

# **Norwalk Community College**

## **Five Year Strategic Plan 2017-2022**

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# **I.**

## **A Message from President David L. Levinson**

Dear NCC Community Members,

I am very proud to present you with Norwalk Community College's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. The plan reflects the culmination of a multi-faceted planning process that took place during the 2015-2016 academic year. Our course of action was both comprehensive and broad-based, gathering input from several sources which included faculty, staff, students, administrators, our Foundation and several of our community partners. Everyone's participation and insight facilitated in establishing seven institutional goals that reflect the vision, mission, and core values of the College.

These goals promote NCC's solid foundation as an educational institution of excellence, while positioning the college to meet the needs of students and the community in the future. Our Strategic Plan is the foundation on which our college operations will be centered and measured. Having identified our goals for the next five years, it is incumbent upon us to keep the conversations going and provide continuous feedback as we move toward each of these goals. I also realize that we operate in a rapidly changing environment and that it is essential to view this as a living document.

We are committed to providing excellence in academics, being responsive to workforce needs, utilizing innovative technology and engaging our community partners. We will carefully manage our campus growth while expanding our role in promoting environmental and civic responsibility. Our strategic goals will drive our institution forward as we collectively create our future at NCC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Levinson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David L. Levinson, Ph.D.  
President

## **II. Executive Summary**

Norwalk Community College (NCC) commits itself to achieving our seven strategic goals during 2017-2022. These goals are as follows:

- Goal 1:** Advance student learning and success as a student centered institution committed to academic excellence.
- Goal 2:** Develop a new system of advising for NCC that incorporates state-of-the-art practice and technologies.
- Goal 3:** Expand professional development for faculty and staff to ensure the success of NCC's strategic goals.
- Goal 4:** Expand the use of technology to support student success.
- Goal 5:** Strengthen internal systems of accountability to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.
- Goal 6:** Direct planning and resources towards ensuring fiscal stability in order to mitigate the effects of budget reductions and declining enrollments.
- Goal 7:** Cultivate and maintain vibrant community relationships.

Our goals were identified through a comprehensive and collaborative process in which faculty, staff, administrators, students and community members came together to provide their insight and analysis of the College's past, present and future. Based on that analysis, and framed by an understanding of our mission and our commitment to our southwestern Connecticut service area, we chose the seven goals listed above to shape the future of NCC.

An important component of this plan is the understanding that evaluation of results has a critical role to play in shaping our decision-making. We therefore envision this as a working document, which can be systematically informed and adjusted over the course of the next five years to reflect progress towards the achieving our goals.

### **III.**

## **How We Developed Our Plan: Overview of NCC's Planning Process**

Work on the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan began with our New England Association for Schools and Colleges (NEASC) self-study, which culminated in fall 2014. The self-study brought together a broad range of constituents to thoroughly analysis the state of NCC and progress made over the past decade. We analyzed demographic and enrollment trends, analyzed college policies and procedures, and reviewed the College budget in light of continued declines in state appropriations. We looked at our academic program, along with the library, informational services and technology operations. We reviewed the College mission and vision, assessed our planning and evaluation processes, and examined our governance and organizational structures.

Following the College's submission of the self-study, and the site visit by the NEASC evaluation team, NCC's Planning and Budget Committee set the strategic planning process in motion. A Strategic Planning Taskforce was created, representing all divisions and departments of the College. The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of three subcommittees: 1) Mission and Vision, 2) Internal Processes, and 3) External Environment. These groups met throughout fall 2015 and spring 2016. They collected data through interviews, roundtables, the Census, and external partners. The subcommittees presented the resulting recommendations at a retreat of the Strategic Planning Taskforce, held on March 18, 2016. A final set of goals and objectives emerged from the retreat and subsequent meetings of the subcommittees and formally presented to the NCC community at the May 6, 2016 All College Meeting.

### **Acknowledgements**

The NCC Foundation played a pivotal role in facilitating the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. Both Ann Rogers, Executive Director of the Foundation and Stuart Weismiller, President of the NCC Foundation Board, participated on the External Partners Subcommittee. The NCC Foundation also provided a planning consultant, Dr. Rebecca Wayland to guide the subcommittees and facilitate the planning retreat. We owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Wayland for

her leadership and oversight of this process. The entire NCC community is grateful to the NCC Foundation for their support and guidance.

### **NCC Strategic Planning Taskforce Members:**

Courtney Anstett, Coordinator of Service Learning

Jacek Bigosinski, Professor and Coordinator, Architectural Engineering Technology, Interior Design and Construction Technology Programs

Danita Brown, Registrar

Kimberly Bryant-Smith, Human Resources Assistant

Jenine Carlson, Health and Life Sciences Grant Project Assistant

Diane Donovan, Tutoring Center Coordinator

Tom Failla, Director of Hospitality Management & Culinary Arts

Kelly Jackson, Librarian

Linda Legters, Adjunct Instructor, English

Linda Lerman, Director of Library Services

Craig Machado, Director of ESL

Rachel Milloy, Assistant Professor, English

Hannah Moeckel-Rieke, Associate Professor, ESL and English

Stefanie Ortiz, Secretary to the Chief Diversity Officer/Compliance Officer

Joan Parris, Early Childhood Director

Mobin Rastgar Agah, Assistant Professor, Engineering and Coordinator of Engineering Science and Technological Education

Barbara Smith, Coordinator of Events and Campus Relations

Gail Stevens, Assistant Director/Specialist

Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Interim Associate Dean of Extended Studies

Alfred Thomas, Admissions Counselor

Pracilya Titus, Student Success Coach

### **Taskforce Support**

Phyllis Fitzpatrick, Director of Institutional Research

Ann Rogers, Director of the NCC Foundation

Kathryn C. Senie, Director of Institutional Advancement and Strategic Planning

## **IV. Current and Emerging Trends**

Founded in 1961, Norwalk Community College (NCC) was the first public, two-year college established in Connecticut. For over fifty years, NCC has carried out its mission to be a leader and partner in the academic, economic, cultural, and social well-being of Southwestern Connecticut. We seek to create a culture of inclusion and excellence through intellectual inquiry, open dialogue, multicultural awareness, and lifelong learning. By embracing the diverse needs of our students, faculty, staff, and community, the college provides an environment in which individuals are empowered to achieve their highest potential.

The College has an annual enrollment of more than 13,000 credit and noncredit students. Fall 2016 credit enrollment was 5,881 students, of which 58% are female and 42% male. Sixty percent of our credit students are aged 24, and under and 66% attend part-time. We are a racially and ethnically diverse college. In fall 2016, nearly 59% of our credit students identified themselves as non-white, including 18% black and 37% Hispanic. Nearly 90% of our students work while attending school, and over half are working 20 or more hours per week (CCSSE, 2015).

### **National Distinction**

In August 2016, the College was awarded a \$2.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Title V Program. The five-year grant is titled “The Student Success Collaborative: Transforming Student Pathways to Credentials and Beyond.” It will increase student success by developing a comprehensive advising system from admission to degree completion; embedding student success strategies throughout the curriculum; and, providing a comprehensive student support system through a virtual and on-ground Learning Commons. The timeline for the Title V project coincides with the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan.

NCC marks its eleventh year as an Achieving the Dream college and has been recognized as a Leader College since 2010. Leader Colleges demonstrate national leadership in the college completion movement and demonstrate exemplary advances in student achievement indicators.

NCC is a recipient of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's 2010 Community Engagement Classification based on the College's commitment to serving the community.

Norwalk Community College was named to the 2013 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). This designation is the highest honor a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning, and civic engagement.

In 2016, President Levinson joined a nationwide group of university and college presidents and chancellors to sign a Campus Compact 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Statement to reaffirm that public service is a priority of higher education and commit campuses to improving community life, and educate students for civic and social responsibility. The Anniversary Statement is a public commitment to develop Civic Action Plans for our respective campuses and our Civic Action Plan goals and objectives will align with this 2017-2022 Strategic Plan.

### **Current and Emerging Context: Critical Trends Impacting NCC's Future**

NCC is located in lower Fairfield County, in the Southwestern corner of Connecticut. The College has a ten-town service district, which consists of the two mid-sized cities of Norwalk and Stamford and eight suburban towns. Among these is the town of Greenwich, which is significantly larger and more socioeconomically diverse than the remaining seven.

Jobs in our service area are concentrated in the health, education, and service industries. Depending upon the strength of the economy, construction and manufacturing can be important, employing around 15% of the working-age population combined. According to Census data, 39% who live in NCC's service area commute more than one hour to work, and approximately

15% actually work across state lines. The cost of living in lower Fairfield County is among the highest in the country. The median price of a home is \$416,000 and the median rent is \$1,348. Forty-five percent of renters spend 35% or more of their income on rent.

The cost of living in Fairfield County, combined with the economic impact of the 2007-2009 Recession, contributed to stagnation in the population over the past five years. Fairfield County (which includes two cities outside the NCC service area) grew 2.5% from 2010 to 2015. During this time, the number of persons of Hispanic decent in Fairfield County increased 11% to a current high of 18%, and there was no growth in the non-Hispanic population. NCC serves a particularly important role for Fairfield County Hispanics. Currently, 37% of NCC students are of Hispanic decent, an increase of 7% since 2012. Nearly 60% of our students are the first-generation in their families to attend college (CCSSE, 2015). Additionally, English is not the native language of 36% of our students (CCSSE 2015).

The geographic area served by NCC is well known as having one of the highest rates of inequality in the United States. While the cost of living is driven up by the high incomes of the top quintiles of the population, many who live in Fairfield County remain poor. Connecticut's highest-income households — the top 5% — received a quarter (24.9%) of all the income in the state. The poorest 20% of the households in Connecticut received only 3.3% (Gibson, W. & Kauffman, S., 2012). "According to state-level data, Connecticut and New York have the largest gaps between the top 1 percent and the bottom 99 percent of taxpayers" and Fairfield County is by far the most inequitable of Connecticut's counties and the 3rd most inequitable county nationwide (Sommeiller and Price, p. 8, 2015). According to American Community Survey data, 9% of the residents of Fairfield County live below the poverty level. However, 19% of black and Hispanic residents live below the poverty level compared with only 6% of whites (www.Census.gov).

Since many people in the Fairfield County suburbs are wealthy, the cost of living is high. The expense of living in this area seriously affects our students as they prioritize the necessities of work, food, shelter and transportation over school. CCSSE data indicate that 43% of students say it is likely or very likely that they will have to leave college for financial reasons. Forty-nine



percent of NCC students are paying for college themselves without any help from family or friends, through a combination of their own earnings, federal financial aid, employer contributions, and scholarships. The high cost of living is a major reason that students drop from full- to part-time; typically, 25-30% of first time, full-time students will drop to part-time after just one semester at NCC.

The population of Fairfield County is also aging, with the under 18 population declining 1.3% from 2010 to 2015, while those aged 18 and above increased by 3.8% ([www.Census.gov](http://www.Census.gov)). This trend is reflected in the public high schools. Overall, Connecticut anticipates an 11.6% decline in the number of high school students from 2012-2024. Only two other states in the country expect higher declines (Thomas, J. R., 2016). In 2014, 66-82% of seniors graduating from Norwalk and Stamford high schools attended college, and 23-28% attended a community college. NCC is highly dependent upon younger students for enrollment, and this dependency has been increasing. In fall 2016, 63% of NCC credit students were aged 24 and under. Fall headcount at NCC has declined by 15% since 2012. Given the demographic trends described above, this enrollment decline or stagnation is likely to persist during the next five years.

The need for community college education in Fairfield County remains high. Forty-six percent of the population in NCC's service area holds a bachelor's degree or higher, and 20% hold a graduate or professional degree (American Community Survey, 2015). In many ways, this creates a positive environment for the college as our students cherish postsecondary opportunity and they benefit greatly from a robust scholarship program generated by local donors. The enthusiasm of our students for the Bachelor's degree does create a challenge for graduation rates, because even as they enter their first classes, students are planning to transfer as soon as their finances and/or grades allow. Transfer, rather than degree completion, is a priority for our students. Despite the fact that graduation is associated with higher rates of Bachelor's degree attainment for our students (National Student Clearinghouse data).

NCC is one of 17 colleges and universities that make up the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system. The Connecticut Board of Regents oversees this system, and has numerous initiatives underway that will shape NCC's future. The implementation of PA 12-

40, continues to evolve. This legislation called for reform of remedial education, which went to scale at NCC in fall 2014. Additionally, the College is currently in its first year of implementation the Transfer and Articulation Program (TAP). TAP is intended to ease transfer between the community colleges and Connecticut State Universities so that students can seamlessly complete 60-63 credits at each institution. As a relatively young state entity, we anticipate that the CSCU system will continue to develop new initiatives aimed at strengthening public postsecondary education in the State of Connecticut during the next five years, which will strongly impact policy and practice at NCC.

In sum, we find our College to be in a supportive but ever-changing environment. We must simultaneously adjust to ongoing reductions in the budget, while at the same time seeking ways to expand services to the communities that depend on us. Our five-year plan reflects these pressures, as we seek to leverage technology and professional development to simultaneously extend our reach, maintain high academic standards for our students, and increase efficiency.

## **V.**

### **Vision and Mission Statements**

#### **Vision**

Norwalk Community College aspires to create a culture of inclusion and excellence through intellectual inquiry, open dialogue, multicultural awareness, and lifelong learning. By embracing the diverse needs of our students, faculty, staff, and community, the College strives to provide an environment in which individuals are empowered to achieve their highest potential.

#### **Mission**

Norwalk Community College is a leader and partner in the academic, economic, cultural, and social well-being of Southwestern Connecticut. We are an educational community that embraces diversity and inspires excellence among our students, faculty, and staff.

- We provide affordable education leading to degree completion, transfer, professional certifications, employment, and lifelong learning;
- We promote student learning and success through high quality instruction, support services, and co-curricular activities;
- We support workforce development through partnerships with labor, business, industry, government, and our communities;
- We cultivate vibrant community partnerships through the sponsorship of intellectual, cultural, social, and recreational events and activities;
- We prepare our students to be active and responsible contributors to the global society.

## **VI.**

### **NCC Core Values**

#### **Student Centered Focus**

We value a holistic approach to student education by recognizing the intellectual, social, and professional diversity of our students. We provide opportunities and resources for our students to succeed academically and to integrate knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom into everyday practice.

#### **Excellence in Teaching**

We value excellence in teaching and providing the best education possible for our students, delivered by experts in their fields using the most current methodologies. We believe that the environment directly affects the learning process and students deserve the best resources and support we can offer.

#### **Student Success**

We value and support student learning across the lifecycle. We seek to foster a love of learning in our students, and support the development, pursuit and achievement of academic and career goals.

#### **Community Engagement**

We value NCC as an integral part of the Fairfield County community. We wish to enrich our community, while at the same time being enriched by it. Our partnerships help us to address community needs and identify opportunities for our students; resulting in pathways for transfer, career employment and community service for the public good.

#### **Civility and Respect**

We value our diverse community and seek to ensure that we create an environment that is welcoming and encouraging, and one in which fairness, impartiality, and accountability are evidenced in open, transparent, and respectful exchanges at all levels and in all relationships.

## **VII. Strategic Goals and Objectives**

Our five-year strategic plan encompasses four institutional priorities that are overarching assurances made by our community of administrators, faculty, and staff. They will serve as a beacon to guide and shape decision-making at NCC. The success of the strategic plan rests upon our institutional commitment to these priorities and they are reflected in the plan's goals and objectives.

### **Institutional Priorities**

- We commit to shared and transparent governance.
- We commit to provide fiscal stability and appropriate stewardship of resources.
- We commit to ensure sound decision-making and infrastructure, facilities and sustainability.
- We commit to a consistent and responsive planning and evaluation process.

### **Strategic Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1: Advance student learning and success as a student centered institution committed to academic excellence.**

- 1.1 Integrate student success skills into gateway courses.
- 1.2 Increase student engagement, active and collaborative learning and support for learners.
- 1.3 Engage students in at least one *High Impact Practice* during their academic experience at the College.
- 1.4 Provide opportunities and resources for students to integrate knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom into everyday practice.

**Goal 2: Develop a new system of advising for NCC that incorporates state-of-the-art practice and technologies.**

- 2.1 Establish a system of educational planning that engages students in academic and career advisement from admissions and orientation through graduation and transfer.
- 2.2 Align academic and career pathways through the identification and communication of structured pathways and critical courses.
- 2.3 Expand and develop advisor training to ensure that advisors are current in their knowledge and supported in their advising practice.
- 2.4 Implement strategies to improve communication with students at every stage of their college experience from admissions to completion.
- 2.5 Strengthen accountability to ensure all students routinely and systematically receive advising.

**Goal 3: Expand professional development for faculty and staff to ensure the success of NCC's strategic goals.**

- 3.1 Increase the integration of part-time faculty into the fabric of the institution.
- 3.2 Develop a process for training, accountability and assessment of online and hybrid courses; expand support for online faculty and students.
- 3.3 Increase the exploration and piloting of successful teaching initiatives. For example, continue to provide professional development for Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC).
- 3.4 Promote a culture of inclusion through diversity and cultural training.
- 3.5 Provide faculty and staff with training to support the use of technology for advising and the classroom.

**Goal 4: Expand the use of technology to support student success.**

- 4.1 Build an interactive and informative website that addresses the needs of students, faculty, staff and the community.
- 4.2 Reduce the need for students to come to campus by expanding and strengthening on-line education, creating an on-line orientation, and building a Virtual Learning Commons.

- 4.3 Expand technology for administrating and learning management systems; increase use of Blackboard to include all classes and all College faculty, staff and students; improve training in and use of educational technology, technology for student advising, and the use of day-to-day technology, including Share Point, Outlook, and Banner.

**Goal 5: Strengthen internal systems of accountability to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.**

- 5.1 Establish and implement an assessment process for student learning outcomes in all courses and programs at NCC. Priority will be given to establishing an assessment cycle that supports TAP.
- 5.2 Institute processes to ensure faculty meet their obligations, including, for example, advising and final grade submission.
- 5.3 Identify goals and measurable outcomes for college-wide student services and implement a plan for assessment.
- 5.4 Institute regular assessment of NCC's organizational structure and systems of governance to ensure efficacious oversight, evaluation, and accountability.
- 5.5 Establish and implement a process to evaluate the progress toward the Strategic Plan; determine what modifications need to be implemented to achieve its goals and communicate these findings.

**Goal 6: Direct planning and resources towards ensuring fiscal stability in order to mitigate the effects of budget reductions and declining enrollments.**

- 6.1 Institute financial strategies based on budget data to ensure the fiscal stability of the College.
- 6.2 Upgrade and retrofit campus buildings and space to make them energy efficient to meet the goals of the Climate Action Plan.
- 6.3 Analyze space allocation and document a systematic and transparent process for decisions concerning the use of facilities.
- 6.4 Institute regular security training for faculty, students and staff; provide effective communication about safety protocols.

6.5 Develop a systematic process to identify, write and review current grants and potential grants.

6.6 Complete Phase 3 campus construction, which includes renovation of the theater and west campus cafeteria.

**Goal 7: Cultivate and maintain vibrant community relationships.**

7.1 Strengthen partnerships with public schools through communication, concurrent enrollment courses, articulation and collaboration, and targeted programs to better prepare students for college.

7.2 Support seamless articulation with all public Connecticut universities including the further development of the CSCU systems TAP and the University of Connecticut transfer programs.

7.3 Establish NCC as a leader in entrepreneurial education.

7.4 Encourage employers and community agencies to consider NCC as the go-to posting for employees and support their employees' academic and career opportunities.



## **VIII.**

### **The Next Steps: Implementation and Accountability**

Over the course of the next five years, NCC will devote resources and attention to implementing our goals and objectives. Deans, directors and chairs will be primarily responsible for organizing divisional and departmental planning with their constituents that serves the overarching goals of the institution. The President and deans have ultimate oversight of this process.

Implementation of NCC's five-year strategic plan becomes a dynamic process by way of its integration into college processes. All departments and divisions at NCC engage in an annual cycle of planning and reporting. Templates are provided by the Department of Institutional Effectiveness each spring for the following year. Annual reports are saved to the College's SharePoint site. Additionally, the five-year plan provides a framework for other college processes, including the NCC Foundation's provision of funding for institutional advancement and faculty Additional Responsibilities.

## IX.

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