

Strategic Transformation Planning Summary Interfaith Community Partners Listening Session April 2, 2025

Introduction

On April 2, 2025, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) hosted a listening session with members of its interfaith community to solicit valuable insights and guidance aimed at informing the College's mission, institutional values, and strategic transformation plan. This gathering sought to harness diverse perspectives to help the College chart a bold, innovative path forward, addressing community needs and enhancing educational relevance and accessibility.

Curricular Innovation and Relevance

Participants underscored the critical need for Tri-C to maintain curricular relevance by proactively adapting to evolving demographics and workforce demands. Attendees urged the College to embrace curricular innovations such as AI integration and entrepreneurial programming. Highlighting a proactive stance, one respondent stated, **"Manage the enrollment cliff with innovative curriculum,"** while another emphasized, **"Need the skills more than the employment,"** reflecting a call for educational approaches tailored to future skill demands rather than immediate job placement alone.

Comprehensive Student Support

The interfaith community partners strongly advocated for expansive student support, stressing the significance of addressing life barriers such as transportation, childcare, and emotional safety. One participant passionately noted, **"Transportation issues are among the biggest challenges preventing student participation,"** and another voiced, **"Creating safe spaces for ALL students—especially historically marginalized students—is essential."** These insights point to the need for holistic strategies encompassing both academic and non-academic student needs to enhance student retention and success.

Community Integration and Engagement

A pivotal theme emerging from the session was the necessity for Tri-C to deeply integrate with its surrounding communities. Participants suggested transformative actions such as establishing education pathways that engage families from early childhood through higher education. A particularly ambitious vision shared was, “Imagine a complete campus where children automatically progress from daycare to degree without reapplying,” reinforcing the idea of a comprehensive educational continuum that could radically alter community engagement and educational access. Another participant emphasized the importance of engaging communities proactively, stating, “While it's great to bring the community to the college, take the college to the community,” highlighting a strategic approach toward accessibility and outreach.

Workforce and Economic Development

Participants emphasized the critical role Tri-C plays in local workforce development, stressing the importance of responsiveness to changing industry trends and the necessity for strong employer connections. Highlighting this, one participant remarked, “Put resources behind workforce development and job training,” and another advocated for “job placement partnerships with local employers,” signaling a strong community expectation for Tri-C to serve as a key driver of economic vitality and job readiness.

Cultural Competence and Diversity

The interfaith dialogue clearly articulated a call for Tri-C to nurture an inclusive, culturally sensitive environment reflecting societal diversity. Participants highlighted the necessity of developing competencies in multicultural communication, equity, and inclusion, particularly in the current sociopolitical climate. One respondent powerfully asserted, “In a culture that vilifies diversity and inclusion as 'wokeness,' be awake!” Another emphasized the practical importance of “making sure students understand how to operate in a multicultural setting,” showcasing an imperative to educate and prepare students for diverse workplaces and societies.

Affordability and Accessibility

Throughout the session, affordability emerged as a crucial element influencing community perceptions and educational accessibility. Participants emphasized that Tri-C must

continue to pursue innovative approaches to maintain low educational costs. “Affordability is always an advantage,” noted one attendee, while another pushed the College to explore “creative ways to make education as affordable and accessible as possible,” thus highlighting financial accessibility as foundational to community trust and institutional growth.

Conclusion

The collective wisdom shared by the interfaith community reflects a vision of Tri-C not merely as an educational institution but as a cornerstone of community transformation and empowerment. By embracing bold strategies, from comprehensive cradle-to-career pathways and innovative curricular models to fostering an authentically inclusive and responsive learning environment, Tri-C has the opportunity to profoundly reshape the educational landscape. Moving forward with courage and creativity, Tri-C can fulfill its promise as a catalyst for economic vitality, social equity, and enduring community prosperity, effectively meeting the aspirations and challenges of the future

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For any questions regarding the listening session or this summary, please reach out to [Gregory Stoup](#), Vice President of Institutional Progress & Effectiveness.