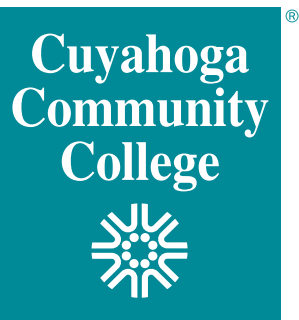


Building Momentum:

First Steps in Forming the Tri-C Academic Plan

SUMMARY OF ORIENTATION SESSIONS



Setting the Context

This report contextualizes the work of academic planning with the overall strategic direction of Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®). An academic plan, along with the institutional strategic plan, sets the direction for the mission, vision and values of the institution.

Tri-C President Michael A. Baston has set a clear agenda for the College. This agenda is articulated in his **First 100 Days** report. This report also articulates a strategic direction for the institution, anchored by three fundamental principles:

- **Values-centered**

We are consciously committed to diversity, integrity, academic excellence, the achievement of individual and institutional goals, and inclusive prosperity. We will dedicate ourselves to building trust, respect and confidence among our colleagues, students and the community.

- **Student-focused**

All decisions will be evaluated through a “student-first” lens, considering the potential impact on student equity, the student experience and student success and to ensure opportunity for all.

- **Purpose-driven**

As the community’s college, Tri-C will be a catalyst for change in Northeast Ohio. We will create more vibrant communities by moving people from economic fragility to economic mobility through education and training for in-demand, well-paying jobs. We will drive economic growth by partnering with business and industry to design programs that will develop the skilled workforce needed to fuel current businesses and attract new ones.

These three principles will guide the institutional actions designed to transform Tri-C to move boldly into the future. Furthermore, Baston suggests that in order to become the values-centered, student-focused and purpose-driven institution the region needs, Tri-C must commit to actualizing the following three themes. These themes emerged during his listening tour during his first 100 days.

The three themes, informed by stakeholder conversations and aligned with the three principles articulated above, are to:

- Build a Culture of Clarity
- Redesign the Student Experience
- Strengthen the Value Proposition

It is important to note that there are a number of initiatives already in progress that will move Tri-C forward in realizing the vision Baston set out in his **The First 100 Days** report to the Tri-C community. Initiatives of note include the facilities plan, the schools plan, a review of enrollment processes and the design and implementation of an Associate of Arts/Associate of Science program review similar to what exists for applied degree programs.

Integrated Academic Planning: These initiatives align with one of the most comprehensive and ambitious initiatives — the development of Tri-C’s first integrated academic plan. The first Academic Planning Orientation Sessions were held in April 2023. These sessions served as a first wave of institutional scanning in preparation for the development of a comprehensive, integrated academic plan. Four groups of Tri-C faculty and staff representing academic and workforce programs — 89 people in all — convened to discuss the challenges facing the broader higher education sector and Tri-C.

These sessions were interactive, a balance of defining integrated academic planning in today’s higher education environment and small group discussion. Participants received the following questions in advance of the orientation sessions and were asked to come to the sessions with brief answers to these questions.



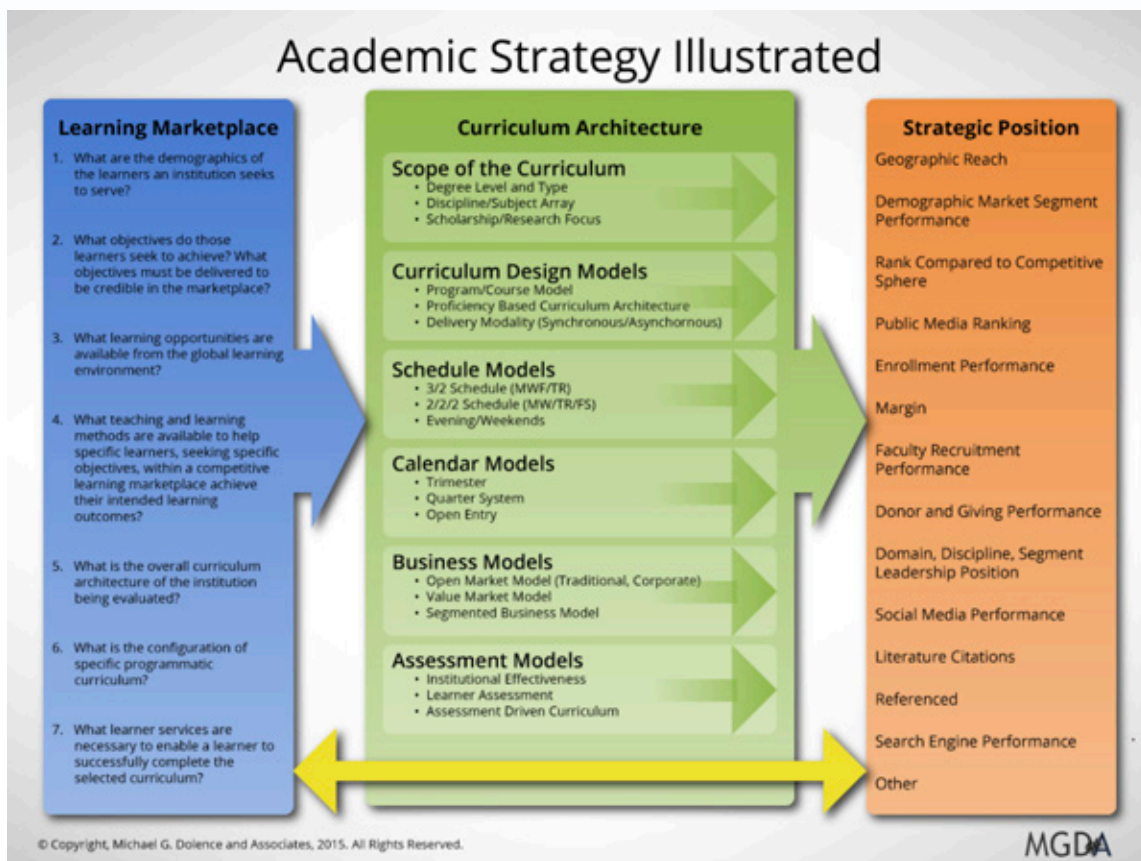
The small group discussions focused on these questions:

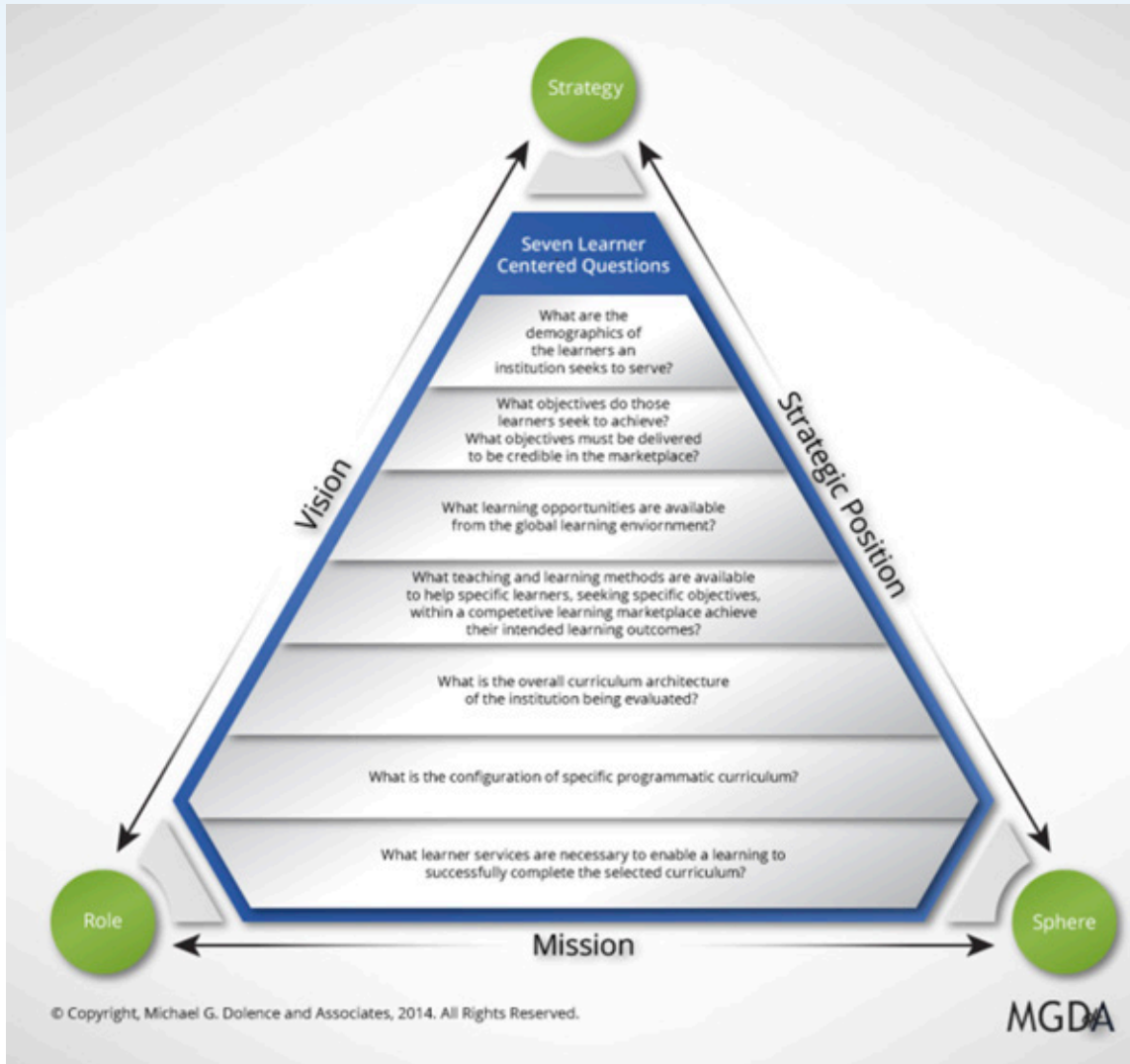
- “In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges facing higher education?”
- “In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges facing Tri-C?”
- “Discuss the Seven Learner Questions.”

Participants discussed two dimensions of integrated academic planning developed by Michael Dolence (2015). Two diagrams depicting the dynamics of integrated academic planning were shared with the participants and are included below.

The first diagram is an illustration of the **Academic Strategy**. Dolence suggests there are three fundamental elements to academic planning: the Learning Marketplace, Curriculum Architecture and Strategic Position. The Learning Marketplace identifies seven strategic learner questions that all institutions must address in the development of an academic plan. Curriculum Architecture identifies the fundamental components of structure and function of the institution’s curriculum. Strategic Position is a set of outward-facing factors that institutions need to take into consideration in the development and implementation of an integrated academic plan.

The second diagram takes the Seven Learner Questions and demonstrates how the responses to these questions would help an institution determine academic strategy, its role in the higher education ecosystem and its sphere of influence in the higher education sector. As you can see, strategy, role and sphere inform institutional mission, vision and strategic position.





Summaries of Discussion Questions

Below are bullet-point summaries of responses to the first two questions. These comments are categorized using a STEEP analysis. This methodology is a common environmental scanning technique used to tease out significant external forces that are both important and impactful to higher education. The STEEP acronym stands for external trends that fall into one of these five categories: Social, Technology, Economic, Environment and Political. There was considerable overlap in the comments to both questions. See the comments that were repeated to both questions below.

Social Trends

- Mental health issues of students and the College workforce
- Greater competition from other entities inside and outside of higher education (i.e., workforce, military, bootcamps and online credentialing)
- Declining population
- Push toward online learning
- Societal pressure, shifts against higher education and relevance of education to life and jobs
- Lack of academic prep for incoming students
- Shift in public attitude that education is a commodity
- More questions about the value of higher education: ROI, cost-value and value proposition
- Great resignation, burnout, and faculty and staff mental health
- Changing generational differences and expectations
- Academic integrity
- Importance of knowledge-based education
- Administrative turnover
- Varying work ethic
- Power skills and soft skills lacking

Technology Trends

- Challenges with improved technology (e.g., AI)
- Digital inclusion
- Lack of computer skills
- Access to technology (i.e. Internet and laptops)
- Economic trends
- Inflation and short-term gig economy
- Cost and affordability
- Success-based funding

Environmental Trends

- No comments provided

Politics Trends

- SB 83
- State and federal intrusion (i.e., DEIB, controversial topics, free speech and academic freedom)



Tri-C-Focused Comments

Participants also provided comments that referred to **specific** aspects of the Tri-C environment.

These comments were placed into one of three categories:

- Institutional Characteristics: Facilities, Policy, Processes and Procedures
- Institutional Context: Environment, Economics and Politics
- Student-Focused Comments

Institutional Qualities: Facilities, Policy, Processes and Procedures

- Mission sprawl: called to be all things to all populations/Tri-C seeks to serve everybody
- Need to do a better job of explaining the academic and workforce options
- Corporate College®
- Community college stigma
- College processes
 - Enrollment process
 - Overall curriculum architecture — stackable certificates, workforce and academic degrees
 - Array of programs and services — counseling, enrollment, new student orientation and new initiatives
 - HR/SAC process
 - Scheduling process
- College priorities
- Initiative fatigue
- Information silos
- Infrastructure
 - Buildings (too many)
 - Space utilization
 - Lack of financial resources
- Neoliberalism of administration
- Workforce dynamics
 - Lack of investment in people
 - Restrictions for faculty hiring (adjunct)
 - Lag in faculty transitioning to online learning
 - Reliance on interim positions
 - Employee recruitment and retention
 - Sustainable wages
 - Changing priorities regarding position requirements
 - Having students, faculty and staff return to physical presence
 - Overreliance on counterparts chairs
 - Faculty and staff burnout
 - Adjunct pay/contracts
 - Small percent of full-time faculty
 - Equity



Institutional Context: Environment, Economics and Politics

- Federal and state interest in higher education from untrained parties
- Cleveland demographic stratification
- College readiness, especially for CCP and fresh out of high school
- Affordability
- Digital divide
- Achieve learning, such as clinicals, labs and internships
- Poverty
- Competition from other institutions
- Emphasis on workforce
- Use local resources to globalize curriculum
- Education v. vocation
- Are short-term programs taking away from degrees?

Student-Focused Comments

- Value — Say Yes to Tri-C, CSU, etc.
- Students ill-prepared for college (academic, grit and socially)
- Working students (families depend on income)
- Online classes favored because of pandemic
- Changing vocational pressure
- Lack of student engagement
- Immediate gratification character trait of students
- Cohorts à entrances
- Adult learners
- Students juggling more life issues
- Mostly first-generation
- Ages 18-30, some second career
- Other employment opportunities for students
- Professional (soft) skills vital to learning
- Desire students with aptitude and attitude suitable for health care
- Abroad experiences for faculty and students



The Seven Learner Questions

As noted, these Seven Learner Questions are important considerations when planning for an integrated academic plan. Dolence (2015) suggests that the way an institution responds to these questions sets the framework for the its strategic position in the higher education ecosystem and sets the direction of its curriculum architecture. The responses below are a first look at what participants judged as the important considerations relative to the Seven Learner Questions.

Question 1: What are the demographics of the learners your institution seeks to serve?

- Very heterogeneous student population
 - Post-degree, nontraditional high school graduates and CCP
 - Regional v. national
 - Diverse socio-economic backgrounds
 - Transient
 - Diverse education background: traditional, CCP, returning with some college, lifelong learners, and well- and ill-prepared
 - Post-degree students
 - Metro and urban
 - Low income
 - Older/nontraditional
 - Veterans
 - First-generation
 - CCP, high school grads, GED and ESL
 - Seventh grade to 80 years old
 - All genders: LGBTQ and faith-based
 - Encore
 - Seeks to become visible to those who have not considered Tri-C
 - Transfer students
 - International students
 - Nontraditional students
 - Cuyahoga County racial demographics: 58% white, 29% black, 6% Hispanic and 7% other
 - We serve all students
 - Student demographics: all community members, from CCP to Program 60
 - Demographics: Cuyahoga, Geauga, Portage, Summit, Lake and Lorain
- What demographics of learners don't we serve?

Question 2: What objectives do those learners seek to achieve? What objectives must be delivered to be credible in the marketplace?

- Jobs, explore career options — reskill/upskill, career advancement, development of technical competency and job skills leading to a living wage
- Prep for four-year degree
- Credential
- Personal enrichment
- Degrees, short-term certificate, further training for higher wages, personal development and transferability to four-year institutions



- Transfer
- Personal enrichment, individual development and quality of life
- Programmatic — accreditation standards
- Two-year degree
- Gainful employment
- Life skills
- Personal satisfaction

Question 3: What learning opportunities are available from the global learning environment?

- Work experience and internships
- Alternative education credentials
- Articulation agreement partners
- Plethora of online resources
- Workforce training
- American degree for international students
- Global cross-cultural education
- Not intentionally recruiting global students (minimal)
- No study abroad
- Libraries and open resources
- Advanced degrees
- Expand diversity through global partnerships by incorporating unique views of international students
- Experiential learning (i.e., internships, co-ops and clinicals)
- Flashy or less substance
- Social media — fast/snip/learning

Question 4: What teaching and learning methods are available to help specific learners, seeking specific objectives within a competitive learning marketplace, achieve their intended learning outcomes?

- Tutoring quality
- Eight-week blocks
- Assessment
- Hands-on learning, apprenticeships, real-life experiences, real-world simulations modalities — online offers workers flexibility
- Lectures, experiential learning, project-based learning, group work — film and music
- Different teaching and learning modalities
- Need to be intentional with how we handle online teaching
- Tutoring, SAS and modalities
- Scholars' programs
- Faculty devoted to field and college



Question 5: What is the overall curriculum architecture of the institution being evaluated?

- Degrees, certifications and workforce development
- Pathways, student services, tutoring, mentoring, advising, accommodations, certificates and degrees
- Certificates
- Precollege opportunities
- Flexible opportunities — certificates and badges
- Multiple campuses
- Day/Evening
- Weekend
- Counseling
- Testing Center
- Vast institutional shifts to accommodate CCP environment

Note: What's missing? Online, hybrid, F2F; cohort models; alternative calendars (i.e., eight-week sessions, 15-week sessions, etc.)

Question 6: What is the configuration of the specific programmatic curriculum?

- Disconnect WCED and academic coursework (pathways program) and TAG classes/OTM
- ELOs, course-level assessment and TAG/OT36
- General education, major programs and technical training
- Program accreditation (specific to program)
- Program structure — prerequisites and corequisites, cohorts and placement testing

Question 7: What services are necessary to enable a learner to successfully complete the selected curriculum?

- Access to technology
- Outreach and dropped students
- Childcare
- Counseling, advising, easy enrollment and payment plan, basic needs support, equity support services, accessibility services and student advocates
- Career guidance and internships
- Financial aid and tutoring, facilities — staffed, and faculty advising
- Advising, food pantry, technology assistance and Project 60
- Childcare, TRIO, Say Yes and tutoring
- Comprehensive mental health services
- Tutoring, freshman orientation, assistance, counseling, student access, advising and faculty intervention
- Academic and support triage process
- College-level, coordinated remedial support