

Hello NECC Community,

Please enjoy this October 2020 edition of the *ISE News*.

### The Buzz: The Pandemic and the Integrated Student Experience

**Whatever happened to the ISE News?** That is a fair question. The last edition came out back in December 2019: ten months ago! The answer is that the COVID-19 pandemic happened and since last March other forms of communication have taken precedence.

For awhile, in fact, it looked like the pandemic might swamp the ISE itself. As we scrambled to go remote last spring, the Academic Centers and Student Success Hub closed for in-person services, work on preparing our facilities in Lawrence for the ISE slowed dramatically, and the future of Advising Reform was very much in doubt given budget cuts and many uncertainties.

**Ironically, the pandemic also actually spurred the Integrated Student Experience** in other ways. As almost everyone had to learn to work and serve students from home, the use of Navigate by employees and students exploded. Student usage of Navigate grew from 1160 students in January to 5276 by September. We rapidly accelerated the ability of most students to register themselves for courses in order to facilitate remote advising and course registration. Advisors and financial aid counselors began reporting that, at least some of the time, their meetings with students on Zoom were more productive than in-person sessions. We hired two new professional advisors to support the Academic Centers: Kizzy Borbon and Shakira Moreta.

By late in the spring, it was clear that our target date of August 1<sup>st</sup> to introduce Advising Reform might still be met. Working in close conjunction with Student Affairs and the Academic Center professional advisors, the Center faculty leads and deans put together plans to be able to advise and register all continuing students by late summer. It was not easy. There were a lot of challenges and many nuts and bolts issues related to the transition of students from the Student Success Hub to the Academic Centers remain to be worked out. Thanks to a tremendous effort, however, **hundreds of students were registered by the Academic Centers between August 1<sup>st</sup> and the start of classes in September. Meanwhile, the Student Success Hub Advisors handled 15,000 contacts with students from March 16-September 30 and registered 1703 students.**

The pandemic also disrupted plans for a new in-person, required student orientation for new students. With just a few weeks available last spring before new students started to appear in large numbers at the college, Tiffany Esmerio and a team from Student Affairs rapidly moved the orientation [experience](#) online. **1343 students experienced the online orientation between May and the start of classes in September.** Recognizing that an online only orientation might not be adequate, the team also developed a live webinar version that allowed students to ask questions in real time and interact with peers and Student Affairs staff.

**By the summer, work had resumed on preparing the new Student Success Hub and combined Academic Center in the Dimitry building and the expanded Health and new STEM Academic Centers in the El Hefni building on the Lawrence campus.** Although these are not open for in-person service yet, they should be ready when we return to more normal operations.

Finally, all the people working on the initiatives that make up the Integrated Student Experience have labored to figure out how to mostly remotely deliver this academic year the three key pillars of the ISE: student sense of belonging, academic structure, seamless/integrated support. The rest of this edition will focus on that work. Before we turn to that, it's crucial to remember that all this progress on the ISE occurred while the exact same people doing the work were also wrestling with other essential tasks brought on by the pandemic: disbursing CARES Act funding to students, implementing a new student laptop requirement, taking iTeach, converting two hundred courses to online, planning on-campus labs and student support operations, and achieving better than expected fall enrollment.

Viewed from that perspective, our progress on the ISE is a remarkable achievement. That happened because **many talented people went above and beyond and worked together as a team, despite plenty of bumps, to help our students weather this crisis.** I am grateful, proud, and frankly amazed at what we have accomplished. We are not done with either the ISE or the pandemic yet, but based on this performance, I am confident we will move forward successfully.

#### What Else is Happening with the Integrated Student Experience?

**In News from the Academic Centers, The Center for Business and Accounting** offered three Major Meet-Ups and a Getting to Know Us event during NECC's Weeks of Welcome. It has also hosted a Lunch and Learn event (with more to come in October and November) and will participate in the UKnighted Fair by sharing two student videos and a video about the Alpha Beta Gamma Honor Society. The Center is offering Accounting tutoring via Zoom this semester, and is also reaching out to the students planning to transfer with a campaign to assist them with the transfer process. If students have questions regarding Business Center events, staff, or faculty please direct them to the Center [website](#) which is continually updated with services and other information.

**The Center for Liberal Arts** held/will hold the following events:

Tuesday, September 15: Trivia Table Quiz

Tuesday, September 22: Coffee Hour with faculty and students

Wednesday, September 30: Liberal Arts Career Panel

Wednesday, September 30: Liberal Arts Program Presentations to Professional Advisors

Thursday, October 8: Mass Transfer and Commonwealth Commitment – a Q&A with Michelle Sunday

Wednesday, October 21: Fake News with Dean Amy Callahan

Tuesday, October 27: Regis College Dean Bill Koehler will discuss Liberal Arts and Careers

October Date TBA: Psychology Career Event

November Date TBA: Psychology Transfer Event

**In News from the Student Success Hub**, all student support services continue to be available remotely. Appointments are available on a limited-hour basis for the Testing Center, Welcome Express, Financial Aid and Student Success Hub Advising at the Haverhill Campus only. Our Lawrence Campus Student Success Hub is coming together. Math and Science Tutoring will be moving from Amesbury Street to the Dimitry Building and be located with other Tutoring Services in L202. Welcome Express, Financial Aid, and Student Success Hub Advising will also be moving into space in the Dimitry Building. In addition, Student Life will

have newly configured space. We look forward to serving our students in a more integrated way once we are back on campus in the future.

**In Advising News**, Stephanie Wares and Michelle Sunday are offering an **Advising Bootcamp Series for faculty on Wednesdays at noon** during the month of October to gear up for Spring registration season. The goal of these meetings is to offer a refresher on vital topics that come up most frequently during advising appointments, so you feel confident and empowered to advise in November. Each session will consist of a brief overview and will provide an opportunity to ask questions and share experience. The weekly NECC Events email has information on how to join the sessions. A similar series is being offered to professional advisors, PACE, and admissions staff.

Since the middle of September, the Student Success Hub advisors have had 275 appointments with new students to **build Academic Plans** in Navigate. This is a crucial step in the process of transitioning these students to the Academic Centers.

In news about **Navigate**, we introduced new appointment scheduling care units for Tutoring, Academic Placement and Testing, and Faculty Office Hours.

We also upgraded our alert system to include all students via the **new Student Ambassador initiative**. By submitting an alert in Navigate, faculty can now receive support in working with students that are disengaged in Blackboard or having technical issues. The Ambassadors reinforce the role played by the student Navigators, who handled over 9000 student contacts between mid-March and the end of September, in connecting students to needed support resources.

**If you wish to join the growing number of students, faculty, staff and administrators contributing to the Integrated Student Experience**, please email me at [wheineman@necc.mass.edu](mailto:wheineman@necc.mass.edu).

Bill

William A. Heineman, Ed.D.  
Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs  
Northern Essex Community College  
978-556-3327