

## March 2018 Update: Integrated Student Experience

Hello NECC Community,

For your Snow Day Reading Pleasure: The Integrated Student Experience (ISE) **March update**.

### The Buzz: Answering the “Big” Questions

The Integrated Student Experience initiative is so broad in scope and extensive in implied change to established practices at Northern Essex that it can become overwhelming and confusing. Many staff and faculty have asked many questions about the ISE in many meetings over the last month. Although they run the gamut, **four of the most common questions are “Why are we doing this?” “What data underlies the initiative?” “How do we know it will work?” “What are the workload implications?”**

Let’s take those one at a time. We are pursuing the ISE because **we want more of our students to achieve their goals** here, whether that is graduation, transfer, career preparation, enlightenment, or something else. And we want more students reaching the milestones on the way to those goals: **learning, passing their classes, completing the first term, persisting from semester to semester**, etc.

For instance, we would like to do better with the new students that arrive each fall. **Of the roughly 1000 new students in Fall 2016, 4 graduated, 32 transferred, and 502 returned to NECC by Fall 2017.** The rest (463) did not have a favorable outcome. Those **46 percent that left were disproportionately male, Hispanic, older than 21, and part-time**. A third of them earned no credits and another third earned six or less. Close to 60 percent of them had a GPA under 2.0 in Fall 2016. **Two-thirds of these students didn’t even return in Spring 2017.** If a quarter of those 463 students persisted instead of leaving, it would wipe out half our enrollment decline between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017.

It is both the grimness of those figures and the opportunity they represent that underlies the Integrated Student Experience initiative. Most of the elements of the ISE (more holistic approach to student success, guided curriculum pathways, advising reform) are being pursued in community colleges around the country. This approach is endorsed by Achieving the Dream and other community college associations. **Check out these links for just a small taste of what is happening elsewhere:**

[Austin Community College: Areas of Study \(what we call Meta Majors\)](#)

[Community College of Baltimore County: Academic Pathways](#)

[Indian River State College: Guided Pathways](#)

[Middlesex Community College: Academic Pathway Maps](#)

[Pierce College: Career Roadmaps](#)

[Queensborough Community College: Academies \(what we are calling Meta Major Centers\)](#)

[Saint Petersburg College: Career and Academic Communities](#)

In some cases these efforts at other institutions are quite new and so the jury is out on how well various strategies are working. However, I saw a presentation at the recent Achieving the Dream Conference where **Queensborough Community College reported five percent improvement in retention**. A five percentage point increase in our Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 retention rate for all our students would more than wipe out our enrollment loss for that year. **We are talking about holding on to 250 more students...out of almost 6000. We can do that.** Do we know exactly what percentage of students Meta Major Centers might save and what percentage Curriculum Pathways will help? No. But that degree of

precision is pretty rare anywhere in the field of education. I am confident, however, the ISE can help us save 250 more students a year. Hopefully, many more.

But how much extra work will be needed to get such an improvement? Here certain hard realities set definite boundaries. Although we are applying for grants and seeking funding wherever we can, **new resources to dedicate to this work are limited. Thus we will need to stop doing some types of activities and shift those resources to the ISE initiative.** For faculty and classified and professional staff, the amount and types of work they can do are strictly defined by collective bargaining agreements. **Therefore, any shift in their work must be within existing contractual limits.**

This is a good place to make clear that **we are not asking Day faculty to do more non-instructional work. We are going to invite them, however, to think about doing *different* non-instructional work.** Work more focused on students and less focused on committees, task forces, paperwork and other bureaucracy. **We want faculty to focus on the non-instructional tasks they most enjoy and excel at** (such as academic advising, working with student clubs, curriculum development, orienting new students, helping students completing their degrees get internships or transfer, etc.). Faculty will work with their direct supervisors to develop their non-instructional workloads as they always have. Beyond the contributions that Day faculty make, the other work of the ISE will need to be supported by other resources, including staff, stipended DCE instructors, administrators, and volunteers.

### What's Happening

Within the ISE Implementation Alliance, we can report the following progress in the last month:

- Discussions involving multiple stakeholders have produced the outlines of **a plan for locating many services** to support prospective, new and undeclared Haverhill campus students in the Behrakis-based Center for Student Success and much of the services for existing students in the Spurk Building. **Most of the support services you find on the second floor of Spurk now, will still be there in the future.** Similarly, Academic Preparation faculty in Haverhill will still have offices and teach classes in Spurk but will also spend non-instructional time with new and prospective students in Behrakis. Discussions will continue to further flesh out the details of these service locations.
- Plans are shaping up to **create three new Meta Major Centers in Haverhill by September. The Center for Professional Studies** (Criminal Justice, Deaf Studies, Education and Human Services) **and the Center for Liberal Arts** (Behavioral Sciences, English, Global Studies, and the Performing and Visual Arts) each will be established **on the second floor of Spurk** near the existing Center for Business and Accounting. **The Center for STEM will be located in the Technology Center.** Discussions continue about a location in Lawrence for a Health Meta Major Center and space for the other four meta majors on that campus once the Dimitry Building reopens in 2019. Also, Business faculty and I will hold **a forum with Business students in their Center on March 28<sup>th</sup>** to discuss their ideas for how to make the Center even better next year. Later that afternoon Professor Quinn and I will be traveling to Bentley University to tour a similar center there.
- Department Chairs and Program Coordinators are working toward an **end of semester deadline** to assure all programs have clearly articulated learning outcomes, updated curriculum maps, and clear course sequences as the first three steps in our work on **Guided Curriculum Pathways.**

- The **Advising Reform Team's** recommendations were accepted at the ISE Goal Team meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Those recommendations—including enhanced integration between career and academic advising and between professional and faculty advisors, intrusive advising especially for new students, advising in the Meta Major Centers, and investment in student lifecycle management technology and more advising capacity—can be viewed in detail [here](#).
- I am working closely with the **college's leadership**, which **has committed to helping us find resources** to support the ISE initiative.

Please think about how you can get involved with the Integrated Student Experience initiative. **This is a team effort** and many of you have already strengthened the initiative with your ideas and questions. **Thank You for your contributions!** If you email me at [wheineman@necc.mass.edu](mailto:wheineman@necc.mass.edu), I can help you find a place to contribute.