

Recommended Changes to the 2018-22 Strategic Plan
“Putting Education to Work”

As written in the 2018-22 Strategic Plan, “Putting Education to Work,” the third major phase of the strategic plan is “Plan Implementation and Adjustments.” This is described on page 3 of the plan, where it says, “The State Board will monitor and evaluate progress toward achievement of the plan’s goals, and will make adjustments as needed.”

For the first half of the plan implementation cycle, there were not compelling reasons to make adjustments to the strategic plan. However, multiple external threats in the second half of 2019 and throughout 2020 necessitated changes in the Community College System’s focus and use of resources. Most dramatic was the recognition in early 2020 that SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) had become a worldwide pandemic and would wreak havoc across the United States, including throughout North Carolina. In addition to deaths and health problems, the pandemic has led to economic hardship for many, beginning with the historic spike in unemployment during spring 2020 and continuing with significant challenges for certain industries, occupations, geographies, and populations.

Other major developments impacting community colleges included cyber incidents at North Carolina community colleges; increasing concerns about discrimination and violence toward Black Americans (punctuated by the death of George Floyd in May 2020); increasing public mental health challenges; and national trends toward lower community college enrollment following the arrival of the pandemic. The digital divide that we were aware of before widened as education and services moved online, and our System efforts to provide quality, accessible distance education became an urgent priority of our System and each of our 58 community colleges.

The challenges are many, but there are opportunities as well. Federal resources are being provided to blunt the most damaging impacts of the pandemic on the higher education system and students, and a combination of federal and state resources and decisions are enabling us to bring more attention than ever to broadband infrastructure, access to digital devices, and other persistent challenges. The roles of education, retraining, and community college support are recognized for their contributions to economic and community development. And comprehensive support for students is recognized as a central aim in policy and funding.

As President Stith has stated, out of these trying times, North Carolina Community Colleges will...

- Serve as a first choice for affordable education for all North Carolinians
- Lead North Carolina’s economic recovery and sustained growth
- Become a national model for diversity/inclusion

As State Board leadership has said, the 2018-22 strategic plan is a “living plan.” To follow are recommended changes of objectives, strategies, and wording for the North Carolina Community College System strategic plan to reflect current realities and promote proactive action. If adopted, changes made to the plan document will be buttressed by staff-led tactics to ensure that the adjustments to Board priorities are fully addressed.

GOAL: Increase the percentage of North Carolinians, particularly within underserved populations, pursuing and easily accessing education or training through North Carolina community colleges.



1.1. Improve the understanding and perceived value of educational opportunities, including lifelong learning, offered by North Carolina community colleges.

- 1.1.1. Implement a comprehensive, system-wide marketing and communications plan that focuses on the value of community colleges and promotes the image of the System and our institutions.
- 1.1.2. Strengthen collaboration with education, community, business, and workforce partners for outreach and to support students as they transition through a seamless system of education in North Carolina.
- 1.1.3. Reconnect former community college students to education and training opportunities that foster continued educational and career growth.

1.2. Increase student interest and success in industries experiencing skills gaps.

- 1.2.1. Market the value of technical education and workforce training for jobs/careers.

1.3. Identify and reduce access barriers for all prospective students, particularly among underserved populations.

- 1.3.1. Improve and augment existing financial assistance programs and services to better assist students with educational costs, particularly costs beyond tuition and fees (e.g., books, transportation, child care, etc.).
-  1.3.2. Promote more flexible scheduling and instructional delivery formats, **including more robust and inclusive online learning.**

1.4. Improve the student experience and increase enrollment by simplifying enrollment policies, processes, and communications.

- 1.4.1. Re-envision the application and enrollment process for community colleges.
- 1.4.2. Improve initial advising to include career exploration and improve navigation of the enrollment process.

Clear & Supported Pathways for Student Progress and Success

GOAL: Provide a continuum of education, training, advising, and support to help learners make informed decisions that lead to credentials and careers.

2.1. Provide timely and accurate career exploration and academic planning opportunities.

- 2.1.1. Integrate career exploration and employer outreach for all audiences from the moment they engage.
- 2.1.2. Develop and support effective career planning practices for faculty and staff.

2.2. Provide integrated, targeted support services that promote student success.

- 2.2.1. Provide support for student academic concerns, including early alerts to increase retention.
- 2.2.2. Connect students to transportation, health, and other comprehensive services, drawing on both college and community resources to address non-academic barriers faced by students.

2.3. Increase completion of credentials for successful transition to careers and/or further education.

- 2.3.1. Simplify and streamline processes from entry through completion/transfer, effectively incorporating multiple on and off ramps.
- 2.3.2. Refine foundational and developmental education strategies to accelerate student readiness for college-level instruction.
- 2.3.3. Validate students' prior learning and experience to minimize student costs and the time it takes to complete their educational goals.
- 2.3.4. Support effective advising and coaching to help students determine, pursue, and achieve their educational and career goals.
- 2.3.5. Promote guided educational pathways within broader career pathways.

 **2.4. Reduce opportunity gaps for underserved students.**

- 2.4.1. Help college employees understand and employ effective teaching/coaching strategies for all students, including those who are dealing with the impacts of poverty, trauma, addiction, mental illness, disabilities, and other challenges.
- 2.4.2.  Identify and remove systemic challenges to students of color and offer them targeted supports.

GOAL: Ensure the educational pipeline prepares a workforce possessing the interest, knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the needs of employers, now and into the future.

3.1. Collaborate with stakeholders to promote a workforce system that fosters innovation and establishes seamless connections among community colleges, K-12 education, universities, workforce and economic development partners, and business and industry.

- 3.1.1. Identify and engage employers and relevant sources of data to determine high-demand occupations, program demand within the current labor market, and expected occupational earnings.
- 3.1.2. Partner with high schools, universities, and workforce development entities and engage with employers and industry associations at the regional/local levels to identify workforce needs and establish educational and training programs collaboratively and comprehensively.
- 3.1.3. Collaborate with workforce partners to benchmark successful state and national workforce systems.

3.2. Offer relevant, high-quality instructional programs that meet the needs of business and industry for existing and future jobs.

- 3.2.1. Provide accessible, affordable, and high-quality professional development to faculty and staff to stay informed about labor market and student support trends.
- 3.2.2. Articulate pathways for educational and professional growth within key industries through employer engagement.
- 3.2.3. Develop faculty capacity to conduct program review and learning outcomes assessment to promote continuous improvement of programs.
- 3.2.4. Integrate critical employability skills into all programs of study to better prepare students for today's work environment.
- 3.2.5. Modify the instructional funding model to ensure colleges have necessary resources to offer workforce training needed by their communities.

 **3.3. Increase student access to work-based learning.**

- 3.3.1. Leverage partnerships to connect students with expanded work-based learning opportunities.
- 3.3.2. Modify policies and eliminate the barriers that impede access to apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.

Economic and Workforce Impact



3.4 Increase business counseling for small business owners.

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- 3.4.1. Adjust the Small Business Center performance funding model to prioritize business counseling activities.



3.5 Develop a workforce pipeline for emergency response, pandemic-proof, and high-demand industries.

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- 3.5.1. Implement the NC Workforce Credentials framework.
 - 3.5.2. Expand the teacher preparation pipeline through articulation agreements with universities for teacher prep and lateral entry/residency pathways.
 - 3.5.3. Provide enhanced training for law enforcement officers to ensure safe and fair enforcement of laws.

GOAL: Advance organizational effectiveness, operations, and decision-making to support a cohesive system of nimble, empowered, and community-driven colleges.

4.1. Ensure colleges and the System have access to technology and related infrastructure to meet student and institutional needs.

4.1.1. Implement a sustainable, system-wide enterprise resources planning (ERP) solution that enables more consistent and efficient operations.

4.1.2. Sustain the current ERP infrastructure to prepare for transition to a modernized ERP.

 4.1.3. **Expand broadband access at North Carolina community colleges.**

4.2. Improve decision-making through increased access to comprehensive, timely, and quality data.

4.2.1. Ensure that core data needs are identified, defined, governed, and accurately reported.

4.2.2. Provide access to analytical and business intelligence tools needed to support timely reporting on student and institutional outcomes.

4.3. Enhance and support workplace environments that value and engage employees and provide opportunities for growth and development.

4.3.1. Assess and address the professional development needs across the System.

4.3.2. Advocate for competitive salaries and benefits for community college faculty and employees.

4.4. Ensure policies, procedures, and processes facilitate System effectiveness and compliance.

4.4.1. Routinely monitor and revise the State Board of Community Colleges Code to ensure policies are current and clear.

4.4.2. Facilitate collaboration between System Office and the NC Association of Community College Presidents on the establishment of standard policies and procedures required to meet System requirements and align with best practices.

 4.4.3. **Identify and apply lessons learned from the pandemic based on best practices, System needs, and gaps in strategies.**

4.5. Leverage partnerships and agreements to create efficiencies for the System as a whole.

- 4.5.1. Advocate for regional or system-wide procurement mechanisms to simplify processes.
- 4.5.2. Foster regional and system-wide collaborations among colleges.

4.6. Improve cohesiveness between colleges, professional associations, System Office, and partners.

- 4.6.1. Improve communication among all System entities and key partners.
- 4.6.2. Leverage community college professional associations to increase communication and problem-solving across our System.

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