not all in yet, but preliminarily the most desired changes are availability of a computer lab and printers, followed by a study room, counseling, and programs on how to cook inexpensively.

When asked an open-ended question about what would help you be more successful, students mentioned the above services as well as lower costs of housing and food, more tutoring and hands-on teaching, and a variety of other individual comments.

When asked how we can develop a better sense of community, the top 2 responses were “more interaction with residence life staff” and “occasional community meals.”

The second strategy discussed by this group was to have a “Faculty in Residence” program. We would provide free housing for a faculty or staff member who in turn would provide an adult presence. This could help build a sense of community; students might realize that faculty are “real people.” The F-i-R might coordinate a community meal periodically or have casual programming. He/she might invite other faculty and staff to join these informal gatherings. The decision was made not to immediately implement this idea, but we will continue discussion of the possibility and how that role could impact the feeling of community within the residences.

Additional update - In early June John Bradac became the new Dean of Student Life. During the summer he is having a number of meetings and conversations with campus constituents to foster a strong sense of educational community within the residence halls. In the fall semester, he will convene a working group with Residential Life staff, as well as faculty and other members of the community, to continue to explore these ideas and other creative ways to promote positive interaction and build a vibrant living-learning environment for residents.

II. HIGH NEED STUDENTS/IDENTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE GAPS INDICATIVE OF STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

(Update from Khaki Wunderlich, Kris Altucher, Tim Densmore, and Blixy Taetzsch)

What, in fact, are the needs and gaps experienced by our students and what should be the indicators and short term goals to assess the success and equitable access for identified “high risk” groups?

Our initial work focused on analyzing available student data to better identify the success gaps experienced by many groups of our students. This information helps to frame questions for further discussion and research and assists the other working groups to design their success initiatives.

We analyzed historical graduation and Fall-to-Fall retention rates for several subgroups:

- gender,
- students with disabilities,
- Under-Represented Minorities (URM), defined as Black/African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and multi-racial,
- first generation college,
- low income, defined by family incomes less than \$24,000 per year (the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four), and
- first semester residence life/commuter status.

Fall 2015 FTFT students’ first year academic status was also analyzed for various combinations of the above subgroups and by geographic residency.

A report of the results and underlying data will be posted soon to the Strategic Evidence Library at http://www.tc3.edu/campus_info/institutional_planning.asp.

Initial analyses include:

- There are significant gaps in graduation rates, Fall-to-Fall retention, and first year success for Under-Represented Minority (URM) and low income students. One of the largest gaps in all of these areas is between nonURM students with family incomes above \$24,000 and all other students (URM and/or low income). In the Fall 2015 FTFT class, 36% identify as URM and 37% as low income, with half of them identifying as both (or about one in five students).
- No significant gaps are evident in Fall-to-Fall retention and first year success rates for students with disabilities. We do see some gap in graduation rates but less than the other comparison groups.
- Interestingly, we do not see a gap in historic graduation rates and recent first year success for First Generation College students (looking at that characteristic alone). However, the Fall-to-Fall retention rate trend appears to be going down, suggesting an opening gap that may have an impact on future graduation rates. Fall 2015 First Generation students generally mirrored the other demographic characteristics and academic preparedness of the whole class, except that a higher percentage were also identified as low income. The percentage of our Fall FTFT class identified as First Generation College is trending downward (from 33% in Fall 2011 to 27% in Fall 2015) and half of these students are from Tompkins, Cortland, or Tioga counties.
- Academic underpreparedness alone appears to have a lesser effect on academic success than many other characteristics. In fact, the Fall 2015 FTFT students suspended at the end of their first year had an initial academic profile similar to all FTFT students.
- In the last few years we have seen significant gaps for students who live in residence life their first semester - in graduation, Fall-to-Fall, and first year success rates. While this population is more likely to be URM, low income (whether a resident of our sponsoring counties or not), and less academically prepared (regardless of geographic residency), this is a reversal from historic trends. First year success rates showed gaps between first semester residential and commuter students regardless of URM or low income status. These students are on our campus 24/7 and provide an opportunity for impact that we do not have as easily with commuting students.

While this working group will continue exploring data and sources for additional information (including student focus groups), our analyses are being provided to and used by the other Strategic Priority working groups and the entire college community to inform design of current and future initiatives.

What structural barriers are created by our practices, procedures, and policies that all students must interact with throughout their experience with TC3?

The barriers encountered by many groups are embedded in the conversations of the all of the working and planning groups and are evident in many of the initiatives described herein. This question will remain in the forefront for each group and, in fact, the entire college as planning continues.

Aside from the initiatives discussed elsewhere in this memo, two other programs have been developed to specifically address identified barriers for students:

The Emerging Scholars Program (ESP) has now come to fruition. The first two ESP scholars (current staff of color) will begin their graduate studies and their work with a faculty mentor in Fall 2016, expecting to earn their degrees in time to be appointed to full-time, tenure track positions in Fall 2018. The presence of a higher percentage of faculty members of color is expected to have a very positive effect upon a large percentage of our students, both those of color and those not.

Over the past year, on the recommendation of the Committee on Academic Status, we piloted a required success course for students placed on academic probation at the end of their first semester with a GPA below 1.0. Numbers were very small in the Fall semester; but, this past semester faculty collaborated to teach six sections of the course including 73 second semester probationary students. Despite the best efforts of the faculty, the effort appears to have had no effect on the academic outcomes for these students compared to previous years; 88% of the students were suspended. We will not continue the pilot and, while we will continue to intervene to assist probationary students, the results add more evidence to our belief that our resources have the greatest chance of positive impact before and in the first semester.

III. MARKETING (Update from Bruce Ryan and Blixxy Taetzsch)

What is the comprehensive visual brand that expresses our authentic core strengths?

As described in the strategic priorities follow up action plan, the strategic marketing team has completed the work of developing a new visual brand, creating a conceptual framework/message map, and has identified target markets through the development of our personas.

Visual Brand

Summary of Activities: Three logo options were shared with key constituents, including students, faculty, staff, Board of Trustees, and a committee of the Foundation Board. There was consensus on one logo with some minor tweaks. This logo was formally subjected to concept testing with current and prospective students which strongly affirmed our choice. We extended the brand to graphic treatments for CollegeNow, TC3.biz and the Foundation. The new logo and visual brand was officially rolled out on June 9.

Next Steps: Everything produced from now on will have the new visual brand. In the coming year, signage at all locations outside and inside our facilities will need to be addressed. An in-house kickoff is being planned for the start of the fall semester.

Conceptual Framework

Summary of Activities: The conceptual framework came out of the research from Simpson Scarborough and focused on academic strength, sense of community, and access. We used some samples from other institutions to develop our own visual model using our research data. **The brand position boiled down to one sentence is: A public community college grounded in academic excellence and a supportive community that leads to lifetime success.** The conceptual framework (attached as Appendix A) was processed with Executive Council and then shared in marketing dialogues with over 120 faculty and staff who affirmed that it is consistent with who and what we are as an institution.

Next Steps: As a follow up activity to rolling out our conceptual framework, we will be collecting information, stories, and images that illustrate the key messages for use in future marketing materials and strategies and developing a repository to make them available for use across the campus.

What recruitment and communications strategies will best build enrollment?

Target Markets

Summary of Activities: We analyzed 5 years worth of enrollment data to identify personas within our student population. Five major personas emerged: local traditional, urban diverse, local adult, adult convenience, and donut (meaning surrounding counties). Simpson Scarborough research filled in the elements of motivation and preference for prospective students in these categories. Members of the marketing team have worked to

implement targeted communications, tweaking language and tactics to reflect the personas. Examples include the use of facebook and other social media, changing language from *jobs* to *career*, and a targeted NYC acceptance piece.

Next Steps: We will be planning our promotional/advertising campaign going forward. This will include a comprehensive, integrated plan that incorporates admissions communications, social media, and advertising.

How do we build on the key strengths identified in the SimpsonScarborough study, particularly around our academic strength and community of support?

This past year has been spent primarily on the two questions above. In the coming year, the strategic marketing team will identify and frame issues for the college community to consider in order to determine how best to build on the strengths identified by the research.

IV. ENHANCED INFORMATION AVAILABILITY AND USE (Update from Tim Densmore, Kris Altucher, and Khaki Wunderlich)

What is the meaningful evidence of success that will tell us that what we are doing is working, at the initiative, program, and institutional level?

This question is embedded in the work of each committee considering our critical questions. Formative and summative reports from the committees and major initiatives across campus will be posted in the Strategic Evidence Library described below.

How can we make information more accessible to the college community?

The Strategic Evidence Library is now available at http://www.tc3.edu/campus_info/institutional_planning.asp, providing a single point of entry for access to a wealth of information related to this action plan, our indicators, and our student success initiatives.

Section I: Enrollment/Demographic Dashboard. These interactive graphs and spreadsheets provide the opportunity to see a range of historical information about our students and academic programs.

Section II: Challenge and Intermediate Goal Data. The section contains both current and historic data related to completion, retention, first semester success, basic skill course success, and new student enrollment. The data currently available is in static spreadsheets and charts and will be uploaded by the end of July. We are working on development of interactive dashboards (similar to the demographic dashboards above) expected to be available in September. The dashboards will provide easy access to the data and allow users to dig into the information, by total population or by various subgroups, including gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Where appropriate, dashboard cohorts will include not only first-time full-time students, but also all students new to TC3 in a given semester and students who have earned at least 12 college credits.

Section III: Strategic Priorities Action Plan Data and Reports.

All of the recent Strategic Planning and Priorities memos are linked on the web page above Section I. The March 2016 Update memo, this memo, and all future updates will be linked in this section. The section also currently includes:

- report on the major themes from the January faculty meetings
- report on the results of the Forum strategic priorities survey Spring 2016
- Initial data report on success gaps for subgroups of first-time full-time students (to be available in late July)

Formative and summative reports from the working committees will be posted as they become available.

Section IV: Assessment Data and Reports. This section provides direct links to documents related to our broad range of student success initiatives and data, including department plans or reports and formative and summative assessments of our major initiatives. 2016-17 Department Plans will be posted in September.

Current documents include

- Proposal for the Fall 2016 Network Learning Community (RDNG 99/PSYC 101)
- Vector Scholars program initial assessment report
- 2014-15 Pathways report
- Report on ACAD 175 pilot requiring the course for second semester probationary students

As I look back over the months since we identified our strategic priorities and critical questions, I am struck by the tremendous amount of work that has already been done, by so many across the college, to impact the experience of our current and future students. My faith is unwavering, continuing to work together toward our common goals, we can and will achieve them while assisting our students to build productive futures. Thank you to everyone for your hard work this year, you make a difference.

Appendix A

Tompkins Cortland Community College

BRAND POSITIONING

A public community college grounded in academic excellence and a supportive community that leads to lifetime success.

CREATIVE PLATFORM

Stories and messages about student success, academic strength, and sense of community shared via social media, web, photography, publications, advertising, and PR

BRAND CHARACTER

Transformative, High Expectations, Support, Friendly, Diverse Community, Accessible

BRAND PILLARS

Unexpectedly Challenging

Academic preparation
Expert faculty
Rigorous coursework
High expectations

Encouraging Community

Personal attention
Small classes
Invested faculty and staff
Vibrant student life, athletics, and residential community
Individualized support

Achievable Opportunities

Affordability
Wide range of programs
Flexibility/convenience
Diversity
Accessibility

KEY MESSAGES

KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

Academic excellence | Sense of community | Passion for student success