



V O I C E S

MANY VOICES.

ONE STRATEGIC VISION.



VOICES OF NECC

Walk around NECC's campus in Haverhill or Lawrence and you will hear some powerful voices: the voices of courageous and determined students; and the voices of creative and talented teachers; the voices of tutors, advisors, librarians, lab technicians, maintenance staff, and dozens of others — educators each and every one — wholly committed to student success.

VOICES: 2012-2015 is the college's strategic plan, meant to provide compelling and broadly stated vision, values, and strategic directions, as well as some specific goals, for the whole college for the next few years. It is the hopeful expression of all of these voices, brought together through *Appreciative Inquiry*.

One of the fundamental principles of *Appreciative Inquiry* is that every human system — a family, a community, a company, or a college — has strengths and core values that provide it with life, energy, and purpose. Even when faced with tremendous challenges, such as we have seen in recent years, human systems can and do thrive.

You will find in *VOICES* this sense of energy, of optimism, of aspiration and determination. Ours is an ambitious and vital plan for our future — one that we will accomplish *together*.

Dr. Lane A. Glenn

President, Northern Essex Community College

"We wanted to give everyone an opportunity to express their opinion — we listened to their ideas, insights and gathered their visions for the future. Their willingness to participate and their voices have helped to shape the directions the college will take over the next three years."

*Ellen Grondine
Dean of Law, Education, and Social Professions*



OUR PROCESS

Strategic planning for Northern Essex Community

College's *VOICES: 2012-2015* began at convocation in

Fall 2011, followed by over 35 SOAR forums engaging

employees, students and stakeholders who collaborated

to identify and analyze Strengths and Opportunities,

Aspirations and Results to frame the direction of our

future. Following the college's history of an *Appreciative*

Inquiry approach of inclusive planning, results from

the discussions are a collective voice for continuing

ongoing initiatives at NECC in the immediate future

and beyond. The following themes reflect a shared

vision of strategic directions for NECC.

SD1

SD2

SD3

SD4

SD5

5SG

Support Success

SD ONE

When students begin classes at the college, they often need support in addition to what the instructor provides in the classroom.

Tutoring, financial support, mentoring, personal counseling and advising, and help towards preparing for a career can often be as important to their success as the

"The SOAR process raised my awareness of the innovative ideas my colleagues have and the wonderful creativity that abounds in all areas of Northern Essex Community College."

*Marc Mannheimer
Professor, Art & Design*

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Strengthen Community

Individual efforts are enriched and deepened when created within the context of a community. When faculty and advising staff share knowledge to mentor a student, when community leaders review the effectiveness of career programs, and when faculty meet to align curricula, a community is created that works to ensure student success. We must strengthen our partnerships with each other and the external community — sometimes asking for their help but also offering our help — to assure our mutual benefit so that our students will be successful.

Respect Diversity

SD THREE

We are diverse in who we are and how we learn. Respecting diversity means seeing diversity as a strength that can be used to accomplish the goal of student success and recognizing that people may have diverse needs in achieving their goals.

As we value what each of us can contribute to the goal of student success and attend to what each of us needs to achieve success, we are respecting our diversity.

Foster Leadership

SD FOUR

An academic community works best

when all members are engaged and

proactively working to achieve goals. This

engagement can create leaders in any

area — the student helping a peer, a staff

member tutoring or advising learners,

a faculty member constructing knowledge

with learners in the classroom.

Professional development can support

these efforts on the part of individuals to

become leaders.

Maximize Resources

SD FIVE

In a time of dwindling natural and financial resources, we must find creative ways to preserve and increase the financial means of the college in order to continue and even expand our efforts to improve student success. One way to achieve this goal is to pursue avenues of external support aggressively. Another way is to create a sustainable environment on campus in a way that is socially responsible and financially rewarding.

VISION STATEMENT

It has been said that leadership means the ability to move people from where they are now to where they have never been before, but need to go — and to do so by evoking for them a shared vision for the future. The Northern Essex Community College Vision Statement reflects this:

To create a supportive learning environment that embraces diversity and inspires initiative and excellence.

CORE VALUES

Student Engagement

We are committed to fully engaging our students as active learners by providing a diverse range of educational experiences.

Collaboration

We are committed to developing productive, collaborative relationships within the college and among our various constituencies in the greater Merrimack Valley.

Personal and Professional Growth

We are committed to the personal and professional growth of faculty, staff, and students alike. We believe that lifelong learning is essential to the personal enrichment and professional growth of each individual.

Respect

We are committed to fostering mutual respect that enables faculty, staff, and students to grow and work together in a supportive environment of shared governance, open communication, and fairness.

Diversity

We are committed to creating an institutional climate that deepens our appreciation for diversity and for the unique attributes of each individual.

Access and Opportunity

We are committed to providing affordable access to educational opportunity.

Excellence

We are committed to a high standard of educational excellence in teaching, learning, and academic content.



“Having a SOAR forum in my class was wonderful. The students had great ideas, and appreciated the opportunity to have their voices heard.”

*Trish Schade
Associate Professor, Academic Studies*

Northern Essex Community College

5

STRATEGIC
GOALS



Strategic Directions & Strategic Goals

In *VOICES: 2012-2015* you will find a *Vision Statement* that describes the highest aspirations of the college, as well as statements of our *Core Values* conveying who we are and how we pursue our work. You will also find descriptions that build upon some important other plans and activities we are involved in, such as *Achieving the Dream*, our recently completed *NEASC Self-Study*, and the Massachusetts *Vision Project* for Higher Education, including:

Strategic Directions: Broad statements about some of our most important commitments that each division, department, and area of the college will be asked to use as guides in planning and allocating resources.

Strategic Goals: More specific statements about initiatives and activities that are important to us, and that we will work toward together. These goals will be given high priority for planning, allocating resources, forming teams, and monitoring progress over the next three years.

1. Develop a comprehensive urban campus in

downtown Lawrence. NECC's roots are in Haverhill, where our 106-acre suburban campus on Kenoza Lake serves nearly 5,000 students each semester and features an award-winning One-Stop Student Services Center, recently renovated Library, and a new Technology Center. Twelve miles away in downtown Lawrence, enrollment has climbed to nearly 3,000 students, and even with the opening of a new Health and Technology Center in 2013, more must be accomplished to fulfill the promise of a comprehensive urban campus to meet the needs of Lawrence and the surrounding communities, even as we maintain excellence on our Haverhill Campus, including:

- Partnering with the city and area businesses and organizations on downtown improvement planning
- Providing the necessary space, staffing, and other resources for academic and student support services
- Developing new programs and services to meet the needs of students, businesses, and organizations in the area
- Expanding collaborative activities with K-12 schools in Lawrence and surrounding communities

2. Improve Student Learning, and Retention and

Graduation Rates. While some students attend NECC to take a particular course out of personal interest, or to improve job skills; most intend to complete several courses or an entire program in order to transfer or graduate. Our Core Academic Skills are meant to bring clarity and focus to areas of learning we think are most important, and need to be fully implemented. Through our work with *Achieving the Dream* and other recent student success initiatives our retention and graduation rates have been

improving—nearly 80% of our students transfer, graduate, or are still enrolled six years after admittance. But we can do better. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's *Vision Project* and the American Association of Community Colleges *Call to Action* challenge us to improve our retention and graduation rates, for the good of our students, the college, and our communities. By 2015 we will:

- Improve our Student Persistence rate from 78% to 81%
- Increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded from 1,048 to 1,200

3. Improve Academic Support Services. NECC already provides outstanding support services such as academic advising, tutoring, developmental learning centers, learning accommodations, and library services. Through our work with *Achieving the Dream* and other student success initiatives we have also experimented with other forms of academic support such as supplemental instruction, learning communities, and service learning. We can become even more effective in these and other areas by:

- Developing a comprehensive plan for delivering tutoring services across the college
- Fully implementing and expanding the use of DegreeWorks for academic planning and support services
- “Scaling Up” academic support services that lead to improved student success

4. Improve Student Career Preparation. Whether a student attends NECC for a single class, a Liberal Arts transfer degree, or an occupational certificate program, eventually that student will seek a job in a chosen career field. The college already provides access

to important career preparation services such as career research tools, workshops, counseling, and job placement assistance.

Improving student career preparation involves:

- Ensuring we are offering high quality academic programs that meet student transfer and career needs
- Providing access to high quality workshops and research tools in multiple formats
- Connecting students to pre-employment career preparation opportunities like internships, work-study, and cooperative education
- Making meaningful connections between community service and service learning experiences and career preparation

5. Expand a “Culture of Learning” across the college.

All of us are educators. Whatever our role at the college, we are here to help students learn and accomplish their goals. To do this effectively, we must be constantly learning ourselves — about teaching strategies, new technologies, leadership skills, cultures of the world, computer applications, and more. Creating a “Culture of Learning” means building on the successes of NECC’s Center for Professional Development, Living Our Vision of Excellence Committee, and Center for Instructional Technology and doing even more to support growth and development, including:

- Opportunity for ongoing training and development plans for all faculty and staff
- Access to regularly scheduled workshops, classes, and leadership academies
- Opportunities for advanced forms of growth and development through conferences, classes, and programs outside the college
- An organizational structure and resources within the college to support this “Culture of Learning”