Strategies for Transformative Change

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition

Raising the individual, organizational and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

CREATING RESILIENCY AND PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

The Northeast Resiliency Consortium (NRC) came together while seven community colleges were grappling with the effects of several crises including two hurricanes, the Boston Marathon Bombing, and the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. NRC schools were also dealing with the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression and were acutely interested in finding ways to put unemployed and underemployed individuals back to work. The NRC was organized in partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD) and joined with other strategic partners including the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching & Learning, and national affiliations and trade groups. The consortium was led by Passaic County Community College in New Jersey, and includes Bunker Hill (MA), Kingsborough and LaGuardia (NY), Housatonic and Capital (CT), and Atlantic Cape (NJ) community colleges.

Like many colleges funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's TAACCCT program, the goal of the NRC (a Round Three grantee) was to enhance the capacity of colleges to accelerate learning, ensure that students attain industry-recognized credentials, foster innovative employer partnerships, use new technologies, and deploy robust support services.

The NRC set out to address what resiliency means in times of crisis, change, and challenge, including finding ways for community colleges to innovate while simultaneously creating a highly skilled and resilient workforce across the healthcare, information technology, and environmental/utility sectors. One core strategy of the NRC was the launching of the Resiliency Competency Model, which is featured in this brief.

THE RESILIENCY COMPETENCY MODEL

To determine and define what constitutes resiliency, the NRC, with support from ATD, created a public process for arriving at the core competencies of resiliency. NRC engaged a prominent industrial organizational psychologist to lead the effort of the consortium with key stakeholders - employers, industry groups, students, faculty and staff - to define resiliency and how best to demonstrate it. This work became the basis for the Resiliency Competency Model, with the definition and five competencies illustrated below.

For the NRC and its stakeholders, resiliency was defined as: an individual's persistent development and application of knowledge, skills, and resources that effectively help one adapt to change and overcome adversity.

The five core competency areas are:

CRITICAL THINKING	REFLECTIVE LEARNING	COLLABORATION	ADAPTABILITY	SELF-AWARENESS
Purposeful use of reasoning to identify strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches in diverse situations	Integration and application of prior and current learning to new situations	Works with others to achieve a goal	Successful adjustment to a variety of positive and negative conditions and circumstances	Clear understanding of one's qualities, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, and how they impact one's self and others

MAPPING THE MODEL TO CURRICULA

To enable the faculty to map the Model to their courses, the consortium developed a Resiliency Curriculum Alignment Table. Faculty used the Alignment Table to collect: 1) course objectives, 2) course content, 3) course activities and content coded with one or more of the competencies, and 4) corresponding assessments. They could then determine whether they were accurately assessing the students' mastery of both course content and competencies, and how the courses might need to be revised.

Additionally, a self-assessment was completed by students at the start and conclusion of their courses. This assessment indicated whether students believed they developed the five resiliency competencies. Results of this assessment activity provided strong evidence from students that the courses are aligned with the competencies and that they contain important content and activities to promote the development of resiliency competencies.

IMPACT

In the 2015-2016 academic year, the Resiliency Competency Model and the Curriculum Alignment Table have been used by instructors in selected courses across NRC colleges. To date, 565 students have enrolled in 24 resiliency-enhanced courses in programs of study relating to energy, healthcare, and information technology.

	Courses	Student Enrollment
Fall 2015	16	242
Spring 2016	17 (9 original and 8 new)	323

RESOURCES

Skills Commons: permanent home for NRC resources, tools, and data www.skillscommons.org/handle/taaccct/200

Media
Soundcloud: "Resiliency Roundtables" podcasts soundcloud.com/northeastresiliencyconsortium
YouTube Youtu.be/xaJqx0gdGXw
Twitter @NEResiliency

Note: CUNY member colleges of NRC are also featured in a strategy brief, *Achieving Sustainability through Targeted Curriculum Change* that describes the work of the CUNY CareerPATH (CCP) consortium with its Round One TAACCCT grant.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE RESILIENCY COMPETENCY WORK

The following themes that emerged during the creation and use of the Resiliency Competency Model are informing future community college reform efforts:

1. **Building a participatory process is crucial for buy-in and lasting commitment**

   Only by building an intentional public process with inclusive stakeholder involvement was the consortium able to agree upon a definition and set of core competencies. Through the Model, a common vocabulary of attributes emerged for all stakeholders.

2. **Fostering instructor empowerment with the Resiliency Curriculum Alignment Table**

   It became clear that instructors wanted to examine their own pedagogy, including those not trained as traditional teachers. The Model and corresponding Alignment Table provided a versatile and simple tool for faculty to align activities and content.

   With transparent use of the competencies to shape how content is delivered, teachers were encouraged to speak with students and vice versa about the correlation between classroom learning and job skills. Students demonstrated an ability to describe their classroom learning more directly as relevant work skills.

3. **Thinking about sustainability "early and often"**

   From the outset, NRC had the goal of creating a competency model that would be valuable and relevant for a host of stakeholders, including community college students, incumbent workers, and chronically unemployed or underemployed individuals. By taking "the long view", the hope was that NRC would develop a model that could endure beyond the grant.

4. **Linking model to existing initiatives**

   An important element of the Model was intentionally linking it, and other components of the colleges' grant-funded work, to existing college completion and student success initiatives. With this action, NRC colleges are ensuring that the competencies and other successful components of their TAACCCT efforts become embedded into their institutions' efforts to help students complete and obtain market-valued credentials. Because the competencies align well with other "soft skills" that are in demand across a host of sectors, connecting the resiliency competencies to non-traditional students, including those who qualify for public assistance and other workforce-development programs, is also a focus for the consortium's work. Building the systems necessary to connect with these TAACCCT-targeted participants remains an important "institutional transformation" that should continue beyond the life of the grant.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS