

Synthesized Input/Proposed Planning Themes
--Potential "buckets" (plan themes) and focus areas

Background

Since September 2021, the State Board of Community Colleges and System Office have reviewed demographic and enrollment data and reached out to internal and external stakeholders to identify key issues for inclusion in the North Carolina Community College System Strategic Plan. Some of the major outreach mechanisms included a series of eight listening sessions (by region) with community college presidents and trustees; planning exercises with community college associations; conversations with statewide industry associations and the NC Community College Faculty Association; and a survey of students followed by focus groups, made possible by the N4CSGA (student government association).

Staff used the input (particularly challenges raised up by community college leaders) to develop a list of issues. At the February SBCC Strategic Planning Committee meeting, board members identified their top issues. This prioritizing exercise resulted in the following proposed themes:

- ***Supporting Top-Quality Faculty and Staff for Top-Quality Education and Career Preparation-- Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Retention***
- ***Expanding the Education and Training Pipeline (Enrollment)***
- ***Boosting Student Success for All Students***
- ***Addressing Employer Needs, Talent Development, and Economic Mobility***
- ***Improving System Funding & Effectiveness***

Next Steps

The next steps in the process are as follows:

- The Strategic Planning Committee will review and revise as needed the proposed planning themes (buckets).
- The themes will be used to structure planning teams to develop the goals, strategies, and tactics for the strategic plan, with each team meeting an estimated three times this spring.
- In order to ensure the plan is *strategic*, the planning teams may propose further priorities to the Strategic Planning Committee as it plans how the System can achieve the overall goals. The thought process for objectives, strategies and especially tactics will draw upon criteria suggested by the Strategic Planning Committee, such as the balance between feasibility and impact. The Strategic Planning Committee has described an interest in developing a portfolio of tactics, some of which are shorter-term in nature/more feasible, as well as tactics that would be phased in later or would require a longer-term investment of time and energy to realize. The Committee has also identified some cross-cutting themes that may be found in each theme area, such as *removing barriers* and *promoting diversity and inclusion*.

Draft Planning Themes and Related Issues

As a part of synthesizing and condensing issues to produce a list of five major themes, some topics were collapsed under others. To follow are the same five proposed themes (“buckets”), with greater explanation offered and possible sub-topics identified. Some of these sub-topics may be drawn on to develop plan objectives, strategies, or tactics.

1. *Supporting Top-Quality Faculty and Staff for Top-Quality Education and Career Preparation-- Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Retention*

(salary competition, equity, and growth; remote work; bandwidth; professional development/career development; salary equity and growth for both faculty and staff)

- **Funding for pay, benefits – for faculty and staff**
- **Professional development, career growth opportunities**
- **Other strategies to give employees flexibility in how they work or offer support or recognition to employees**

2. *Expanding the Education and Training Pipeline (Enrollment)*

(pandemic enrollment declines, potential declines in CCP, declining numbers of HS graduates, disengaged youth, credential attainment)

- **Statewide marketing, communications, other “first choice” strategies** (greater engagement from colleges in marketing, balance with local marketing and recruitment; improved communication)
- **Free Community College?** Or expanded scholarships, help accessing financial aid or communicating available resources to pay for tuition/fees, Open Educational Resources (OER) or help paying for textbooks, or other affordability efforts
- **Adult learner efforts**, including addressing their interest in employability
- **Career and College Promise** (role in college FTE, overall enrollment, post-CCP enrollment in community college, low enrollment of students of color)
- **Helping students balance college with work/family commitments** (which is both an *enrollment* and *student success* issue)

3. *Boosting Student Success for All Students*

- **Meeting students’ academic needs** (core instructional efforts and supplies, as well as addressing advising, coaching, pandemic learning loss)

- **Meeting students' non-academic needs** (housing, food, transportation, childcare, mental health)
- **Supporting credential attainment/statewide attainment goal**
- **Meeting the needs of a changing and more diverse student population** (age, race/ethnicity, academic preparation, disengagement, mental health, disability status)
 - **National leader in diversity and inclusion** (*addressing opportunity gaps*)
- **Addressing interest in increased flexibility and availability** (scheduling of courses, modality of courses, availability of college services...especially for adult learners)
- **Technology access for students** (cited more than transportation in student survey)

4. Addressing Employer Needs, Talent Development, and Economic Mobility

(workforce/economic development, student interest, faculty availability, incentives for regional collaboration)

- **Addressing skill shortages** (worker shortages identified across industries)
- **Supporting continued expansion of apprenticeships, other work-based learning, and Customized Training** (with support for colleges to listen to employer needs together)
- **Regional solutions** (changing the relationships between colleges and between colleges and the system office; incentives for regional collaboration; convening college leaders to help develop)
- **Further developing pathways, career advising**

5. Improving System Funding & Effectiveness

- **Funding model** (Funding based on past FTE makes starting new programs difficult, FTE rate for high cost/high impact programs does not cover costs, large/small college funding considerations, services are delivered by headcount not FTE)
- **Funding for capital construction and equipment** (many buildings nearing end of life cycle, especially rural; variable ability to raise local funds; unique needs for buildings, equipment for high-demand fields)
- **Data and innovation** (improved K12 and workforce data sharing; System focus on sharing research and leading innovation)
- **Technology and cybersecurity** (broadband access, computer access, cybersecurity, ERP/technology systems)
- **Enhanced leadership and supports from System Office** (purchasing contracts, subject matter experts, convening colleges, more flexibility, quicker response)