

# Northern Essex Community College

## Participant Feedback:

### Sept. 5, 2017, Capacity Café

#### What I liked or was useful?

- Thank you!
- Importance of the college vision & focus on student success
  - Exchanging information about the importance of being part of this college and the purpose of what we are here for
  - The continued focus of the college on the importance of student success – especially the section on equity
  - Knowing that the student and their success is the most important goal all should have at the college
  - Reflecting on survey data and realizing the difficulties but also identifying recurring themes for improvement like student success definition
  - Appreciate that we are having this conversation as a community
  - Useful to discuss goals, strategies and accomplishing those at the college and how to advance student success at the college
- New faculty (5 generic)
  - Introduced me to areas of the college that are being explored on how to make improvements – found it helpful as a new faculty member
  - Met new faculty and staff (4)
  - Good to get together since I am a new faculty.
- Getting together (5)
  - Its always nice to see everyone, that is the one day where I see many colleagues
  - Good beginning – there needs to be more follow up. Communication is the key
  - People were friendly
- President's message
  - The opening remarks by Pres. Glenn were appreciated. During these unsettling times having an understanding – a “why” was very overdue.
  - Liked the data from the president – seemed very valid
  - All information was useful and the fact that the president's PP will be made available.
  - Useful to receive an outlook on the budget
  - PR department is going a great job in sharing student experience
- Driving action

- I liked that you asked for actions
- I like that our opinions will hopefully drive decision making
- Normally I don't have a chance to interact with others to discuss ways to improve areas of the college
- What do I do now? What do I DO with this information?
- Opportunity to brainstorm "action"
- Interaction with other departments and learning about others and their view: I liked the Interaction with other faculty, staff, and adm. We don't normally talk with and hearing other perspectives: 57 generic plus the specifics below:
  - Any opportunity to work with other areas of the college is an opportunity to learn what others do. I learned how and why they do or do not use technology.
  - It was useful to sit and have conversation with fellow NECC family and get to know and share ideas
  - Conversations with colleagues beyond the "nuts and bolts" of work. The conversation about the various topics is a good way to connect with people.
  - Different perspectives on issues discussed especially what is not working and what those in other positions know and don't know
  - Realization at 2 of 3 tables that staff includes library, tutoring and other teachers who aren't faculty or adjuncts but have huge number of direct student contact hours that are used for teaching. Sometimes this staff is overlooked as educators who need info from faculty/adjuncts or some info from various departments
  - Good discussion about strengths and gaps
  - Communication across stakeholders: faculty, staff, adm
  - Always interesting sharing ideas and experiences with other members of the NECC community. It's a great opportunity to meet different faculty and staff from other departments and hear about opportunities and challenges that affect other areas.
  - Meeting with my colleagues is always grand. Discussions were humorous, sometimes provocative, and even meaningful at times.
  - Teamwork at tables – collegial conversations and debate
  - Several patterns were revealed
  - Sharing across full and part time
  - The opportunity to participate as members of the NECC community by focus on improving student outcomes
  - Lots of great discussion and input. Everyone got to speak and be heard
  - It is interesting to hear a variety of opinions
  - I learned some things from people in different disciplines
  - Good to meet and discuss with others outside our departments
  - Helpful to see how individual in different roles had very different feedback

- Good to hear different perspectives on the topic based on what part of the college the person was from
- Viewing diversity among definitions – hearing diverse perspectives
- I learned a lot from the data and technology round
- Being able to discuss institutional issues with people outside my organizational area who have different expertise/knowledge/experience
- Honesty of participants and getting other areas input
- The best part was having the opportunity to connect and chat with colleagues.
- I liked exchanging ideas about the 7 focus groups. Hearing the various feedback made me think about things I don't normally discuss in my job.
- Opportunity to dialogue about a host of issues; all of which are important
- Activity amount faculty and staff – learning on their experiences and perception
- Collaboration
- Seeing different perceptions based on roles and group change out
- Café style: moving around, diverse groups (10 generic with specific comments below)
  - I liked the café- mixing up who we talk with, yet still enough time to dig deeply into the topics
  - Round table groups very interesting
  - Being able to add to, agree or disagree with prior groups discussions added depth to the exercise
  - Good way to get a large number of people to analyze a large amount of data. The process was good at funneling the data
  - Café concept was good – we improved in our understanding of the data as we moved among the topics – good learning curve
  - Liked the process – enjoyed starting with strengths and ending with action but don't like the word choice of “gaps”
  - Well organized way to collect feedback
  - Great to analyze data in an interactive way and develop new perspectives as we approach the new academic year
  - The 4 questions including potential action steps
  - Being able to participate in 3 different topics
  - Facilitators at each table were helpful
    - Facilitator feedback from previous rounds was helpful
  - Focus on definitions e.g. what exactly or even approximately is the student success we are assessing – of course a full discussion of this issue would take many hours.
  - I didn't know about it so I liked learning about it
  - It was nice to see the data and have a little insight into what is going on
  - Excellent tangible ideas
  - The topics were well chosen

- The method of going to different tables allowed a chance to meet a variety of people (staff, faculty, admin).
- I felt there was a common opinion on the matters being discussed
- I think that we were able to be specific on our strengths and weakness.
- The ICAT data and the chance to discuss it: (20 generic plus comments below)
  - There were a lot of data sets that truly reflect how disconnected people are with the varying facets of the college. With that being said this opened the opportunity for dialogue on the data and expanded issues.
  - It forced us to read the ICAT and some people may have not read it. It was helpful to get the info all in one spot
  - ICAT helped put things in perspective
  - Liked breakdown of roles and function areas
  - I liked the in-depth review of the ICAT results. I especially liked the breakdown of answers by sub-category and by respondent. This was a very informative overview four perceived strengths and weaknesses
  - Useful tool to spark discussion and explore 7 capacities
  - Presentation and materials consolidated a lot of information into a format that facilitate
  - Really helpful to have data in small, manageable units. It led to informed, focused conversations that didn't totally evolve into people focusing only on their interest points
  - Data was interesting – would like a copy of each capacity data
  - Opportunity to evaluate and discuss data
  - Seeing the results
  - I liked taking a look at the data but wonder how accurate it was. It may be difficult for people to grade themselves
  - Data itself/ results of ICAT were really interesting and I liked that they were given to the college community in a facilitated environment.
  - Being able to see the data results
  - Identifying “gaps” and realizing how much agreement there is about them
  - Data seemed a bit open ended – the statistical analysis could possibility go deeper
  - Viewing outcomes
  - Seeing this data to better understand common themes of the general feeling across campus
  - Liked the idea of finding strengths and weakness but need a more reliable/valid instrument
  - I'd like to know more about ICAT
  - Learning about the surveys conclusions
  - Looking at the data was interesting – particularly having completed the survey. It was interesting to see how others answered the questions
  - Diving into the survey results and debating the meaning behind it.
  - Found how much we don't know

- It was useful but brought up questions: was the data valid with so many “I don’t know” answers? Perhaps after a year of making sure everyone has been exposed to the info they could answer the question. What can we do to bring everyone’s answer to level 4? Various ideas to help the info be available to everyone
- Feedback very interesting
- Logistics
  - Well organized with facilities
  - Coffee
  - Line efficiency
  - Staff was friendly
  - Using the gym – more comfortable
  - Spinach croissants were good!
  - Breakfast was tasty

## What could be improved?

- More participation
  - I do not see all the staff and faculty. I do not know what percentage attend but attendance seem low
  - Gaps in attendance
  - Allow student affairs and other professional staff to attend this kind of programming especially convocation
- More engagement after convocation
  - We could have better student engagement. Also better intra-departmental communication
  - We should do this more! Including all to participate in this event/convocation – really! Share the vision our college has and what it means to all involved and to all the capacities we have discussed today. As an outsider I miss sharing the values we have as educator, faculty, leader, administrator
  - More opportunities to come together and work on resolutions to the problems the college faces
  - Continued adjunct, PD support and recognition and involvement
  - More informal discussions – a structured opportunity rather than left to discuss among ourselves
  - Have more informal sessions for these kind of dialogues.
  - Include students from time to time. They are the most qualified to define student success
  - Need more faculty interaction across disciplines
  - There should be more opportunity to have conversations – create the time and space
  - Maybe more opportunities to interact in this way.

- There should be more staff included in these types of events – the fact that the largest group who responded “I don’t know” was staff, illustrates the need to include staff and always make that intentional effort
- Communication and follow up
  - Communication has been an issue for many years in the campus. Small discussion groups rather than large groups could narrow the cap with continued follow up
  - I am curious about what the next steps will be in terms of this data
  - Increasing communication across the college in a effective way will help faculty and staff be more engaged with what is happening at NECC. There were many “I don’t know” answers to many important questions
  - We have done things like this before and all gave recommendations (similar to the areas that were given today) and nothing seems to change. It would be nice to come to a meeting, see all of the recommendations from last meeting and this is what the college has done.
  - Although we talk a lot, there is very little that actually changes 0 for example all of the comments will be posted on the website but nothing happens
  - Make final ICAT available to everyone
  - Wonder how all the work will be utilized
  - Please share data after this event
  - So much of what I am hearing is about communication and follow-up – so what are we going to do with this data and the ideas from this conversation? There is not clear plan for what comes next: what? How? Who?
  - See what action steps are acted upon
  - Having more student centered survey topics discussed including academic advising (student centered departments) that can bring ideas and connect how we can increase retention and graduation and anything related to student success
  - Follow up with actions – use convocation to cross educate and inform each other
  - What is going to happen with our suggestions?
  - Possibly discuss topics with breakouts in departments to discuss how we think our own departments could work to solve some of these problems (how can we “own” the responsibility within our own areas
  - Internal communication and equity across all roles, day and night students, faculty and staff. Knowing where to get the information/resource or assistance to help retain and assist our students and support all faculty and staff
  - Understanding the “why” in the vision
  - Clear org chart of who is where and what they are responsible for
  - Create a visual culture of employees – everyone should have their photo attached to email to start with

- I think we should start at basics – we should get to know each other and what each of us does on campus – we should also always be willing to have comfortable communication together
- Have the same activity in a smaller scale within departments so that we can have more time to discuss; different departments could be mixed to do the workshop but not the entire campus at once.
- Physical location: Gym, /acoustics/visibility of slides (30+ generic)
  - Can we hire an acoustics expert to modify the room baffling and damping and do electronic delay compensation. My guess is that only about half of what is said is actually understood.
  - Gym didn't work (5)
  - Not best physical space – hard to hear and see presentation
  - Sound and technology very challenging and subsequently inhibited communication = poor quality lighting, unable to see video and slide presentations
  - Lighting too bright and no AC
  - Chemical sensitive –people very hard time with smell of newly polished floor (2)
  - Noise level acoustics poor so I could not hear instructions –
  - Echoing room was also impossible for enunciation – couldn't get have the responses
  - Better than the tech center but need more tables and better sound
- Color copies a waste of money especially then faculty don't have enough funds to copy syllabi and exams (3)
- Video (4)
  - Caption video
  - Subtitles: always on any video, material shared; not only for deaf faculty also hard of hearing and universal design
  - Liberal arts video presented was full of young white male students – not diverse or representative of our population? Also why isn't it captioned?
- Clearer instructions and introduction
  - Interpretation of data guide
  - Clarification as to the expectations from the faculty, survey, data, etc.
  - What were the goals? Objectives this process?
  - Some more preparation and information about the tool and maybe even a calculator to work with the numbers
  - Better explanation of the data/statistics before we started
  - It was not clear to everyone that the packets at each table represented different sections of the “pie” on the cover. I think that color-coding would help! Make the relevant pie slice different visually both bolder and a different color
  - With the Capacity café work shop I would have liked to have a breakdown of information that we were discussing: definitions, brief history of survey and expectations

- It would have helped if we were told why we shouldn't take the materials from tables. Each packet was comprised specifically of data related to the topic of the table.
- Were we just responding to data or also including discussion, personal contributions and reflection?
- Mixed directions regarding if we could write on materials we were leaving on the tables
- Some of us needed more definitions of some of the items, i.e. Who is included in the group categorized as "staff"
- Have better set up instructions
- More overview of the process for survey
- Need explanation on what each question and score measures and allow us to follow what to discuss
- Confusing
- Intro too long (3)
- Definitions (6)
  - Terms e.g. equity
  - Definitions in handouts
  - Define student success and student outcomes (e.g. program level outcomes vs. college level outcomes (Core Academic Skills) at the beginning of the exercise
  - Define buzz words in survey: internal/external stakeholders, student success
  - There are many terms whose definition is ambiguous. For example define "student success".
  - Define groups
- Facilitation
  - Facilitators were not very effective
  - Give discussion questions to facilitators ahead of time and on a separate sheet of paper on the day
  - Make sure each person has a say on all topics
- Report out too long or wrong format: (15)
  - Report out speakers should stand up
  - Not productive use of time for groups to read off their strengths and gaps when its difficult to hear and remember what they are saying
  - Feedback at the end was disengaging – we already got their summaries from 3 table groups.
  - Less of a report out – maybe a pair/share
  - Use projector to display feedback in addition to oral reporting.
  - Is there another way to share results? Maybe use clickers so people can see the results on a screen?
  - I think the presentation of information that was discussed in the groups needs to be re-evaluated. It was difficult to hear every response. Perhaps writing ideas down so people can also read and follow along

- Would be better to gather and present at a future meeting
- The Teaching and Learning group that suggested a poster session for staff and faculty to informally share good practices (instead of group activity) that sounded like a good suggestion (2)
- Report out too passive for participants – the setup make it impossible to avoid repetition and vague generalizations
- Report outs were redundant – perhaps a better emphasis on preparing back up points if your point is taken (that’s more the fault of the participants)
- Length/format/café style/organization
  - Would like to dig into all 7 areas of the assessment tool
  - There was too much time being talked at. We talk about the importance of hands-on learning and there was very little opportunity.
  - More specific concentration on one topic or area. Moving to 3 tables for 3 different topics did not allow the time to concentrate and develop one area of concern (2)
  - Assure a mixture of faculty to discuss at each table
  - More time to talk (3)
  - Brevity: having a quick exercise that brought the major takeaways to attendees from the data would have streamlined the process (2)
  - Too long (6)
    - Better to have frequent opportunities to discuss results than all at once this morning
    - Could have done the complete activity in 30 or 35 min.
    - Comments could be analyzed, consolidated and distributed via email.
  - Too short – time was too limited
  - Make the groups that are the same are close by so reporting out could go more quickly
  - Shorter time – 20 min. per round too long
  - Format: two groups would have been more effective.
  - The gyms acoustic limitations a little frustrating – maybe a short full staff gathering followed by breakout session is a better way to gather so we are not as hampered by this issue. Also a gallery walk might be a more effective report-out in this kind of space. Even with a mic its hard to focus when you can’t see the speaker
  - Discussing these results was sometimes frustrating, as some participants didn’t feel like some of these issues pertained to their department – that’s a college-wide problem. Having better context about ICAT and these results would help discussion and engagement from ALL areas
  - Incorporate a break (4)
    - Too long to engage participants completely and best practices would suggest a break to stretch, bathroom, etc. This setting is not conducive to optimal concentration and therefore quality of

work. Because we started at 8:45 the report out was losing attention from participants

- As usual 3 and ½ hours with no break (if you leave you miss something). Plus we have to do to another meeting after this. I wish the college would consider the detrimental effects of sitting for long periods of time.
- 3 tables are one too many – should limit it to two
- Organizational skills need to be improved
- I really dislike having to move around to different tables
- Have everyone wear name tags include title and department
- Food
  - Ensure baked goods fully cooked
  - Have grapes already off the vine or smaller units on the vine
  - Protein for breakfast for diverse diet needs.
  - I can't think of any specific areas to improve except for stronger coffee
- Preparation (3)
  - Might have helped if the ICAT had been emailed to everyone beforehand (or posted on NECC Website)
  - Would have been better to have material ahead of time
  - A little more knowledge about the data presented would be helpful
  - Have the data prior to convocation
- Value
  - Not sure of the value of the exercise
  - This felt like a waste of time. It seems there is a general belief that we don't have enough capacity or we just don't know enough about what happens at the college – so discussion was not always helpful.
- ICAT instrument/data
  - Make clear distinction between perception of reality and the reality itself. The data seem to measure the former not the latter
  - Need more to participate in survey (4)
    - Perhaps the data could be more “representative”
    - Increase numbers of participants to strengthen the data
  - Data confusing
    - More kinds of summary data for better analysis
  - The “n” of each area e.g. adm, full time fac. Part time fac.: we should know the total of people in each category e.g. 27 of 40 adm participated, etc. (4)
  - Was the data given to a true representative sample of the college? Often online surveys have pretty significant issues bias. Could we have a larger sample perhaps if done with division or department meetings?
  - Survey is too subject to opinion not evidenced based objective material
  - Presentation of data should be more user-friendly
    - Having one sheet with consolidated data

- Questions at times confusing – use of jargon words are perhaps confusing for test takers
- Survey bias or weaknesses/subjectivity/opinion:
  - There are too many “I don’t knows” in equity and too many low scores in Data and Tech (see question 3 especially. Question is problematic)
  - I think we were asked to analyze bad data with bias/validity issues: garbage in – garbage out
  - A focus on improving the survey system = targeted participation for comprehensive survey result. An improved communication strategically across the college about the need to complete the survey
  - The survey not objective, not operationalized, no %
  - Mode of assessment
  - Once again we are collecting subjective data
- Don’t use word “gaps”
- More targeted subject matter
- Data should have been in % (two other comments)
- The “I don’t know” #s didn’t seem as helpful as they could be. Were the I don’t know answers given due to lack of info or lack of perceived relevance. Lack of caring? The 4-point scale is limited. Data is helpful as a starting point but not much more.
- Stats could have been more detailed
- The survey itself and the data reporting were pretty poor. As a survey taker I found it often unintelligible. As a reader of the data it was frustrating.
- Content of convocation
  - This is the same theme over and over again – how many times are we going to discuss this? Our enrollment and retention numbers are low, employee morale is at its lowest – how much more talking are going to do. It has not gotten us far not in a better place.
  - I would like to learn more about the “equity” topic at convocation
  - It would be much more useful to use convocation to learn a skill like CPR or use convocation to look at the budget and vote on how to best use our dwindling resources
  - I’d like to learn more about the morale at this college as I think the general effectiveness of employees directly relates to how they feel supported, valued, etc.
  - Formality versus real inclusiveness
  - I didn’t feel as a faculty member that the session helped discuss every day needs of the academic affairs
  - What was the point of all of this? We are drowning in a cup of water
  - I would prefer time being spent talking about teaching and learning/best practices and hearing about what other colleagues are doing in their field

- Some questions about how much people know about data or initiatives, etc. People tend to focus on the information that is relevant to their work – it is not unusual to me to find a lack of widespread knowledge about things like the relationship between IT and IR or disaggregation of student data – though this info is available – in a two hour convocation not every data point will be remembered
  - These limited times per year, where so many faculty are in one place, should be utilized to allow us to work with each other on teaching practices, sharing what we do, treating it as a faculty professional development opportunity. Sessions like the one we did today are so amorphous as to be almost useless to me as a teacher
  - I think this work could be done outside of convocation and then the information found could be used to create and discuss specific action plans and how they can be implemented at convocation.
- Miscellaneous:
    - Change is slow – maybe too slow
    - Did not have to repeat 2011 news
    - Plants are nice but hard on discussion
    - The overall theme seemed that too many new initiatives were being done every semester and changes, making it difficult to keep up. Also administrators are being spread so thin and the departments are getting too large so that info is getting watered down. There is a large goal to be student centered, but faculty feel spread so thin that there is limited time to focus on the students and curriculum growth and time for professional development.